

Early History [Charles T. Furman] E.B. Copy  
By Ben Furman

All these Missionary Societies, as we have known them on the field, preach and teach the fundamental message of salvation through the merits of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And for years we met with them, and tried to have communion with them, on that base. But they all with one accord not only reject but actively oppose the gift and manifestations of the Holy Ghost. If the Lord's Gospel commission is fulfilled in the message which they preach, then there could be no doubt that some such agreement with them would be the Lord's will. But if the baptism with the Holy Ghost, as we know it, and the message of the One Body, as described in I Cor. 12, along with the message of salvation which they preach, is the Lord's message for the saved as well as for the heathen in these last days, then there can be no more arguments, nor agreements, with these other Missionary Societies as to where I preach.

If you tell me that this agreement, marked "B-Territory" in the blue Comity statement, "Is not only a protection to us but to the cause of Christianity in general"; every one of my long years of experience in working against the opposition of these Holy Ghost rejecting Missionary Societies on the foreign Mission field answers "No." And if you should tell me that I should have no voice in the matter, that the Mission Board, backed by the Bishop's Council, knows what is better for the foreign mission work than a no account and fit for the scrap pile anyhow old missionary, my answer is this:

In the beginning of the Church of God foreign mission work, or movement, a company was sent to Africa. Their commission was a complete failure and the money it took to send them and bring them back was a dead loss. To protect the Church from another such possible fiasco, a ruling was passed that was so good and tight that it made another such failure impossible; it tied up the missionary movement and stopped it dead. While other Pentecostal groups, and individuals, without any such wise man made rules to hinder them, were pressing into the regions beyond, and also making plenty of mistakes and failures along the way, the Church of God was stalled -- except in the English speaking islands-- and never did get started again until that apparently wise, but unwise, ruling was scrapped. Now after the missionary movement has got a good start without your rules, why hinder it? Why push us back into the fire and force us



to fight all over again the hard battles already won?

I will back up what I say with some of the pertinent history of the laying of your own foundation here in Guatemala; history which you should know. (Of course this letter, which is going to be somewhat long, is not meant for publication but only for the Mission Board.)

When Brother Pullin and I arrived in Guatemala, in 1916, the Missionary Societies on the field had all of Guatemala claimed and portioned out among themselves by departments; altho a great part was neither occupied nor being worked. And they had a Territorial Comity agreement similar to this latest setup:

Dr. Seacord, a backslidden independent missionary, claimed three departments: Quiche, Totonicapan, and Sololá. He had ceded the department of Totonicapan to Rev. Hines, an independent Pentecostal missionary. Bro. Pullin and I came to work with Bro. Hines. The Nazarines, with headquarters in Cobán, had originally held four departments: Cobán, Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz and Zacapa. But when the Spirit fell among the Nazarines in the Pentecostal revival in the States the Church split; those receiving the blessing forming the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and those rejecting it remaining with the Nazarines. And it was arranged by the divided Churches that in the Guatemalan Mission field Cobán and Alta Verapaz remain with the Nazarines and the departments of Baja Verapaz and Zacapa fall to the Pentecostal Holiness Church. When we arrived in Guatemala, Rev. Bradley under the Pentecostal Holiness Church, was in Charge of Baja Verapaz and Zacapa.

Because of the active opposition of the Nazarines, still wielding influence over the Workers, neither Bro. Bradley nor the missionary who preceded him, had succeeded in leading any of their people into the Pentecostal blessing. But when we arrived it was beginning to overflow across the border from Salvador where old Bro. Mebis, working against the combined opposition of the other Missionaries, had gotten an independent Pentecostal work started there.

In 1917 Bro. Bradley was leaving for the States, as it turned out to stay, and asked that one of us come down and care for his work. Although able to speak very little Spanish it was agreed that I take Bradley's place. The Bradleys, in leaving,



had not yet embarked at Puerto Barrios when I received a telegram advising me that a commission from the Nazarines had already taken over the department of Baja Verapaz. Bradley was not sent back and the Pentecostal Holiness Church abandoned the work in Guatemala.

