

John G Lake's Formative Years, 1870-1908: The Making of A Con Man (May 2014) - Barry Morton (UNISA, History)

John G Lake ranks among the most influential religious con men of the twentieth century. After arriving in South Africa in 1908 with minimal experience and a disturbing past, he stimulated the growth of both large Pentecostal and Zionist movements that continue to flourish today. His willingness to train Africans in the dark arts of faith healing led to the transfer of these techniques to a new and troubling set of evangelists, who in time have built up multinational congregations numbering in the millions.¹

This paper seeks to establish certain basic facts about Lake's early life prior to his move in South Africa in 1908. The reasons for this are as follows: John G Lake, like his mentor John Alexander Dowie, was a master of both the big and small lie. His fairly extensive catalog of writings, most of it generated after his return to America in 1913, is a collection of banal religious dogma interspersed with as great a deliberate set of falsehoods as one could ever hope to find in writing. One turn-of-the-century debunker of John Alexander Dowie referred to the latter's writings as "serial fiction." The same could be said of practically anything written or preached by John G Lake. Additionally, faith healing disciples of Lake's such as Gordon Lindsay and Wilford Reidt produced biographies of Lake that either perpetuated his old lies or produced new ones.² These dubious writings have generally not been critically examined by religious scholars. Kent Burpeau, for instance, did not cotton on to Lake's basic con in his recent, sympathetic biography.³ Another reason that new biographical information is needed is that most accounts of Lake contain a host of basic dating or factual errors. His own writings, filled with anachronistic falsehoods and dubious details, have contributed to the problem, but there is also a lot of sloppy research and writing about Lake in general. Because his life story continues to generate a large readership, it is worthwhile delving into mundane aspects of his background.

This paper is not a labor of love. Rather, it is a much-needed corrective to a host of misleading writings that many other faith healing con men have invoked in order to increase the charismatic nature of their healing ceremonies. Despite centuries of scientific studies showing that faith healing and prayer cannot cure any organic disease or

¹ See B. Morton, "'The Devil Who Heals'": Evidence of Fraud and Falsification in the Career of John G Lake," *African Historical Review* 44, 12 (2012): 98-118.

² G. Lindsay, *John G Lake, Apostle to Africa* (Dallas: Christ For the Nations, repr 1972); W. Reidt, *John G Lake: A Man Without Compromise* (Springfield, MO: Harrison House, 1989).

³ K. Burpeau, *God's Showman: A Historical Study of John G Lake and South Africa/American Pentecostalism* (Oslo: Refleks, 2004)

condition,⁴ many people obviously seek out these quacks for treatment. The reality is that faith healers only trumpet invented successes and never mention the disastrous failures that attend their work. Faith healing can cure psychosomatic diseases such as depression and anxiety, given the right circumstances that faith healers train themselves to create. The danger for the cured is that they will be pressured to become members of the faith healer's cult and subject to intense exploitation thereafter. If my efforts in researching Lake's past can convince a single person to avoid seeking out a faith healing cure, then I would consider them worthwhile.



Figure 1 Lake at St Mary's High School, 2nd Row, 1st Left

⁴See S.M. Asser and R. Swan, "Child fatalities from religion-motivated medical neglect," *Pediatrics* 101 (1998): :625-629; H. Benson et al "Study of the Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer (STEP) in cardiac bypass patients: A multicenter randomized trial of uncertainty and certainty of receiving intercessory prayer," *American Heart Journal* 151, 4 (2006): 934-42; British Medical Association, *Divine Healing and Co-operation Between Doctors and Clergy* (London: British Medical Association, 1956); A. Fielding, *Faith-healing and 'Christian Science'* (London: Duckworth, 1899); F. Galton, "Statistical Enquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer," *Fortnightly Review* (Aug 1872): 125-35; J. McCauley et al., "A randomized controlled trial to assess effectiveness of a spiritually-based intervention to help chronically ill adults". *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 41, 1 (2011): 91-105; *Report of Dr. Benjamin Franklin and Other Commissioners charged by the King of France With the Examination of Animal Magnetism As Now Practiced at Paris* (H. Perkins, 1837); L. Roberts, "Intercessory Prayer For the Alleviation of Ill-Health," *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2 (2009); and L. Rose, "Some Aspects of Paranormal Healing," *British Medical Journal* 2 (1954): 1329-32.

