Tracing Pentecostal Roots
Glenn Gohr
Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center

Background:
While genealogy has became a popular hobby, due in part to the widespread use of the internet, tracing spiritual roots can also be rewarding. Discovering a person’s spiritual background can be a catalyst to a better understanding of the overall Pentecostal movement.

Ideally, if one is a Pentecostal, then one has spiritual roots that if fully traceable, would tie into the early Pentecostal revivals directed by Charles F. Parham at the turn of the 20th Century, William Seymour at Azusa Street, or one of the other early beginnings of Pentecost around 100 years ago.

An example of someone tracing their spiritual roots can be found in Charles Crabtree’s testimony listed in Rick Brunson’s article. Through Crabtree’s father, Clifford Crabtree, converted in Aimee Semple McPherson’s meetings, and then back through William Durham to Azusa Street, within about 4 “generations” or links, he has traced his spiritual roots back to William Seymour and his mentor, Charles F. Parham, who is often called the “Father” of the Pentecostal movement. Stanley Horton has a similar background, since his grandfather was Elmer Fisher of the Upper Room Mission in Los Angeles.

Required Reading:

Objectives:
This project can be an excellent way to enlighten students about the rich history of the Pentecostal Movement in one or more of its aspects, help them to strengthen their research abilities, and bring Pentecostal history alive to them on a personal level. It is a unique approach to a firsthand study of Pentecostalism.

Description:
Tracing spiritual roots does not necessarily mean finding out about a person’s own biological family’s religious background. In most instances it will mean tracking down the links between people who shared the gospel and/or the Pentecostal message through each ascertainable connection.

Project Proposal:
To track down spiritual roots, a person will need to start with the individual (or himself if the student wishes to research his own family Pentecostal roots) and work backwards in time. It will mean writing down a brief testimony of the starting person’s conversion and Spirit baptism. Next the student can do research in the sources listed (or on the internet) or else interview the starting person or some other individual instrumental in that party becoming a Pentecostal believer. This will lead to another “generation” to research. This chain of succession could either following directly through a person’s family tree back to possibly their great-grandparents.
or it could follow a different path if a person is new to Pentecost or their parents were converts to Pentecostalism.

To learn about the chain of events that brought about the transference and witnessing from one “generation” to the next, various research methods can be employed: reading books on the history of the Pentecostal Movement, studying individual church/congregational histories, doing research in historical libraries and archives, and interviewing people connected to the study or knowledgeable of the chain of events.

In conjunction with a study of spiritual roots—or link back to one of the early Pentecostal fathers (or mothers)—a researcher should also obtain background material that would correlate with the links being followed. For example, if a person’s background follows a link back to the Church of God denomination, then a brief sketch of that religious body should be covered in the report, along with names of key figures involved. (It is even possible that a person’s family or a mentor may have had direct contact with one of these key figures, i.e. A. J. Tomlinson, R. G. Spurling, etc.)

**Format:**

The report can be anywhere from five to 10 typed pages, according to the instructor’s wishes. It is possible that a theme of some sort may run through the study as research progresses (camp meetings, music, key individuals, a particular denomination, women in ministry, etc.). Each report will be a significant recording of Pentecostal history and may even lend important information to the broad understanding of Pentecostalism.

It is possible that a person may be able to trace more than one line of “succession,” for instance if the key individual was spirit-baptized through the influence of their home life, and each parent was baptized in the Spirit through a different setting or circumstance. If that be the case, the student can either cover both avenues of spiritual roots or else limit the study to one line of interest. Also, since the Pentecostal movement has Holiness roots, if the student should have difficulty in tracking back the Pentecostal “line,” the study could go back to some Wesleyan-Holiness related beginnings or another related religious body, such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Salvation Army, etc.

In a few cases, if the students are already familiar with their own spiritual roots, they could write on their own family connection back to the founders of the Pentecostal Movement. For many people this may prove to be too difficult, depending on a person’s circumstances or the lack of primary and secondary sources to show the spiritual link. For that reason, it is advisable for the student to study the roots of a well-known spiritual figure.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the instructor assign key people for students to research. Names can be chosen from well-known people in the Pentecostal Movement whose background is somewhat known. Names may be chosen from such works as, *Out of Zion Into All the World*, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement*, *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement*, *The Charismatic Movement: A Guide*, and *Biographical Dictionary of African-American, Holiness-Pentecostals, 1880-1990*. *Out of Zion* is an excellent book that details the spiritual move of God from Dowie’s religious community at Zion, Illinois, as it spread through various key people all across the nation.

Sample persons to study their spiritual/Pentecostal roots include: A. A. Allen, Zelma Argue, Jim Bakker, H. C. Ball, R. Stanley Berg, Dan Betzer, William Branham, Marie Burgess Brown, G. Raymond Carlson, Adele Carmichael, Jack Coe, Charles Conn, Fred Corum, Charles

RECOMMENDED REFERENCES

(This reference work is updated annually. It includes headquarters addresses of most major religious bodies, along with a brief synopsis of how each church group was established.)