Then the Hineses decided to go home, on account of Sister Hines not being able to stand the altitude of Totonicapan. This was in 1918. And it was decided that I return to Totonicapan and Brother Pullin take care of Zacapa. But the Hineses were no sooner on their way than the battle started to oust us. Dr. Secord, already at enmity with Brother Hines because of the Pentecostal doctrine, arrived in San Cristobal, where I was then located. He sent his worker into our chapel, during services, to announce that Dr. Secord had arrived and wanted all to appear the next day at the home of his appointed worker. They took most of our believers and, the owner of the house where we held our meetings going with them, I was called before the civil authorities and ordered to vacate the house, and they took over our chapel. But we had already rented the house next door, having been advised and prepared beforehand, and we just moved our benches and continued on with the few faithful believers they left us. I yelled for Brother Pullin to help me. The Central American Mission, awake to what was going on, had their representative on hand to ask Brother Pullin to sign over the department of Zacapa to them before he left, which he refused to do, but they took in anyhow.

The fight was now between us and Dr. Secord for the department of Totonicapan. The missionaries all knew that he was backslidden but respected his right to the department under the territorial agreement - but we held it. When Brother Hines heard about the battle he returned and took over. We had the victory but were all now bunched up in one department, and so I decided to move out. But where to? Peten, in the lowlands to the north and a third as big as all Guatemala, was the only department not claimed by the other Missionary Societies, so we thought, and so I decided to go there. And Cobán being on the border and on my route if I went by land, I wrote to Richard Anderson, the missionary then in charge of the Nazarine work, telling him of my plans and asking his advice as to equipment etc. He answered my letter and with kind "Christian" courtesy informed me that they considered Peten as their territory. And this after he



had stolen the department of Baja Verapaz from me, and despite the fact that Peten was not occupied. We learned through their "Christian" paper that a missionary was not sent into Peten until years later. We were green, inexperienced, discouraged and still trying to work in harmony with these Evangelical and Holiness, but Canaanitish, Missionary Societies.

And so Brother Pullin and myself and wife decided to go into Quiché and fight it out with Dr. Secord. The departments of Totonicapan and Quiché were considered by the other missionaries as the cream of Guatemalan missionary territory on account of being the thickly populated center of the Quiché, or Mayan, Indian tribes, and the Indians practically untouched with the Gospel. At that time there were only a few, perhaps 50, Indian believers in the Totonicapan department and I think none at all in Quiché. It was evident to us that the Lord used these peculiar means of keeping there two departments for the planting of the Pentecostal testimony in Guatemala. Shortly after our arrival in Quiché there was a revolution and Dr. Secord, who was tied up with the old Cabrera government, was ordered out of the country.

On our return to the States, after five years on the field, we were told that the small group of missions, under the Casley Brothers who had been supporting us, could not support two families in Guatemala. And so ~~now~~ we retired in favor of the Pullins, this without the knowledge of Bro. Pullin. (It was generally understood that Bro. Pullin would be married on his return to the States.) While he were fasting and praying to know the Lord's will the Primitive Methodists came looking for us. The Lord's leading in this was as peculiar as it was definite. Without knowing the stringent territorial conditions in Guatemala or ever having heard of us their General Conference had decided to open up missionary work in Guatemala and had deputed Rev. Tinker, the Mission Board member most interested, to employ two missionaries for the job. He and the Mission Board Secretary, who came to interview us, knew full well that we were Pentecostal. And when the subject of doctrine was brought up we were told that we had liberty to "Preach everything between the two lids of the Bible." And so we returned to Guatemala under the Primitive Methodist Mission Board; realizing what it was to cost us later.