Early Life and Move to Chicago

John G Lake's background and family are not particularly important in understanding either his personality or *modus operandi*. There is also less source material on him before 1895 than afterwards, and it is hard to be certain about many of his earlier his activities. For some reason, though, many writings about Lake spend considerable time dealing with these matters. My suspicion is that the provision of myriad mundane facts about Lake aims to provide verisimilitude to otherwise highly dubious narratives.

Lake was born in 1870,⁵ in a small village named Avonbank a few miles from the small town of St. Mary's, Ontario.⁶ His father, James Lake, was an immigrant from Scotland who worked for a farmer named James Graham. On 1862 James Lake married Graham's daughter, Betsy, and the two would spend fifty one years together. Betsy would bear fifteen children, of whom seven would survive infancy.⁷ John Graham Lake was at least the fourth born. His eldest sibling was his sister Maggie, while his older brother (also named John) died the year before his birth. This made John G Lake his father's heir.⁸

Sometime during the 1870s James Lake began to turn to self-employment. He rented stalls in the St. Mary's market, and sold produce and meat there. By 1878 he had a permanent butcher's shop in St. Mary's, and it would appear that the family had moved to the town. A picture of St. Mary's High School showing its "Senior Staff and Pupils" in the mid-1880s shows the young John G Lake—our first known picture of him (Figure 1). His attendance at the school would certainly indicate the family's residence there.⁹

In 1886¹⁰ the Lakes moved from Ontario to the growing new center of Sault Ste Marie in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The explanation for the move can probably be laid down to the boom times in the Upper Peninsula fostered by the opening up of the Soo Locks . These locks, which connected Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, allowed large freighters to trawl upper Great Lakes. A huge logging boom also occurred, following which the entire Upper Peninsula was stripped of its massive forests in a huge burst of primitive

⁵ *US Census 1900 Michigan, Chippewa, Sault Ste Marie, Ward 02, District 0020*, entry for John G Lake.

⁶ Personal communication, Mary Smith (St Mary's Museum), February 13 2014.

⁷ *US Census 1900 Michigan, Chippewa, Sault Ste Marie, Ward 02, District 0020*, entry for Elizabeth Lake.

⁸ Burpeau, *God's Showman* , 23.

⁹ St Mary's Museum, Digital Photography Collection, 0285ph.

¹⁰ *US Census 1900 Michigan, Chippewa, Sault Ste Marie, Ward 02, District 0020*, entry for James S Lake, lists the family's immigration year as 1886. Based on John G Lake being photographed in St Mary's High in 1886 or 1887, his father may have moved to Sault Ste Marie prior to the rest of the family.

accumulation. During the process, Sault Ste Marie grew and attracted new residents drawn to opportunities in transportation, shipping, trading, and logging.

As far as can be told the Lakes bought a house on Bingham Ave in central Sault Ste Marie soon after arrival (Figure 4).¹¹ This three-story four-poster structure served as a butchery/produce shop on the ground floor, while the family lived in the second floor and third story attic.

John G Lake lived in Sault Ste Marie for only three years during his youth, and we have minimal information about his time there. Apparently having finished his schooling in Canada, Lake did not attend further high school in Sault Ste Marie, and he is not mentioned as being part of graduating classes in the years following his family's immigration.¹² Some of his siblings, though, are frequently mentioned in newspaper lists of school honors in the 1890s. The young Lake, then, presumably went to work. We can assume he aided his father, or else began employment as a carpenter, his profession until 1904.

There is very little qualitative information about the Lake family. Lake himself emphasized his family's sickly nature and its piety, although his descriptions are not overly convincing. He claimed that the deaths of eight infant Lake children affected family morale greatly. "A strange train of sickness, resulting in death, had followed the family," Lake recalled.¹³ Lake claimed to have suffered from serious constipation as a child and youth, while many of his siblings allegedly had serious ailments. This led to the Lakes turning to religion for comfort. According to Lake, his family was Presbyterian in his early years, and then became Methodists while in St Mary's. He himself was apparently baptized as a Methodist as a fourteen year-old.¹⁴ Following this, the Lakes remained Methodists in Sault Ste Marie. Lake almost surely exaggerated the nature and impact of these issues. His "chronic constipation" was almost certainly an invention. Almost all faith healers (such as Charles Parham, Carrie Judd Montgomery, and Maria Woodworth-Etter) of Lake's era claimed to have suffered from severe childhood illness, as would all of Lake's successors. So his "chronic constipation" is more of a genre statement than an actual illness. His youthful piety cannot also be confirmed. There is really no independent evidence of the Lake family attending church, even though such newspapers such as the *Sault Ste Marie News* and *Sault Ste Marie Democrat* routinely reported on church news from the late 1880s to

¹¹ According to Betsy Lake's obituary, they bought the house around 1886. *Sault Ste Marie Evening News* 25 November 1913.

