

a  
PROMISE  
and a  
PLAN

a HISTORY OF THE  
ONENESS PENTECOSTAL  
MOVEMENT IN JAPAN



## ENDORSEMENTS

When the Lord calls a man out of sin, the man doesn't know where his future may lead him. Paul Dennis obeyed the voice of the Lord and has done an amazing work in Japan.

This exciting book shows how the Lord calls individuals from various walks of life and sends them to a country desperately in need of salvation. There have been many missionaries who have gone to Japan sacrificing much time and money to see the lost reached. They obeyed as the Lord of the harvest directed them to reach the field of their calling. As you read this book you may feel the call of God impressing you to make it a matter of prayer to pray more diligently for our missionaries.

I have known the Dennis family for many years as we are from the same church, which my father pastored in Ohio. They are a very dedicated couple that willingly obeyed when the Lord said go. Japan has been blessed because of the life and ministry of Paul and Shirley Dennis.

John S. Leaman

Former Director of Promotions of Global Missions  
United Pentecostal Church

Paul and Shirley Dennis are examples of the wonderful work of grace that results in transformed lives of service that impacts individuals, a nation, a region, and the world. If you are thrilled at the wonder of the Word and the work of the Spirit, you will enjoy this exciting journey describing the preparation of a bride for Christ in "The land of the rising sun." Marvel at human sacrifice and the supernatural power of God and be inspired to attempt greater accomplishments for our faithful God. Relax, read, rejoice, reflect, and rise to revival in your world of ministry.

Garry A. Tracy, Pastor

New Life Center, Bridgeton, Missouri



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PAUL a. DENNIS



a HISTORY OF THE  
ONENESS PENTECOSTAL  
MOVEMENT IN JAPAN



WORD AFLAME PRESS  
HAZELWOOD, MO

# **A PROMISE AND A PLAN**

## **History of the Oneness Pentecostal Movement in Japan**

Compiled by Paul A. Dennis

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Cover and interior design by Laura Merchant

Published by Word Aflame Press, 8855 Dunn Road, Hazelwood, MO 63042.

Printed in the United States of America.

All Scripture quotations in this book are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise identified.

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### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A promise and a plan : history of the Oneness Pentecostal Movement in Japan / compiled by Paul A. Dennis.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7577-4546-1 (alk. paper)

1. Oneness doctrine (Pentecostalism) 2. Oneness Pentecostal churches--Japan.

I. Dennis, Paul A., 1935- editor of compilation.

BX8763.P76 2014

289.9'40952--dc23

2013046033

# **DEDICATION**

To those pioneers of the faith who gave ear to the Lord's voice as He talked to them about His plan for saving souls in Japan.

To those who have heard the echoing of the Macedonian call and are keeping the promise and plan of God alive.





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## FOREWORD

God has always given His children *a promise and a plan*. From Adam in the garden to us, it holds true. God has a plan and a purpose for our lives and gives us the promises that, when claimed, will make that plan clear and accomplish that purpose. His plan inevitably comes through people.

For Paul A. Dennis and his beloved wife, Shirley, that plan and purpose included devoting their lives and ministry to Asia and especially the country of Japan. As he states in the beginning of this book, these are just some of the stories that could be told. Many of the people mentioned herein I was personally acquainted with before, during, and after my tenure as foreign missions director. I knew the pioneers as far back as L. W. Coote.

“To appreciate this history, we have to go back and tell living stories of past years. . . .” So Paul Dennis set about to compile as many in-their-own-words stories as he could to record this history of God’s work in Japan. He went there himself as a man with a promise and a plan, and became a part of that nation’s apostolic legacy to generations to come.

I commend the Dennises and recommend this book to any reader interested in knowing about the progressive growth of the gospel message in an entire country. I recommend it to any reader who is interested in the biographical stories of men and women who were unconditionally committed to the will of God. I recommend it to any reader who needs the reassurance that God has a promise and a plan for his life. You will gain encouragement and strengthened faith by reading of God’s promise and plan for Japan.

T. F. Tenney  
Former General Director of Foreign Missions



## FOREWORD

As the *China Mail* slowly moved into Yokohama harbor in late February 1949, my first glimpse of Japan was breathtaking. After nearly two weeks crossing the turbulent Pacific Ocean in midwinter on a cargo vessel, it was wonderful to be on terra firma and in Japan.

Japan was the first country outside of North America that this fourteen-year-old boy visited. The people were very friendly. After visiting five cities of Japan, and realizing that this beautiful country was basically unreached with the apostolic message, I left praying that many would come to this nation as messengers of the good news.

Sixty years later, Paul Dennis has placed in our hands a beautiful history of the many who have been willing to leave their homeland, family, friends, and comfort zones to go to a people with different customs, languages, and religious beliefs. Great sacrifice has been made; yet these brave soldiers of the cross did not count their lives dear unto themselves.

