

CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST LEADER-ACTIVISTS – MAJOR PROGENITORS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PENTECOSTAL FEMALE LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

The work of early Church Of God In Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) pioneers is mainly remembered as the work of men. This essay considers that in a culturally confining society that, as a whole, saw Black sanctified women unfit for leadership, the sisters' products—building schools, organizing conventions, changing nations—ran counter to expectations. It is of interest that a group labeled marginalized, ignorant and downtrodden moved skillfully through multicultural settings, responded to hostilities from those in their communities, and handled conflict with male constituencies with grace and advocacy. If language is about meaning, once the meaning of Pentecostal femaleness in sharing what it means to live out the sanctified life is understood, then the myriad activities in which lasting fruit are produced makes sense.

Introduction

W.E.B. Du Bois is quoted as saying "But what of black women?... I most sincerely doubt if any other race of women could have brought its fineness up through so devilish a fire." Certainly, this is true for early 20th century Church Of God In Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) women in ministry (hereafter referred as leader-activists). I have coined the term because of the vigorous intersection of leadership and trench creds in their campaign to spread Pentecost, which both embraced and transcended early traditional churchwomen's roles. These leader-activists believed that sanctification cleansed the believer, and that Spirit Baptism empowered for service. This belief would undergird them as they served through distinct ministries which would be tried in the fires of hostility from those early 20th century communities who did not understand Spirit Baptism and

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some males within the ranks of C.O.G.I.C. who refused to accept the model of Charles Harrison Mason, Sr., the founder of the Church Of God In Christ, Incorporated, who urged anyone, whatever the gender, to use his or her anointing and talents to go into the everywhere to teach and preach the kingdom of God.

Cultural norms had a defining affect upon females operating through dual identities and roles. Through the dynamic experience of Holy Ghost Baptism, as at the day of Pentecost, these leader-activists were distinct in their character, their successes, their dress and their roles. Until the most recent past, little attention has been given explicitly to the industry of C.O.G.I.C. leader-activists. God has used various ways in which to express Godself to God's world. There is a reality in God allowing God's power and might to be revealed through the feminine appeal throughout the generations. Today, especially as corridors of power open further, and new opportunities continue for all women, the Twenty-first Century Pentecostal female would do well to reflect upon the failures of the past as teaching sources and successes of the past as occasions of humility to expand the Holiness-Pentecostal doctrine. As a Twenty-first Century leader-activist, I offer this essay as a spirited defense of the work of these pioneers and add to the growing corpus of scholarship documenting their work.

Research on Women in the Black Church

Researchers such as Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham have produced much-needed volumes on the work of Black women in the Church. In *Righteous Discontent*, she cites a term describing the Black Church coined by E. Franklin Frazier as a “nation within a nation.”² If that is so, then the seemingly invisible work of the women of the Church Of God In Christ can be described as a nation within a nation *within a nation*. Brooks-Higginbotham's work focuses on women in the Baptist church, and this publication invited me to search for work done on women in the Holiness-Pentecostal traditions. After reading everything I could about the women of the sanctified church by women such as Cheryl J. Sanders and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, growing up in the Church Of God In Christ (C.O.G.I.C.), it was my desire to hear what was said *about* women in the church *by* women who were a part of the movement. In the early 80s I set out on a journey to capture the stories of these women and found that,

²Evelyn Brooks-Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 11.

initially ridiculed and ostracized by brothers and sisters of other denominations, they remained true to their faith and articulated this faith by forming strong networks and organizations to move the church forward.

It is important to note that a growing literary corpus has emerged, including Chapters in books, dissertations, and press publications on women in the Church Of God In Christ.³ Other published and self-published books are now being penned by Church Of God In Christ authors including *Roots Out of Dry Ground – The Mother Reatha Herndon Story*.⁴ Reatha and her twin Leatha, born in the Oklahoma territory before its becoming a state, served as itinerant preachers who “prayed out” and organized up to 100 C.O.G.I.C. congregations throughout the United States beginning in the early 1900s.