¹² *Sault Ste Marie News* and *Sault Ste Marie Democrat* both ran extensive features on graduating students every spring.

¹³ Quoted in Burpeau, *God's Showman*, 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

1890s. The Lakes were clearly not active members of any Methodist or Presbyterian congregation in Sault Ste Marie. Based on an argument of silence, the most likely explanation is that they were very occasional churchgoers, at most.

One very rarely finds honesty in any of John G Lake's writings, but a throw-away line in one of his later sermons would appear to explain a lot about his early years: "when I was a boy..I was surrounded by as vile a set of men as have ever lived."¹⁵ As to what "vile" acts his family members were involved in, we cannot be sure. But this characterization of his family seems far more apt than one stressing their suffering and piety. What is clear is that John G Lake was set on becoming a religious con man from quite early on in adulthood, and the vast majority of his family members showed no compunction about assisting him in his deceptions.

Problematic details with Lake's biography first appear in the 1888-90 period, and appear to result from systematic deceptions on his part. According to the persona he later shaped as a faith healer, between 1888 and 1890 he attended a Methodist Episcopal Seminary in Newberry, MI.¹⁶ After being ordained, he was then offered a post in Pestigo, Wisconsin in 1891.¹⁷ However, Lake declined to accept the appointment, because by this point he had developed a strong belief in "divine healing", and he felt that the Methodist church had abandoned the true precepts of John Wesley.¹⁸ Having declined to enter the ministry at this point, Lake moved to the new industrial suburb Harvey, Illinois on Chicago's South Side, where he claimed to have founded Harvey's first newspaper.¹⁹ All of this, though, is demonstrably false.

Lake did not attend seminary in Newberry, since no seminary of any kind existed there. Burpeau, Lake's apologist biographer, has attempted to reconcile this problem by maintaining that Lake "participated in the Sunday School Institute conducted by the Newberry, Michigan Methodist Episcopal Church."²⁰ The local newspaper, the *Newberry News*, makes it clear, though, that Lake never attended the Sunday School Institute (which in any case lasted only 1 day!) in Newberry. He did not attend the event in November 1888,²¹ nor did he attend the subsequent Quarterly Conference afterwards, and nor was he associated with the church's 9-week revival in March 1889.²² Nor is he

¹⁵ *John G Lake: His Life, His Sermons, His Boldness of Faith* (Ft Worth: Kenneth Copeland, 1994), 108.

¹⁶ *Spokane Press* 16 July 1924.

¹⁷ See his 1924 sermon in R. Liardon, *John G Lake: The Complete Collection of his life teachings* (Whitaker House, 2005), 454.

¹⁸ See discussion in Burpeau, *God's Showman*, 28-30.

¹⁹ Lindsay, *John G Lake*, 12.

²⁰ Burpeau, *God's Showman*, 27, and 53, n.27.

²¹ *Newberry News* 17 and 24 November 1888.

²² *Newberry News* 23 March 1889.

listed as having attended or participated in any of the many church events and socials that were commonly reported on in the newspaper at any point between 1888 and 1890.

Lake, to put it simply, was not an ordained minister, although he wished to appear as one from his early 20s onwards. Burpeau also maintains that Lake took courses at Evanston's Garrett Bible Institute in the late 1890s, even though the university has no records of his registration!²³ This also could simply not be true, since Lake was a resident of Sault Ste Marie at the time. Moreover, Lake was listed in the 1900 Census as having less than ten years of formal education, meaning that he could not have attended seminary.

Another problem with Lake's version of his decision to reject the Methodist appointment is that it is anachronistic. Lake claimed to have rejected Methodism because of its unwillingness to recognize "divine healing"—a practice that John Dowie and A.B. Simpson introduced to the Midwest after 1890. Lake could not possibly have encountered Dowie or Simpson's churches until moving to Chicago *after* allegedly rejecting his pastoral appointment. His story is thus both contradictory and anachronistic, since Dowie only moved to the Chicago area in mid-1890 from California. Nor did Dowie even become well-known in Chicago until 1893. Interestingly, although Lake seems to have lived in Harvey from 1890 to 1896, he did not join the newly-formed First United Methodist Church that was started in 1890.²⁴ This seems to be a strange omission for someone who was ostensibly recently ordained and was being offered a pastorate at this time.