Among these outstanding missionaries are Paul and Shirley Dennis, who have given many years to missionary work in Japan. They felt the need to prepare for us this marvelous history of the past apostolic missionary work and the present team of missionaries who continue to establish congregations of believers. The results of the sacrifice and hard work of these missionaries are the hundreds of dedicated Japanese Christians and the host of outstanding Japanese leaders, pastors, and workers.

As you read these interesting accounts of determination, commitment, and sacrifice, may you be stirred, even as have I, to continue doing your very best to share with Japan's millions the message of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Harry E. Scism  
Former General Director of Global Missions



## PREFACE

A forest starts with a seed. A giant redwood tree grows from a tiny seed. An oak tree springs from an acorn or seed nut. The whirling helicopter seed sprouts into a maple tree.

These seeds are dispensed by different means. Some just fall and find fertile soil. Others are carried by the wind a short distance from the tree, while others are blown miles away. Some fall into small streams and are swept into rivers. Others are buried by animals, and some are eaten by the animals and deposited in another area.

Whatever the process by which a seed is transported, when it finds soil, it sprouts. The sapling grows until it becomes a tree bearing seeds. The cycle continues generation after generation.

Before the foundations of the world, God had a plan in place for the propagation of His Word. He only needed people to place in the plan—sowers to spread the seed.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (Acts 2:39)

The above scriptures have motivated many Christians to leave their homelands and travel to foreign lands to sow the gospel seed. Other Christians have traveled to lands of strange customs and languages in pursuit of prosperity, in defense of their government, or simply to see the sights. As they go, they also sow the seed. In the last 150 years, God has used many people from different

walks of life—missionaries, professionals, soldiers, and tourists—to accomplish His plan.

*A Promise and a Plan*, the history of the Oneness Pentecostal movement in Japan, sprang from my desire to share the story of establishing the First United Pentecostal Church of Okinawa (FUPC) and the Asia Military District (AMD). However, the truth of the Pentecostal experience and the oneness of God arrived in Japan long before I did and long before the United Pentecostal Church was formed.

As a boy I was captivated with Oriental culture, especially Japanese. I remember taking my little sister to the movies. My stepfather would give each of us a quarter. Fourteen cents was for the ticket, a dime for popcorn and candy, and a penny was left over. I was fascinated by the sword fighting and the kamikaze pilots, although I did not understand their significance in history. Little did I know that in the future I would serve in Japan with the United States Air Force and years later, return as a missionary.

When my wife and I came to Japan as United Pentecostal Church missionaries, we followed a procession of champions. The fruitful harvest we experienced was the result of the labors, sacrifices, prayers, battles, victories, and yes, even the failures of others. Their names ran through my memory channel. One name led to another. Some of these people I had heard or read about; many I had never met—many who would soon be forgotten.

In Deuteronomy 6 the Israelites were instructed to obey God's commandments, the first of which is "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD" (verse 4). They were to teach God's laws diligently to their children when they were sitting, walking, resting, and playing. Why? Lest they forget. And that is why this history has been compiled.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special appreciation is given to the love of my life, my wife Shirley. For the last fifty-four years she has worked on this country boy's manners and speech, making me into a better man. When I get bogged down and want to give up, she is there telling me, "You can do it. Just stop and think about it."

To all who have helped me become the missionary I am. Without you, it would have been uphill all the way. We did it together.

A special thank you is given to my editor, Barbara Westberg. She plowed through my thoughts and inspirations to help me compile this history of the Oneness movement in Japan. She double checked the facts and figures to assure that we have presented as accurate an accounting as possible.

Thank you, Barbara, for your passion for bringing to life these stalwart men and women of God, whom future generations would never meet except through the printed word.

Paul A. Dennis





## MOTHER OF PENTECOST

David Heath agonized as his eldest daughter told him of her burden for Japan.

“Oh, May, I cannot bear to give you up. Our family would be too lonely and bereft. We have already lost two of our dear children. Baby Mabel and three weeks later, before we could even reach him, Walter died in college. Please don’t go.”

“Dear, dear Papa, I must go. The burden for Japan is great. They worship many, many ugly gods of fear, and the great masses have never even heard the name of Jesus. I hear them calling me night and day. Though I love you dearly and it almost breaks my heart to leave all my family, the call of God is strong. I must go.”<sup>1</sup>

May, born in 1877, was the oldest daughter of eight children of David and Mary Jane Heath. May’s family was one of the two Protestant families in St. Marys, Pennsylvania, a prominently Catholic town. She attended the Normal School (teachers college) and became a kindergarten teacher.