Pentecost Empowers all Genders in Los Angeles

In 1906, a phenomenon occurred in California that would change the religious landscape of America and the world. Tucker writes that this was a “third force” in Christianity.⁵ This third force of Christianity’s geographical center of gravity moved to Los Angeles and was called the Azusa Street Revival. The revival, characterized by ecstatic worship, *glossolalia* (speaking in an unlearned, unknown tongues by the speaker) and instances of divine healing, was the culmination of a series of events that began to unfold a half-decade earlier when on January 1, 1901, students at Charles Fox Parham’s healing home and Bible school experienced an outbreak of *glossolalia*, which was identified as the “initial evidence” of Holy Spirit Baptism.⁶

Early African American Women at Azusa Street

³See Adrienne Israel, “Mothers Roberson and Coffey-Pioneers of Women's Work: 1911-1964, in *Bishop C.H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ*, edited by Ithiel Conrad Clemmons (Lanham: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1996), 101-122; and Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God In Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007).

⁴Doris J. Sims, *Roots Out of Dry Ground* (Memphis: COGIC Publishing House, 2015).

⁵Anjulet Tucker, “Get the Learnin’ but don’t lose the Burnin’”: The Socio-Cultural and Religious Politics of Education in a Black Pentecostal College” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2009).

⁶Estrelida Alexander, *The Women of Azusa Street* (Laurel MD: The Seymour Press, 2012), 9.

While much has been written about male leadership, African American women played a significant and active role in the birth and development of Pentecostalism in America. Lucy Farrow (the niece of abolitionist leader Frederick Douglas), pastored a small church in Houston, Texas. After hearing of Spirit Baptism with the sign of speaking in tongues, she became the first African American recorded to have received the Baptism in the Holy Ghost. She began teaching the doctrine to her congregation, including William Seymour. Although Seymour did not receive the Baptism, Neely Terry, a member of a Holiness Church in Los Angeles pastored by Julia Hutchins invited him to Los Angeles where he preached the Baptism in the Holy Ghost with the sign of speaking in tongues. Upon being banned by Hutchins because of the doctrine, he was invited by Richard Asbery to relocate to Bonnie Brae Street to continue his teaching and prayer meetings. The majority of initial attendees were female African American domestic workers. When the porch collapsed under the weight of those from every demographic, the meetings were moved to 312 Azusa Street. This meeting would last approximately three and one-half years and individuals were sent out by the Holy Ghost to globalize the message of Pentecost. One black preacher, Ophelia Wiley, a member of the evangelistic team spread the news of the revival throughout the United States.

Church Of God In Christ Founder Charles Harrison Mason Receives Holy Ghost Baptism with the Sign of Speaking in Tongues

Some records indicate that Charles Harrison Mason, Sr. was born September 8, 1866, on the Prior Farm near Memphis, Tennessee.⁷ As a child he was miraculously healed of yellow fever. He was influenced greatly by the writings on sanctification by Baptist preacher William Christian or Methodist Evangelist Amanda Berry Smith.⁸ In 1893, he preached his first sermon on sanctification from 2 Tim 3:12-13. Upon entering Arkansas Baptist College, Mason met Charles Price Jones and other ministers who believed in sanctification, and these ministers began to preach that message. By 1897 the growing hostility over the doctrine of

⁷German R. Ross, *History and the Formative Years of the Church of God in Christ (Memphis: Church of God in Christ (Publishing House, 1969), 14. Although his obituary dates his birth in 1862, census record caused the Church to set the date to 1864; consequently the year of his birth is uncertain.*

⁸ Calvin White Jr., *The Rise to Respectability*. Fayetteville, (University of Arkansas Press, 2012), 16-17.

sanctification and healing cost Jones and Mason fellowship with their Baptist association.⁹ The National Baptist Convention expelled Jones and Mason, and these two individuals continued to preach and teach sanctification in an organization, which became known as the Church of God in Christ, a Holiness organization. In this new organization, Charles Price Jones was chosen as overseer. In 1906, Jones sent Mason, W.S. Pleasant, and J.A. Jeter to Los Angeles to investigate the occurrences of the Azusa, Street Revival. While at Azusa Mason receive the Baptism in the Holy Ghost:

