

## H.P. ROBINSON - DEDICATED TO A CAUSE

by Agnes B. Robinson

In the brief and colorful history of the Pentecostal Holiness Church there have been numerous men and women who put the cause of Jesus Christ above their own desires and who poured out their strength in dedication and devotion to Christ and the church.

Hugh Padgett Robinson was such a man, for the Cause was truly first with him. He could well be classified among the elite group known as "pioneer ministers" of our church, for many of the older ministers who helped blaze the trail and carve out the Pentecostal Holiness Church were still living and preaching when he entered the ministry. With total commitment to the Cause, he caught the flaming torch of Holiness and Pentecost and preached it with all his might until his death December 30, 1965.

Born on a small farm in Clarendon County, South Carolina on July 17, 1914, Padgett came to know Christ as his Saviour at the age of 17. He had just quit school in the 11th grade to farm full time to support his widowed mother and four small sisters. He was the only boy in a family of eight. His three older sisters were married at the time of his conversion and full responsibility for the family's support seemed to rest upon his shoulders.

Serving as secretary-treasurer of the Original Free Will Baptist Church in his community, he and a friend visited the Barrineau Pentecostal Holiness Church one Monday night during a revival. The singing of a group of saints gathered around an old piano during the altar call affected him deeply. He could see the glory of God shining on their faces as they sang, making him hungry to share their experience.

That night he was gloriously saved. On Tuesday night he was again in the altar, and prayed through to sanctification. On Wednesday night he returned to his own church. After the first song he jumped to his feet and asked permission to speak.

Without further ado, he proceeded to pour out his heart in a burning testimony, telling what God had done for him.

The deacon in charge of the service sternly rebuked him and warned the other young people not to be led into such fanaticism. Padgett was humiliated and crushed. After the service he went to the deacon and told him he would pray for him. The deacon said "You'd better pray for yourself, young man! We won't allow such nonsense in this church."

Slipping out a back door, he walked a foot-log across a stream to his home. He felt like the whole world had tumbled in on him. Feeling his way in the darkness, he knelt at an old rocker and poured out his heart to God. The next thing he knew he was speaking in a beautiful language he had never heard. The light was on, and the room was crowded with people who had followed him home from church. That night God baptized him with the Holy Spirit and called him to preach.

Being a bashful person, he saw no way that he could ever preach. <sup>However,</sup> shortly after his call, his youngest sister became very ill with typhoid fever. For days she lingered unconscious between life and death. In desperation, Padgett went into the woods back of his home where he loved to pray. As tears flowed down his face, he promised God he would preach if He would heal his sister. Receiving assurance that God had heard and answered his prayer, he returned to the house to find his sister sitting up in bed and asking for something to eat.

The next day he left the plow handles and started preaching. In homes, in rural churches, in brush-harbors, at cross roads, in school houses - everywhere there was an opening, he shared his glorious experience with all who would listen. He knew little about the Word, but he knew God had transformed his life. From his first message and throughout his ministry he preached with such earnestness, compassion, and anointing that people poured into the altar, and many souls were born into the kingdom.

One of the old pioneer preachers took him to district conference to get Mission Worker's License. The examining committee turned him down because of his limited knowledge of the Scriptures. He applied twice before they would grant him Minister's



License in the South Carolina Conference. In answer to the examining committee's question: "What will you do if we refuse to give you a license?" He replied, "I'm going to preach." It hadn't occurred to him to do otherwise, for he felt this was his destiny - he was born to preach, and everything else he did was secondary.

In those early depression years he walked the dusty roads with his suitcase in one hand and his violin (fiddle) in the other. More than once he walked as far as 60 miles to preach and didn't receive enough offering to buy a bus ticket home. He used to tell of one church who gave him a crate of squawking chickens instead of an offering. He had to try to hitchhike with them in addition to his suitcase and violin. In spite of his limited finances, he often expressed amazement how God provided for the needs of his family.