At the age of twenty-one, May followed her heart and volunteered for slum work in Philadelphia. Edmond Whittaker, a well-to-do business man and president of a missionary society, wrote this about her in a religious paper:

Miss May Heath, whom I had the privilege of seeing accept Jesus as her “all in all,” about three years ago, taught school in Elk County, Pennsylvania and anticipated following that profession as her life’s work, but the Lord, has led her in a way that she knew not of. Both Miss Heath and her senior worker labor among the outcasts of society because of their “love for souls,” and give their time and effort without money and without price. Every dollar given for this work goes right direct to the cause, as there are not salaried offices.<sup>2</sup>

The society on Middle Alley was located in a two-story house. The first floor housed the mission. The second floor had two rooms—the kitchen and a room for the matron of the society, which she shared with May.

When May first came, Clara (the matron) met her at the door and said, “May, you are too frail for this type of work, and I really don’t need or want you.” But May would not be deterred. Finally Clara said, “You know that we don’t receive any remuneration whatsoever.” May had been under the impression that she would receive twelve dollars a month, so this statement greatly surprised her. Before she realized what she was saying, she replied, “My Father supports me.” Of course, she meant her heavenly Father, as no money would be forthcoming from her earthly one. Until the day that May left “Middle Alley,” Clara did not realize that she received no regular income. God met her every need. Often her purse was empty, but when Clara would say that they must take the street car to some of their duties, May would insist that they should walk because they needed the exercise.<sup>3</sup>

In 1900 May enrolled in the Nyack Missionary Alliance School, a school strong on faith, healing, sanctification, and missions. God's call in her life for Japan became priority. Even though her heart ached because of her father's grief, she kept the burden for Japan first and foremost. She made personal sacrifices that many single ladies would not consider.

On October 13, 1902, she boarded a train in Pennsylvania for the long ride to San Francisco. There she embarked on a four-week ocean voyage, which seemed much longer because she was seasick most of the time. Finally, after years of struggle and training, she arrived in the Land of the Rising Sun.

She made her way to Hiroshima, where she studied the language and customs. After that, she opened a prison work in Kobe; then on to Tokyo where she worked among the soldiers. At times May went where people had never seen a white person. A Christian Japanese Bible woman worked with May helping her with the language and providing much needed companionship.

Living in Japan was not easy. May did not have access to many of the staples she had in the United States. She lived mostly on rice, fish, and beans. When teaching and preaching, she sometimes used the wrong word, but the people felt God's anointing and understood what she meant. Once she made a point about the blood of Jesus washing whiter than snow. At the close of her message a Japanese lady approached her asking, "Where can I get some of this Jesus soap?"<sup>4</sup>

As she traveled she saw Singer sewing machine shops everywhere; yet the majority of the people had not even heard the name of Jesus. Oh, how this grieved her. One day she received a tract in the mail telling about the Holy Ghost outpouring at Azusa Street in Los Angeles. She hungered for this experience, but had no idea how she could get to California. The answer came in a surprising way.

May's diligent work, the different climate, and difficult living conditions broke her health. Her heart weakened. The doctor said that she must return to the United States where she could get better medical care.

May spent long hours in intense prayer, seeking God's will. Finally, she decided to follow the doctor's orders. After four years in Japan, a heavy-hearted May returned home.

Back at her father's house, she got much needed rest and medical attention. But it was not enough. The doctor told Mr. Heath, "I am sorry, but I cannot do any more for May. She needs to get away from this Pennsylvania climate. I recommend that you send her to California. Perhaps her health will improve in that climate."

May told her mother, "Papa and the doctor think they are sending me to California for my health, but God is sending me there to receive the Holy Ghost."<sup>5</sup>

Accompanied by her mother, May arrived in Redlands, California. When health permitted she began searching for Azusa Street. She was greatly distressed when she found the correct location, but learned that the group had disbanded. She had no idea where to look next. This was no problem with God; He already had a plan.

One day a young man selling horseradish came to the door of their home. Upon being told that they were not interested, he replied, "I don't care if you buy any or not; I just use selling as an opening. What I really want to know is if you have heard about the wonderful Holy Ghost?"

What a spiritual feast May had as she assured him that she had come halfway around the world to hear about and receive this glorious gift! The young man told her of a nearby Pentecostal church and asked her if she had ever heard any one speak in tongues. Of course she had not. Never before having met a Spirit filled person as far as she knew. Then right on her front porch he began to praise God and was soon speaking in tongues and glorifying the Lord.

May attended this church and later received this experience for herself.<sup>6</sup>

Some situations May had experienced in Japan convinced her that she could not return as a single lady. So when the Missionary Alliance sent word that they were considering sending her back to Japan, May responded that it was not wise to send a single woman without the protection of a husband.

May and her parents relocated to Pomona, California, where her father obtained a job as custodian of the city hall. In Pomona May found a Pentecostal church, where she enjoyed her Holy Ghost experience and the fellowship of the saints.



May Heath in Japan



May Heath and Helper

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