After a while my very soul began to cry to God just like a pump without a sucker, and after a while you catch the water and the man is strong, even physically, so, after a while my desire seemed to become intense within me, and every breath seemed to become heavier as I looked to God. I sat there a while and I heard a sound just like the sound of wind, a great wind. I heard the sound like in the Pentecost. I heard it just as real. I sat there, some on my left, some on my right, and I gave up to God, not resisting him; I determined not to resist him, and after a while I went through a crucifixion, and after I had gone through that I was completely empty, my mind was sweet, at rest; my flesh was sweet, at rest. I sat there a while giving up to God. The anthem of Heaven seemed to rise then; I felt myself rising out of my seat, without any effort. I thought at first it was imagination; then I saw it wasn't imagination. Well when I was drawn to my feet there came a light in the room above the brightness of the light of God. When I opened my mouth to say "Glory to God," a flame touched my tongue and my English left me, and I said "Glory" and then my hand was moved by the power of the Spirit of God. He had complete control of me. Now when this was over I was filled with the presence of God. I didn't move a foot; I sat there just as I am sitting now; I knew everything going on; the people even talking in the room. I was looking at them just as I am looking at you. God didn't knock me out. I saw others that were knocked out.¹⁰

⁹Bishop Ithiel C. Clemmons, *Bishop C.H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ*, 21.

¹⁰Glenda Williams Goodson, *Royalty Unveiled: Women Trailblazers in Church of God In Christ International Missions 1920—1970* (Lancaster, TX: HCM Publishing, 2011), 69.

Returning to the South, Mason and Jones split over the issue of *glossolalia* and Mason reorganized The Church Of God In Christ as a Holiness-Pentecostal organization in 1907.

Mason Immediately Appoints Women to Strategic Roles

Mason allowed tremendous freedom for women's ministry, possibly drawing upon the inspiration of the prophet Joel:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon *all flesh*: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; And also upon the servants and the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.¹¹

God made Godself known in a new and powerful way through the Holiness-Pentecostal movement and with the great number of women from traditional Baptist, Methodist and other mainstream denominations joining the newly established Church Of God In Christ, space would be given to women. Despite subordination to secondary leadership functions, women were open to forging space in the new organization's growth. Mason's keen insight is said to have linked the West African dual sex system firmly to the foundational structure of the new movement. Adrienne Israel notes many West African women wielded authority in spiritual as well as domestic affairs: "To institutionalize their power they formed solidarity groups from which they gained a strong 'psychological sense of self-esteem.' Some West African societies ensured women political power...by developing what anthropologists have called a 'dual-sex' system. Women's councils not only governed women's affairs but their representatives voiced women's interests from the village to the king's court. Although the dual-sex system gave prominence to women in community affairs, they remained, as a group, subservient to husband."¹²

¹¹KJV, Joel 2:28-29.

¹²Glenda Williams-Goodson, "The Church Of God In Christ Transforms Women's Ministries Through the Influence of Chief Apostle Bishop C.H. Mason," in *With Signs Following The Life and Ministry of Charles Harrison Mason* ed. Raynard D. Smith (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publications, 2015), 75.

Within the context of his times, Mason made things fairer, was progressive in defining gender roles and generous in allowing women the freedom to walk worthy of whatever calling God's plan desired them to fulfill. Mason began his search for a female to oversee the women's ministry. It is asserted that he initially would choose Lillian Brooks; however, because she was just north of her teens, she declined that role. After meeting Woods (Robinson), Brooks urged Woods to attend the Pine Bluff, Arkansas Convocation and in 1911 she attended the National Convocation in Memphis, Tennessee.