We have very little independent information about Lake's time in Harvey (Figure 2). It is clear that he moved there around 1890, as in July 1891 the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* lists him as on his way back to Sault Ste Marie for a vacation.²⁵ Lake did not start the *Harvey Citizen* newspaper as he claimed. This newspaper was owned by the industrial consortium that founded and built Harvey, IL.²⁶ The editor of this conservative paper was not Lake, but Lucy Gaston, the famed temperance and anti-smoking agitator.²⁷

Bearing in mind Lake's claims to have converted to Christianity as a teenager, it is possible that he was attracted to the new suburb of Harvey by its evangelical ethos. The town was founded by a group of evangelical industrialists who developed it specifically as a dry, religious, pro-business town. Since Lake was definitely not a practicing Methodist while in Harvey, it is worth asking what religious group he was affiliated with at the time.

²³ Burpeau, *God's Showman*, 27, and 53, n. 28 and 29.

²⁴ See *Our History, 1890-1968* (Harvey: First United Methodist Church), which lists all the founding members.

²⁵ *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5 1891. He is listed as a Harvey resident.

²⁶ See *The Town of Harvey, Illinois: Manufacturing Suburb of Chicago aged two years* (Harvey: Harvey Land Association, c. 1892), n.p.

²⁷ See *Leaves of Healing* 3, 28 (1897): 433-4; C. Tate, *Cigarette Wars: The Triumph of the 'Little White Slaver'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 42-3.

The best answer appears to be that he frequented meetings at an outpost of A.B. Simpson's Christian and Missionary Alliance which held revival meetings in the Chicago suburbs from mid-1891 on.²⁸

Since Lake was clearly not a journalist, we can infer that he made his living in Harvey working in the construction trade. Harvey was a planned industrial suburb, and included a large residential section where Lake probably was involved in building new houses. In 1914, for instance, Lake said in a sermon that he had been a "builder" while in Harvey, and that he had considerable experience in roofing and foundation work.²⁹ It would seem obvious that Lake, having picked up some construction skills in Sault Ste Marie after leaving high school, migrated to the Chicago area to take advantage of well-paying work to be found there.



Figure 2 Harvey Illinois

Another important non-event that allegedly took place around the time of Lake's move to Harvey was his alleged healing by John Alexander Dowie. "I found myself like my brother,

²⁸ Lake refers to this only once in his writings, *John G Lake*, 483.

²⁹ Burpeau, *God's Showman* 26.

but worse crippled than he. When my legs drew out of shape and my body became distorted by the common curse of rheumatism..I went to John Alexander Dowie's Divine Healing Home at 12th and Michigan Streets, and an old gray-headed man came and laid his hands on me and the power of God went through my being and made my leg straight."³⁰ This event, which allegedly took place around 1890 when Lake first went to Chicago, is once again anachronistic. Dowie did not establish a healing home in Chicago until the mid-1890s. In order to invent a dramatic healing for audiences that he had allegedly undergone, Lake in this case borrowed from Charles Parham, the man who converted him to Pentecostalism in 1907. Like Lake, Parham claimed to have been cured of rheumatism by faith alone as a young man, an experience he also likened to having electric power go through his body.³¹ This anachronistic account was in later life paired by lake with his aforementioned condition of "chronic constipation" "that almost killed me" "for nearly nine years". According to Lake, he told God during these Harvey years in a prayer that he was "finished with the doctor and the devil" and was cured.³² Once again, the story is anachronistic and conflicts with his rheumatic affliction.