My wife and I staid in Quiché proper and Brother and Sister Pullin took the upper part of the department, north of the Negro river. And Brother and Sister Hines, now returning to the States for Gook, (1922) turned the Totonacapan department over to us, under the Primitive Methodists. Everything moved along nicely as long as we were left alone. Carrie got a nice school going, with about 40 or 50 scholars. And our work, which was yet exclusively among the Ladino, or white, class was growing nicely. But we were soon to learn the bitterness of working against opposition against the Pentecostal testimony at these quarters, or yoked up with unbelievers. It wasn't generally understood among the Methodists that we were Pentecostal and when the news reached the President of the Conference he sent another missionary to see about. His report brought a commission to investigate us. After we talked over it the matter of doctrine they went out to conference among themselves. When they returned our resignation was already written and we handed it to them. They refused to accept it and asked us to stay on our full term which we did.

At the General Conference, on our return to the States on furlough, the Lord worked in a marvelous way -especially through Carrie - and we were returned to the field. But a titled college graduate was send down to take charge of the educational work, and other missionaries were soon on the field. We were not opposed openly. They were all against us, but they used wisdom. We took our liberty ~~in~~ in preaching but the seed which had to do with the Holy Ghost doctrine was rooted up before it had a chance to sprout. We found ourselves frustrated on every hand, and so we decided to resings, leave the territory to them and go to South America where there was more room.

In South America we found much the same conditions. Ecuador, where we landed, was claimed by the Christian and Missionary Alliance. But since they were occupying ~~any~~ very little of the territory, we found them not so difficult to work whit.

On our return to the States, after a term among the jungle Indians in the Oriente, we were again asked to return to Guatemala under the Methodist Mission Board, as things were not going so good there. The missionaries sent to Totonacapan could not endure the altitude, the school in Quiche was petering out, one missionary's wife had the nervous hysterics, another, after enduring a couple of months, had returned without permission.



And so at the request of Brother Tinker we had in our application to the Mission Board at their General Conference which that year, 1929, was in Pittsburgh, Pa. But with our application went a written statement of our doctrinal belief. And knowing that the "Unknown tongues" was the stone of stumbling I wrote plainly that I believed that speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance, according to Acts 2:4, was the Scriptural evidence of the reception of the Holy Ghost.

On the convention floor the question of conflicting doctrines on the foreign field was brought up and the Pentecostal doctrine, and people, ripped to pieces; and ruling passed which in effect prohibited the missionaries from preaching it, and all the missionaries required to sign a "Code of Ethics" which obligated them to comply with the ruling. We knew at the time that these rulings were passed for our special benefit, as they knew that we were sitting there listening to it all. And we thought that that ended our work in Guatemala, as our written statement of doctrinal belief was already in the hands of the Mission Board. Sometime later the Mission Board Secretary came to me and said, "Brother Furman I congratulate you, you are accepted for work in Guatemala." And I asked him point blank, as I was very much surprised, "Was that statement of my doctrinal belief read?" And he answered, "Yes".

No one asked us to sign that "Code of Ethics". I never did know how it came about. We knew that the Lord was back of it, but the only explanation for such strange proceeding was that not only we but the Pentecostal doctrine had plenty of friends in the Methodist General Conference.

We returned to Guatemala, stationed in San Cristobal, with the firm belief that the Lord had brought us back here for the special purpose of preparing the people for and outpouring of his Spirit, and we were determined to fight it through. So far as we could see the old doctrinal foundation which we had all labored, and suffered, to establish was completely ruined. It was a long hard battle and meant fighting through even the opposition of our head worker who himself had been saved under the ministry of Bro. Hines and in the beginning indoctrinated, although not baptized, in the Holy Ghost. But in ~~1923~~ 1932 the Lord graciously poured out of his Spirit upon out few congregations in the Totonicapan Dept. and upon Bro. Pullin's work in the northern part of Quiché and



gave us a real Pentecostal revival.

Up to this time the battle with the Methodists and other Missionary Societies had been over doctrine. But the out pouring of the Holy Ghost not only stirred things among the Methodists but all the other missionaries were now after us in earnest. We at once reported the outpouring to our Mission Board, and got this answer from the Secretary, "I didn't ask you for this report. " And whereas before the revival we could occasionally report one or two converts and could now report so many baptized that my arms ached for days at a time, not only the Mission Board but the Missionaries as well were up in arms against us. The blessing overflowed onto Presbyterian territory and, although we had not yet trespassed personally on their territory they sent in a complaint against us to our Mission Board. And they did their best to stamp out the blessing. This all of the Missionary Societies tried to do, their leaders, like old king Herod, trying to kill the child as soon as it was born.