Lizzie Woods Robinson – from Slave to Organizer

In 1911 while conducting a meeting at the Baptist Academy in Dermott, Arkansas, Mason met an ex-slave born Elizabeth Isabelle to Mose Smith and Elizabeth Jackson in Phillips County, Arkansas, on April 5, 1860. Church Of God In Christ Bishop and Historian A.T. Moore interviewed Robinson in 1945 shortly before her death where she says she was five years old when Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves and remembered all the grownups being very “jubalistic.”

During slavery, it was against the law for Blacks to be taught to read and write. However, from their first days out of bondage, freed slaves demanded formal education. When schools for freed people opened in early 1865, they were already overcrowded and within the year of Black freedom, thousands of former slaves crammed into churches or under trees to learn. While the Freedmen's Bureau did not hire teachers, or operate schools, they rented buildings for school rooms and assisted Missionary Societies and Northern Whites, and provided books, transportation, and protection against those who would oppose Black literacy. Blacks, fortunate enough to gain an education, took a proactive role in educating their brothers and sisters.¹³ After freedom her mother sent Lizzie and her siblings to school where she learned to read and by age eight her mother had her read the Bible to adults in the community.

Lizzie Woods Receives the Baptism in the Holy Ghost, is Excommunicated; then Appointed General Overseer of Women's Work in the Church Of God In Christ

¹³Glenda Williams Goodson, *Rediscovering An American Classic Essays on the Life of American Educator Dr. Arenia Cornelia Mallory 1926—1976* (Lancaster, TX, HCM Publishing, 2016), 5.

As an adult, she read Joanna Moore's *Hope Magazine* and became sanctified. Taking ownership of her skills as an entrepreneur, she sold *Hope Magazines*. Becoming so successful, Moore recommended that the American Baptist Association invest in her leadership by sponsoring her entry to the Baptist Academy in Dermott, Arkansas. After two years of training, she became Matron of Girls there. She met Charles Harrison Mason at the Academy in 1911 and received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

I was sanctified in the Baptist School but did not have the Holy Ghost. Elder Roach was pastoring the Church of God in Christ at Dermott at that time and Bishop Mason came there to preach and came to the school. Brother Mason began to teach us, I told him that I had been living right for six years but I hadn't been baptized with the Holy Ghost. So, I received the baptism of the Holy Ghost that day.

After receiving the Baptism in the Holy Ghost, Robinson was fired.

Mason's core strength was to identify strong female leaders the church needed to collaborate with in spreading the gospel of holy living through sanctification and the power of the Holy Ghost. There is not much documentation of his *discussing* women's role as leaders and activists in ministry. He just allowed them to *do* ministry. This worldview caused him to appoint Robinson General Overseer of Women's Work. Mason's use of the term Overseer of Women's Work may have been intended to note that a separate work for the women was to be recognized. However, according to Butler, the term 'overseer,' used in the New Testament to designate a bishop, was bestowed on Robinson to solidify her appointment over all women's activities. In effect, Mason made Robinson a bishop over C.O.G.I.C. women.¹⁴

Robinson immediately took to the task and served courageously while battered with rotten eggs and beaten for her stand in holiness and Pentecostalism. Finding that the work among the women lacked organization, Woods used the organizational skills gained through her entrepreneurial activities with *Hope* to create a system for women's ministry. The Women's Department would become a tightly organized network of leader-activists serving as home and international missionaries, evangelists and preachers. But first, they had to be organized. After

¹⁴Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 41

discovering two major groups of women working in the church—one group praying and the other group studying and teaching the Word—she merged them. This united team became the first auxiliary of women, the Prayer and Bible Band. Possibly building upon her entrepreneurial skills in selling *Hope* magazine, she also led the women in fundraising. It is reported that the first bank account for the C.O.G.I.C. in the amount of \$168.50 was made from Bible Band funds. Later Woods-Robinson led the women to act as key fundraisers in building Mason Temple, the national headquarters in Memphis.¹⁵