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE WORKS


**CHURCH BODIES**

**Apostolic Faith (Charles F. Parham)**


**Apostolic Faith Mission (Portland, OR)**


**Assemblies of God**


Church of God (Cleveland, TN)

Church of God In Christ

Church of God of Prophecy
Mixon, Roy D. Reflections of 450 Years in the Ministry. N.p.: N.p., 198?

International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

International Pentecostal Holiness Church

Open Bible Standard Churches

**Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada**


**Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland**


**Pentecostal Assemblies of the World**


**Pentecostal Church of God**


**United Pentecostal Church**


*Note: Similar histories can be located for other church bodies.*

**DENOMINATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND REPOSITORIES**

**North America**

Apostolic Faith, 1009 Lincoln Ave., Baxter Springs, KS 67713
Apostolic Faith Mission of Portland, Oregon, 6615 S.E. 52nd Ave., Portland, OR 97206-7660
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 1435 N. Glenstone Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802-2131
B. L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary, 204 North Lexington Avenue, Wilmore, KY 40390
Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College, 500 College Ave., Wheaton, IL 60187-5593
Bolin Library for Pentecostal Research, Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God, 1000 Longfellow Blvd., Lakeland, FL 33801
Central Pentecostal College, University of Saskatchewan, 1303 Jackson Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7H 2M9
Charles F. Parham Center for Pentecostal-Charismatic Studies, South Texas Bible Institute, 12340 Perry Rd., Houston, TX 77070
Christ For the Nations Institute, P.O. Box 769000, Dallas, TX 75376-9000
Church of God in Christ (COGIC), P.O. Box 320, Memphis, TN 38101
Church of God of Prophecy Archives, P.O. Box 2910, Cleveland, TN 37320-2910
David du Plessis Archives, Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 N. Oakland Ave., Box 258, Pasadena, CA 91182
Eastern Pentecostal Bible College Library, 780 Argyle St., Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9H 5T2
Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Road, P. O. Box 57A, Lima, NY 14485-0857
The Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas, 901 Bishop William Edward Fuller, Sr. Highway, Greenville, SC
Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center [Assemblies of God], 1445 N. Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802-1894
Foursquare Archives, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1910 W. Sunset Blvd., Suite 200, P.O. Box 26902, Los Angeles, CA 90026-0176
Hal Bernard Dixon, Jr. Pentecostal Research Center [Church of God, Cleveland, TN], 260 11th Street NE, Cleveland, TN 37311
Holy Spirit Research Center, Oral Roberts University Library, P.O. Box 2187, 7777 S. Lewis, Tulsa, OK 74171
International Pentecostal Church of Christ, 2245 St. Rt. 42 SW, P.O. Box 439, London, OH 43140
International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives and Research Center, P.O. Box 12609, Oklahoma City, OK 73157
The Lewis Wilson Institute for Pentecostal Studies, Vanguard University, 55 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, CA, 92626
Nazarene Archives, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131
Nelson Memorial Library, Southwestern Assemblies of God University, 1200 Sycamore St., Waxahachie, TX 75165
Open Bible Standard Churches, Inc., 2020 Bell Avenue, Des Moines, IA  50315
Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Archives, 2450 Milltower Court, Mississauga, Ontario  L5N 5Z6
Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador, 57 Thorburn Road, P.O. Box 8895,  
Station A, St. John's Newfoundland  A1B 3T2
Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc. (PAW), 3939 N. Meadows Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46205
Pentecostal Church of God, P.O. Box 850, Joplin, MO  64802
Regent University Library, 1000 Regent University Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23464
United Pentecostal Historical Center, 8855 Dunn Rd., Hazelwood, MO  63042
Western Pentecostal Bible College, Box 1700, Abbotsford, B.C., Canada  V2S 7E7
Zion Bible Institute, 27 Middle Highway, Barrington, RI  02806

Europe
Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland, Inc., 16 Bridgford Road, West Bridgford,  
Nottingham, U.K.  NG2  6AF
Charles Wesley Heritage Centre, 5 Charles Street, Bristol, England  BS1  3NN
Donald Gee Center For Pentecostal and Charismatic Research, Mattersey Hall, Mattersey,  
Doncaster, England  DN10 5HD
Elim Library, Elim Pentecostal Church, P. O. Box 38, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, U.K.  
GL50-3HN
Finnish Pentecostals, Jyväskylän helluntaiseurakunta, Lyseonkatu 3, 40100 Jyväskylä
The Hollenweger Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Pentecostal and Charismatic  
Movements, Vrije Universiteit, De Boelelaan 1103, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands
New Life Publishing, P O Box 64, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, U.K.  S60 2YT
The Swedish Pentecostal Research and Information Center (PRI), Kaggeholms folkhögskola 178  
54 Ekerö, Sweden

*Note: Similar information can be located for other church bodies as well as in other parts of the  
globe.