Together with some of the older ministers of the conference he evangelized by holding tent meetings, eating saltines and viennas, sleeping on crude benches, and fighting misquitos. But during those difficult years, the Holy Spirit moved mightly in communities and many churches were born.

Feeling his need of Bible training, he went against the advice of relatives and friends and enrolled in Holmes Bible and Missionary Institute (now Holmes College of the Bible). He attended this school from 1938 - 1941. During these years the Upper South Carolina Conference asked him to pastor one of their churches. He also attended Newberry College and Coker College (the only male in an all-girls college), where he received his degree. He took postgraduate work at the University of North Carolina.

It was his custom, even in those early years of his ministry to seek God's guidance in every decision. This would probably account for his firm conviction the first time we met that I was to be his wife. On our first date he informed me to that effect. His sincere, positive manner quite took my breath away, and drove me to my knees. All night I sought God for direction. As the sun rose at dawn, I knew without a doubt that he was God's choice for my future. I told him so that night. Without reservation, I can say the Lord brought us together and throughout our marriage I often thanked God for finding me worthy to work by the side of such a dedicated servant of God.



Shortly after our marriage in 1947 we went to pastor the Pentecostal Holiness Church in East Rockingham, North Carolina. Starting with a membership of 70, with about 150 in Sunday School, God richly blessed our efforts. During our ten years there, our church membership rose to 450 with an average Sunday School attendance of over 750. That Easter Sunday we had a record attendance of 1125. It had become the largest church in Richmond County. Almost every service souls prayed through to salvation, sanctification, and Pentecost. A weekly radio program caused him to be accepted as pastor to many unbelievers of the city, and he spent hours counseling and praying for those in need.

Early in his pastorate he asked the Lord to give him a shepherd's heart and God answered his prayers. He loved people, and his compassion reached out to those whose lives were wrecked by sin. He had a special concern for those who were victims of broken marriages and wrecked homes, and as they dedicated their lives to Christ, he made sure they had a place to work in the active ministry of the church. He had a special rapport with young people and they felt free to bring him their problems. He was never too busy to give attention to the aged or the children who often gathered around him.

During his years as pastor, he demonstrated a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of his members. Many nights I could hear him in the church, across the street from the parsonage, praying for hours at a time. Early in his ministry he cultivated the practice of praying at the top of his voice in the woods back of his home. While attending Holmes he could never adapt to the "quiet hour" each morning, and his prayer life suffered until he discovered he could pray in his own way in the boiler room of the Holmes Memorial Church without disturbing others.

Preparation of his sermons took priority at our house. Our three daughters-Cathie, Carol, and Caren - knew to tip-toe and to keep their voices muted when he was in his study preparing for Sunday. Padgett had a natural eloquence in speaking and writing, but he spent hours in research as he developed his sermons. He would not go to bed on Saturday night until he had assurance that he had God's message for the hour.



From the time he first started preaching, he followed the practice of writing his thoughts down on paper as he prepared his sermons. During those times of deep meditation, with soul tuned to that heavenly world, flashes of inspiration were transferred from his heart to paper. He was an artist with words and his sermons were filled with imaginative descriptions that made you feel you were well acquainted with the Bible character involved. Supporting Scriptures, historical facts, up-to-date happenings, poetry, and words of well-loved hymns were sprinkled liberally throughout his sermons. He preached God's Word without fear or favor. He preached a high and holy gospel, calling on God's people to live holy lives with pure motives and right attitudes toward God and man. His messages were convincing, powerful, moving - compelling his audience to make a definite response. He often preached with tears coursing down his cheeks as he pled with people to make full commitment.

He left the pastorate in 1957 with a feeling of deep reluctance, for he loved to pastor; but he assumed the duties of a conference superintendent with the same dedication he had shown to the pastorate. As a conference superintendent, he identified closely with the pastors under his supervision. Many of the ministers told me after his death how they would go to his office feeling utterly defeated by the problems they had encountered, and after hearing his words of encouragement and prayers, they would leave with a buoyant step, convinced that with God's help they were more than a match for any situation.