The women understood that the work of domestic and international missions was vital because souls were at stake. They wished to undergird the work of women who left the comforts of home to risk their lives for the cause of Christ. Home missionaries were trained to share the love of Jesus through practical means. For example, in the 1940s, long before the federal Head Start program, Lydia Hinsley cared for the children of working mothers and opened a nursery in the lower level of Hinsley Cathedral COGIC where her husband was pastor.¹⁶

Robinson Organizes Home and Foreign Missions

In 2017 Church Of God In Christ ministries were active in 83 countries. While there were some males traveling outside the United States, most pioneer international missionaries were female. In 1926, Robinson laid the groundwork for an official Missions Department when she introduced Elder Searcy to the Church Of God In Christ National Convocation. After its reorganization, the Department had grown to such an extent that the C.O.G.I.C. expanded its reach to a number of Third World countries. Undergirding the vision of Mason that the Church Of God In Christ “go into the everywhere,” it was Robinson who appointed some of the most erstwhile international missionaries pioneering the work outside the United States by spreading the gospel, building missions, medical clinics, schools, and mission towns throughout the world. Some of these women and their areas of work are the following:

¹⁵The historic Mason Temple, C.O.G.I.C.s national headquarters, with its 7500 seating capacity, served as an intersection between the church and civil rights activities in Memphis during the 1950s and 1960s. On April 3, 1968, the night before he was assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King gave his prophetic “Mountaintop” speech there.

¹⁶*The Whole Truth*, Volume XIV, No VI, COGIC Headquarters, Memphis, TN June 1981, 7.

Elizabeth White Tour began in 1929/1930 – sent to Liberia as First Church Of God In Christ Missionary to Africa (worked with Nyambo people at Bonniken, established the Liberian C.O.G.I.C. at Wissikeh, Wuluken, Tobou Chiefdom).

Willie Curtis Ragland Tour 1934 – 1946—Missionary to Liberia (Tugbaken Mission Station) *Beatrice S. Lott Tour 1939 – 1962*— Missionary to Liberia (Tugbaken Mission Station) *Martha Barber Tour began circa 1945*—Missionary to Liberia (Tugbaken Mission Station).

Robinson described her job as having the “general supervision over all the women’s work, and to evangelize and systematize the work among the women.”¹⁷ Kelly Mendiola states “With women in foreign fields as missionaries, women planting churches as evangelists and missionaries to non-C.O.G.I.C. areas, a magazine, *Lifted Banner*, and Prayer and Bible Band Topics, Mother Robinson’s Women’s Department was systematized and organized as she had set out to do.”¹⁸ The work would further explode from the organizing efforts of Mother Robinson to include the birth of auxiliaries and units as the Women’s Department developed a formal structure, the Women’s International Convention. As Overseer of Women’s Work and National Mother Robinson traveled to 26 cities in one year organizing the work of the women through Prayer and Bible Bands and appointing State Mothers (State Overseers) to oversee the work of the women in the States where the Church Of God In Christ expanded.

Lillian Brooks Coffey – Second General Super-visor

On December 13, 1945, at 2:20 a.m., Lizzie Woods Robinson died of sudden cardiac failure, at the age of 85 in Memphis, TN. Now Lillian Brooks Coffey was unanimously appointed Second General Mother of the C.O.G.I.C. Coffey met Jesus as a girl in a Sunday school class taught by Bishop Mason. As she grew, Mason observed her intellect, wit, and commitment and trained her in all aspects of the work of the Church Of God In Christ. Before her appointment as General Mother, Coffey focused not only on the sanctified women of the denomination but to the betterment of the Christian woman’s condition. Because of WWII, America tightened

¹⁷Ibid, 42.

¹⁸Kelly Willis Mendiola, “The Hand of a Woman: Four Holiness-Pentecostal Evangelists and American Culture, 1840-1930” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2020).

its belt including rationing food. Coffey successfully requested permission from the Bishop's board to purchase a suitable home at 154 Arden Park in Detroit, Michigan, as a rest home for Christian Missionaries, who made an outstanding contribution to humanity and religion regardless of race, color, or creed inside and outside of C.O.G.I.C. In the midst of the war, the women liquidated the mortgage in five years.