Brother Bradley, who had also been employed by the Methodists, had signed that Missionary Code of Ethics and, after the Hines had left was stationed in Totonicapan and later moved to Chichicastenango because Sister Bradley could not endure the high altitude, reported the outpouring of the Spirit to the Assemblies of God in the States and, without my knowledge and despite the fact that he had had nothing whatever to do with the Revival, offered himself as their missionary to take charge of the work for them. (If an honest man signs away his conscience he is already dishonest. As for me, when I go home I want to go with a testimony like the Lord's as; my conscience never ridden except by the Lord himself.)

And so Brother Williams, who was the Assemblies' Superintendent then stationed in Salvador, in company with Bro. Bradley came to our home in San Cristobal one day in 1933, sent by the Assemblies Mission Board to investigate and, judging from their attitude, with the intention of taking over. I had to tell Brother Williams, who is a good Superintendent, who was doing the leading here. After they had failed to take them under their wing Brother Williams reported our revival and group of Holy Ghost baptized saints as a group of libertines in Guatemala; their distinguishing name for the Pentecostal con-



gregations in Salvador who would not join up with them.

Our furlough was again due, in 1934, and we went home to face the battle which we knew awaited us there. An itinerary was arranged for us and we were to visit the churches in the Pennsylvania district as far east as to Scranton where the Mission Board Meeting was to take place. I had long ago learned that we had only to walk in obedience to the Lord and, regardless of appearance or of what others thought or did about it, he would see us through with the victory. But to be faithful to the Lord now meant that I would testify to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in every Church I went into, the majority of which were fanatically opposed to ~~this~~ this latter day outpouring of the Holy Ghost; which was, up to the time, the hardest test I had ever gone through. But the Spirit held me to it. And it surely did stir things. In some of the churches our message was received gladly, but mostly it was otherwise. One example: We got to Newcastle Pa., late, a few minutes before meeting time. And as we were already on our feet in the parsonage to go into the church the preacher said to me, "Brother Furman, before we go into the church I want to ask you a question: Do you believe that speaking in other tongues is the evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost?" I said, "Yes I believe that," ~~and~~ "Well", he said, "You can't preach that in my pulpit."

I said to him, "Now let us understand each other about this: Just as sure as I go into your pulpit, That's what I will preach. Now do I understand you to say that you refuse me your pulpit?"

"No", he said, "I won't do that. But if you mention 'Tongues' I will immediately get up and tell the church that you are in false doctrine."

"All right", I said, "Now we understand each other."

And so we went into the Church, which was full. The pastor turned the service over to me and sat down. I told them of the outpouring of God's Spirit upon our work in Guatemala, and when I came to the Spirit's ~~some~~ manifestations of speaking in other tongues, the preacher did just what he said he would do. It was like putting off a bomb in the church. Then he came over to me and said, "Brother Furman, I love you, but I had to do that." The Holy Ghost was on me and I said, "Please sit down Brother, I am not through."



He sat down, and the Lord poured it all over me. I had wonderful liberty in the Spirit.

But on arriving in Scranton we were forbidden to speak in any of the churches by the district superintendent until after the Board meeting, although we were scheduled to speak in four or five, and at the Board meeting there were a lot of angry men waiting for us. It was so hot that they overstepped their own legal order and admitted several of our accusers into the Board meeting, just as though we were some awful criminals on trial. They had us on the floor about four hours.

Some of the Mission Board had been changed but the Secretary who had sent us to Guatemala the last time had not been changed. The Secretary who had employed us in the first place was still a member of the Mission Board, but he failed to appear. And Brother Tinker, our old friend and still our friend to this day, the only one to say a word in our defence, was also there. Some one asked the question, "How come that there is no record of the Furmans signing that doctrinal paper, when all the other missionaries signed it?"