For many years he was in great demand for revivals, Camp Meetings, and Ministers' Seminars. In 1945 when the General Conference voted to have each conference elect a representative to serve on the General Board of Administration, he was elected to represent the South Carolina Conference. He was Assistant Superintendent of the conference at that time. In 1957 the General Conference voted for each conference superintendent to be the representative. That same year he became superintendent of the South Carolina Conference and served in this capacity until his death. This meant that he served on the GBA continually for 20 years, working as chairman or as a member of numerous boards for the denomination he loved.

In 1961 he was elected as one of four Assistant General Superintendents. He continued to serve as Conference Superintendent in addition to his new assignment. While the other officials chose to go by plane to fill their appointments, he preferred to go by automobile so he could take me and our three girls with him as he traveled across the nation to preside over conferences and preach in camp meetings. Those times of togetherness drew us close together as a family. We often made the car ring with favorite old hymns and revival songs: "Daddy sang bass, and Mama sang tenor!" He had the gift of making each of us feel we were an important part of his ministry.

Padgett loved the out-of-doors; growing up in the country within twenty miles of three major rivers, he learned to fish and hunt as a boy. He was a man of action with tremendous energy and drive. Whether he was fishing, hunting, praying, or preaching, he seemed to pour every ounce of energy into what he was doing. Our family went on periodic camping trips, taking to the wilds for a brief respite from the incessant ringing of the telephone and the continual demands upon his time and energies. He enjoyed camping in the most primitive manner - sleeping in a tent or under the stars, cooking on an open campfire, and hiking through the dense swamps of South Carolina.

He enthusiastically enjoyed getting with a group of the fellows - ministers, or friends from his home community - to camp out, hunt, and fish. He liked to trust his luck or skill to provide the meat for dinner, and he usually came through. He delighted in displaying his skill in the culinary arts by cooking a squirrel perlieu or a fish stew for which he was famous. His hearty laughter would ring through the woods as the fellows, ravenously hungry, consumed great quantities of water to cool the generous amounts of pepper he always added to the food.

God chose one of these special times of relaxation and comradeship to take him home to be with Him. He and Rev. Carl Thurman, a close friend and hunting buddy, took part of their Christmas vacation to go to a government goose preserve in Swanquarter, N. C., with plans to sleep in a new pickup camper he had just purchased. Upon arrival they decided to make coffee and eat a snack of Christmas goodies I had packed for him. Since the night was cold, they lit a charcoal fire in a small hibachi. After a time



of eating and fellowship they poured water on the coals to put out the fire. Placing the hibachi on a shelf in the camper, they crawled into their sleeping bags in the camper and drifted into sound sleep. During the night the smouldering coals ignited and used up the oxygen. In their sleep, the two ministers went to be with the Lord they loved and served. The date was December 30, 1965.

The comforting presence of the Holy Spirit reminded me that like Enoch, Padgett and Carl walked with God, and were not, for the Lord took them. This was their coronation day.

Padgett left this life at the early age of 51 after 34 years of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Throughout his life his dedication to the cause of Christ was a compelling force within him, driving him continuously in its promotion. No sacrifice was too great to make, no personal desire was heeded when the Cause was involved. All through his ministry he seemed to have a feeling of urgency, as though in a race with time, and he crowded every moment with action.

In one of his sermons he expressed the inner feelings of his heart towards the cause of Christ:

"The Cause has its roots in two eternities. Time is an isthmus between them. The Cause stretches from age to age, from eternity to eternity ... and we stand for a flickering moment between the two, then we pass into infinity. It is our responsibility to see that this Cause shall never perish from the earth...but like Him, we are expected to completely lose ourselves in it and give it all we have. What we do now with respect to the Cause will determine what eternity will be for us when time is a story."