Church Of God In Christ adherents experienced difficulty being accepted in the larger Black church community. Coffey's foresight in opening her home was indicative of her willingness to form alliances outside her denomination and race for the betterment of the Women's Department and the condition of women and their families. Because men were overseas fighting, 18 million women entered the workforce including African American C.O.G.I.C. women such as the late Theda Wells who worked in an Oregon shipbuilding yard. While many of these women were formerly field workers and domestics, now they entered the middle class where they could earn an average of \$2,000 per year. Coffey's keen insight caused her to re-engineer the Women's Department to include units encompassing Leadership, Administrative, Missions, and Service to make it accessible to the needs of all women.

The Beginning of the Greatest Women's Convention in the United States Led by Black Women

One of the crowning achievements made by Mother Coffey was the birth of the Women's International Convention. Her testimony reveals that in the 1950 C.O.G.I.C. Holy Convocation during the Women's Day "On Monday morning, between 9:30 and 10:30, [the WIC] was begotten by the Holy Ghost." Bishop Mason drew up and signed an agreement authorizing his support. The women also had an invitation from Bishop Samuel Crouch, who had been appointed President of Missions in 1937, to hold the convention in Los Angeles. Much, much work went into planning what would become the largest gathering of Black women in America and Red Card Delegates, a term coined by Lelia Mason Byas, paid \$100.00 each for room, board, sightseeing, and registration.

The program for this first convention included issues of concern to the Women's Department, Christian education and education at large, racial issues, and Missionary activity. They would "Mak[e] known ONE purpose through every act and expression to abolish slipshod methods and indifferent attitudes toward Missions in this first meeting of its kind." Missionary activities addressed the needs of women in their homes and

communities as well as foreign missions. The keynote address was given by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, whose National Council of Negro Women formed an alliance to engage the women of the C.O.G.I.C. in civic responsibilities. Attending missionaries joined by State Mothers marched with banners unfurled representing the various states and countries that C.O.G.I.C. women's missionaries served in, to accentuate the focus on missionary activity. At that first Women's Convention, Mother Coffey presented to Bishop Samuel Crouch \$10,000 in cash, in a paper bag as a donation from the Women's Department for the missions' work of C.O.G.I.C. By 1965 The November Missions Report documents that Supervisor Annie Bailey and the Department of Women reported \$10,475 to Missions while the same year Supervisor Mattie McGlothen with \$5,230.71 (worth about \$36,000 in 2016 dollars). Additionally, under Coffey's administration, the Women's Department reportedly supplied one-third of the national church budget.

Believing that the church is to uplift every community she finds herself, these leader activists acted upon that belief with the Women's International Convention desegregating Albany, New York hotels in the 1960s.

Street Preacher Anne Pennington Bailey Changes a Nation

Although Lillian Coffey would continue in her role as General Supervisor until her death in 1964, like Robinson before her, she gave her "daughters" the mandate to accept Mother Annie Bailey as the third General Supervisor. She was born September 22, 1894, in Temple, Texas. In 1915 Annie Pennington (Bailey) stopped by a revival on her way to the movies to ridicule the saints. After hearing the testimony of a woman who had been bedridden with tuberculosis and healed, she was saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. This was problematic in that her family was considered middle class and most middle class Blacks at that time did not associate with *holy rollers*. She soon left her home in Texas and traveled with Elder J.E. Bryant, Mother Hattie Robinson Fray and Mother M.M. Jackson to Buffalo, New York. Joined by Mother Lula Cox of New Jersey and Mother Nancy Gamble of Indiana the team worked fervently as evangelists and pioneers preaching, playing guitar and singing while they established the C.O.G.I.C. ministry in New York City, New Jersey, D.C., Maryland, Connecticut, Springfield, and Boston. These courageous C.O.G.I.C. pioneers took the message of holiness and Pentecost to tenement houses, backyards, sheds, and basements.