I suspected that there were more than one there who knew more about it than I, but no one said a word. But the Spirit gave me the answer, and I said, "That was one time that the Lord himself put one over on you."

They finally passed a motion that Brother and Sister Furman be returned to Guatemala on condition that they sign the doctrinal agreement. The President of the General Conference, who was presiding, very kindly told us that they would excuse us for half an hour so that we might think it over and pray about it, and then we could return and give them our answer. I told them that the question had been settled between us and the Lord years ago, and now I didn't need a half minute to think it over and pray about, I would not sign, and so we were out.

Most of the Methodist ministers were good conscientious Christian men and I think acted honestly according to their light. But, like the denominational missionaries on the field, soaked in the world's education and pickled in their own human dignity and distinct denominational brand of man made doctrines. We loved them all and had determined to be faithful to them to the end, and so had made no plans for the future. But we had followed the Lord regardless of their opposition and so had no worry. And so the Lord definitely



led us into the Church of God.

Back on the field in Guatemala under the Church of God Mission Board, we were considered by the Methodists, who were now backed by all the other Missionary Societies working in Guatemala, as traitors, trespassers on their territory, worse than heretics and therefore not to be dealt with as Christians. But the Lord gave us a clean and clear cut victory. Every one of our congregations staid with us -this in the Totonicapan district - and there was division in only one, in the city of Totonicapan. Here the Methodist missionary was entrenched, had won over our head worker, who now had his baptism with the Spirit. But finally the worker, all of the elders and most of the congregation came with us.

The other Missionary Societies still hold to their old territorial agreement and take it for granted that the Totonicapan and Quiche departments belong to the Methodists. And according to that agreement, in effect among themselves, the Church of God has no rights whatsoever in Guatemala, except in Guatemala city, as the capital was, under the original agreement, to be considered as open to all the Societies. But in pouring out the Holy Ghost the Lord simply ignored their man made rulings and geographical boundary lines and we just took it for granted that he set us free from them and we also ignored them. As our work slowly, but surely, spread over all Guatemala we followed up, doing what we could to pastor every Holy Ghost baptized group. This brought us into conflict not only with the Missionary Societies but with the Government as well. But the Lord gave us the victory in every battle. The Governor and Chief of Police in Totonicapan prohibited all manifestations in our meetings. We appealed the case to the Chief of Police in Guatemala. He returned it to the judge in Totonicapan who ruled against us. We appealed the case to the President. He returned it to the Judge in Totonicapan. We were called before the judge and given our final orders: All manifestations in our meetings which we called manifestations of the Holy Spirit were to cease immediately. We made our complaint to the Lord and went right on. In a short while there was another revolution and every one of our persecutors, including the President, were running for their lives. Their blasphemous accusations and sentence are still recorded against us, but stand for nothing.



But to a great extent the other Missionary Societies have succeeded in resisting the spread of the Revival and the testimony of the church of God on the territory; this by crying "False doctrine", "Wolf", etc., And by spreading tracts that are so blasphemous against the Holy Ghost that they would almost make your hair stand on end. But in spite of ~~this~~ all opposition and every means to hinder and to stop us we have been steadily, ~~altho~~ although slowly, increasing - from about 600 in 1934 to about 2,878 in 1947. And no doubt the Missionary societies in Guatemala will be glad for this last weapon, "The Evangelical Foreign Missions Association", to use against us. For they will all, I have no doubt whatever, insist that their territory is already evangelized; and this despite the fact that the Guatemalan Indian Population, which is about 80% of Guatemala's about three and a half Million inhabitants, is hardly dented with the Gospel after all these years of labor. There are still tribes in the Totonicapan and Quiche Departments that are hardly touched with the Gospel testimony.

Right here in our own section (For Convenience we have Guatemala divided into three sections, each section under the direct supervision of one missionary family) there are tribes practically untouched. IN Nahau