General Supervisor Lizzie Robinson appointed Bailey the first National Women's Department Financial Secretary but one of Bailey's outstanding accomplishments was the salvation and empowerment of Joseph Paulceus. At the time there was violent opposition to Holiness-Pentecostal men preaching on the street so sometimes they would have the women preach. While Bailey preached Paulceus was convicted, saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. Soon he met with Bishop Mason who gave him money and a tent and he returned to become the founder of the first Pentecostal church in Haiti. By the time Bishop McEwen and Mother Coffey journeyed with Dorothy Webster Exume to install her in Haiti as Administrative Missionary, the C.O.G.I.C. had grown to over 10,000 members. In 1927 Bailey was appointed State Supervisor of Maryland. Because of her faithfulness and organizational skills, C.O.G.I.C. jurisdictions were established in Delaware and Washington, D.C. in 1928. After the death of Lillian Brooks Coffey, Senior Bishop O.T. Jones, Sr. appointed Bailey as International Supervisor of Women in 1964.

Since its birth, the Church has not been without problems and the leader-activists used their spiritually sensitive ears and influence to assist in guiding the church during turbulent times. During the *years of reorganization of the Church* (1961-1968) Bailey, called The Darling of the Brotherhood, led the women in prayer, fasting, and continuing the vital work of women's ministry as the men fought for ecclesial power through the court systems after the death of Bishop Mason. While in office she added seventeen new auxiliaries including the Business and Professional Women's League. She also vowed that she would not only help at home but in mission fields that she may never see. She helped Foreign Missionary Pearl Page Brown board 70 boys and girls at the Cape Palmas, Liberia West Africa Mission. She died in 1975 in Detroit.

The Church Of God In Christ and Education

One female ex-slave said, *I just want to read from the Holy Bible before I die.*¹⁹ Historically, the church, the family, and the schools have worked together and served as anchors of Black communities. Clergy believed that if America was indeed one nation under God she should reflect biblical principles and, because of their visibility in the community, spoke boldly in fighting for justice. One of those principles was the freedom to learn. Tucker writes "Black churches formed the core of black educational philanthropy in the South. In poorer communities, black

¹⁹*Rediscovering an American Classic*, 1.

church-run schools were the only schools available. Before (and after) universal education was put into place in 1870, church-run schools filled the void. Some of the church-run schools became colleges. Well-known Morehouse College was started and met in the Springfield Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia, and Spelman College got its start in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta. Wilberforce University (1865) supported by the AME Church, Morris Brown College (1881) and Livingstone College in 1879 were both Church established.²⁰

Pinkie Duncan Establishes the First C.O.G.I.C. School

Many met the newly formed Holiness-Pentecostal church with skepticism and disdain. C.O.G.I.C. members, along with their children were ostracized. Due to the hostile environment, a space for their children was required. Miss Pinkie Duncan was the first known foot soldier to attack ignorance when she started her educational pursuits in the basement of St. Paul Church Of God In Christ, Lexington, Mississippi. Sister Duncan was undaunted by the mud floors. Bishop Charles Harrison Mason encouraged the beginning of what was then known as the Saints Home Industrial School in 1918. He was pastor at St. Paul and his children were the first students along with the Cooper children (Goodson 2002:20) Duncan understood that those children of the families who joined the new church were persecuted because of their religious beliefs and required a sensitive hand in spiritual and educational development. Professor James Courts of Lexington, Mississippi, a county school teacher, offered to help Sister Duncan with the work. In 1919, the State Board appointed him to the position of principal, which he held from 1919 until his death in 1926.

Mason Taps Arenia Cornelia Mallory

The vision of Bishop Charles Harrison Mason, to take the message of Jesus Christ into the everywhere, reached Illinois where Arenia Cornelia Mallory was saved. Bishop Mason seemed to have an unusual knack for discovering individuals with keen abilities. After identifying them, he would next mentor those individuals to transform the development of the Church Of God In Christ into the premier organization that God promised him upon his acceptance of his call. By the time Mallory met Mason, her intent was to travel to Africa to serve the Lord Jesus among her brethren

²⁰Tucker, 64.

there. Mason saw something in Mallory and asked her to journey south to serve the Lord and her church as a piano teacher. Her early life was one of privilege. Her father was a businessman and there were musicians and entrepreneurs counted among family members. Emblematic of their status as members of the Black middle class were the facts that her mother was the first female African American Italian harpsichordist in the United States. Family members were also vaudevillians, performing in variety shows across the country. Ethel Waters, her sister-in-law, would play a tremendous role in fundraising efforts. According to Tucker, Mallory's graduation from the Whipple Academy of Music provided further evidence of their status.

She accepted Mason's offer and found that education at the Saints Industrial, owned by the Church Of God In Christ and chartered by the State of Mississippi in 1918, while filling a void, was treated haphazardly. Mason advanced female leadership when soon after she arrived Professor Courts died, and he appointed her with the responsibility of the school as Principal. She worked hard to overcome negativity both within the church and without. Without because she entered the Southland as a Northerner who may bring new ideas to upset the community's social mores (she was threatened with lynching), while she was resisted from within the church because she was female.

Mallory had confidence that providing education for the children of the saints as well as sharecropper's children would promote a broader understanding of the sanctified church while serving as a venue for the upward mobility of Blacks in Holmes County, Mississippi. The task would be daunting but Mallory was firm in her belief that the God she served would make a way for her to accomplish her assignment. She proceeded to develop an expanded curriculum for the school and invite other denominations to send their children. Soon the student population swelled to 350 and included Catholics.

Strategic Partnerships

Believing in the power of strategic partnerships, Mallory saw possibilities of galvanizing the community—the religious community and poor sharecroppers—to educate those who would be informed and effectuate change. During 50 years of leading the school, Mallory grew Saints to receive accreditation, making her the first African American President of a Black College. At the close of the Mallory era, it was reported that more than 32,000 students had matriculated through Saints.

It was no small task but Dr. Mallory knew how to work with almost everyone as she focused on her assignment. Among those giving tribute to the work of her hands were college and university presidents, political figures and individuals from every spectrum of corporate and business life.

Women who would succeed in life necessarily have to have strong personalities. While tolerating belittlements graciously, Arenia Mallory was said to be tough and circumstances would prove it. Bishop Mason and Azusa Street leader Apostle W.J. Seymour envisioned a multiracial body of believers working together for the cause of Christ's kingdom. When three White teachers ventured south to begin service at Saints, it is recorded that local segregationists ordered her to rid the school of them. When she would not comply, segregationists threatened her with lynching. It was only when White businessmen came to her one night and pleaded with her not to be the cause of a bloodbath in the area that she relented.

Through Dr. Mallory's religiously based activism with organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women where her friend and mentor Mary McLeod Bethune served as founder and president, she accomplished much. She was also connected to the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the nation's oldest African-American Greek letter sorority. It was through this partnership that she accomplished a great feat. Because of the medical needs of Blacks in the Mississippi Delta were extensive and, because most Blacks in the Mississippi Delta were extremely economically disadvantaged or severely poor at best in 1934, Alpha Kappa Alpha sponsored the Mississippi Health Project to bring primary medical care to rural blacks. Members of the sorority financed, designed, and implemented the project, which was active for two to six weeks every summer from 1935 to 1941. The Mississippi Health Project was the brainchild of a Mississippi native and California resident, Dr. Ida Jackson. Dr. Dorothy Celeste Boulding Ferebee, a member of the sorority and a practicing physician in obstetrics and gynecology, was appointed the project's medical director. Initially staffed by Dr. Ferebee and volunteers, the first medical clinic was headquartered at the Saints Industrial School in Lexington, associated with the Church of God in Christ.

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The Whole Truth, Volume XIV, No VI, COGIC Headquarters, Memphis, TN June 1981, 7.