Lake's marriage to Jennie Stevens certainly did occur in his Harvey years, although many writers on Lake get the details wrong. Jennie, like Lake of Scottish descent, was three years older than him. She had grown up in Newberry, MI, where her father seems to have been a rather unsuccessful farmer. By 1888 his wife and daughter no longer lived with him at his shack in Newberry, but instead resided in Sault Ste Marie. They only visited the town occasionally, and he occasionally went to see them.³³ Based on the 1900 census, it seems that the rest of the Stevens family resided two doors down from the Lakes on Bingham Ave, and that Lake met Jennie since she was a neighbor. Based on the absence of references in both Newberry and Sault Ste Marie newspaper reporting of church events, Jennie and her family were not active churchgoers. Hence Lake's story of how he met his wife is definitely embellished:

When a young man, I stood in the aisle of the Methodist Church and was introduced to a young lady. As I touched her hand the marvelous moving of our natures was revealed. Presently something from her soul, that subtle something that Christians know and recognize as spirit, her spirit passed to me...she told me later that she had been in the habit of searching a young man's spirit to know if he was pure; but, she said, "In your case, the strange thing was, that my spirit made no such search. I just knew it."³⁴

³⁰ *John G Lake*, 124.

³¹ C. Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (1902; repr Christian Pentecostal Books, 2012), 42-3.

³² *John G Lake*, 254.

³³ *Newberry News* 30 August 1888; June 2 1889; and April 12 1890.

³⁴ *John G Lake*, 188.

Following their marriage in Illinois in February 1892,³⁵ the Lakes soon began to have children. By the time of Jennie's death in 1908, they would have six, and would adopt another. Jennie was commonly described as a woman with many incurable ailments by her husband, although his many conflicting statements about her health, along with her dubious testimony regarding miraculous cures that she had undergone, lead one to doubt that she had any ailments at all. Lake maintained that she had tuberculosis and repeated paralysis in the mid-1890s, but these afflictions seem inconsistent with a woman delivering healthy children at the same time.³⁶ Moreover, the fact that Lake claimed to have cured his wife's paralysis in 1898 through "divine healing" himself is a sure sign that she was not ill at all. Faith healers cannot cure those close to them, and are only effective when dealing with strangers.

Jennie Lake was the perfect wife for Lake. A prim, quiet, ostensibly religious woman, she repeatedly was willing to testify on numerous occasions to miraculous healings that she never in fact experienced. From fairly early on in their marriage, Jennie was willing to support Lake's various cons and never deviated from his own narratives.

How did John G Lake meet John Alexander Dowie?

It is highly doubtful that we will ever know how Lake and John Alexander Dowie (Figure 3) became acquainted. Lake's story about travelling from the Soo to Chicago to have his rheumatic legs healed and straightened is the only version of their first meeting that exists, and, as we have seen, it could not possibly be true. There is no way of really knowing how the two met.

John Alexander Dowie was probably the most gifted faith healer of his era. Having quit the orthodox priesthood in his native Australia, he became an independent evangelist in the 1870s and began faith healing in 1882. His early career, like the rest of it, was always followed by controversy. He developed many enemies campaigning for temperance and for leading large anti-liquor processions. After moving to Sydney in 1878 he spent several years researching Spiritualism and developed a close friendship with an experienced con man named Holding. During 1882 he initiated a new, public form of faith healing that went far beyond what had previously been seen in Europe and America. Using these spectacular new methods, he built up a large congregation at the Sackville Street Tabernacle, more dubious sides to his personality began to emerge. In front of a large

³⁵ Jordan Dodd and Liahona Research, comp.. *Illinois, Marriages, 1851-1900 [database on-line]*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Film # 1403534.

³⁶ For some dubious material regarding her various sicknesses, see Lindsay, *John G Lake*, 3, 13-5.

audience, he inveigled the owner of the church's property to sign away the rights over to himself. Not long afterwards, the Tabernacle was destroyed under suspicious circumstances, with the insurance money enabling Dowie to pay off his large debts.³⁷

After being forced to leave Australia in haste, he formed the one-man organization, The International Divine Healing Association, and promoted it around the Pacific. Members of the association, which was extant from about 1886 to 1896, were expected to tithe. Paid up members were eligible to send Dowie a message when they were sick, and he would pray for their Divine Healing in absentia. After developing a following in various locations, Dowie ended up in California in 1888. Moving around the state for about two years, he barnstormed and conducted numerous healings. Many of these healings were obviously staged, but Dowie was also able to cure many people afflicted with psychosomatic illnesses. In doing so, he enlarged the membership of the International Divine Healing Association and began to develop a reputation as a healer.³⁸

From early on in his career, then, Dowie developed a successful formula. He moved around regularly with his entourage to maintain his charismatic image, always publicizing his successes and burying any news of his many healing failures. His ability to get his followers to tithe was a stroke of genius that should have kept him a wealthy man for his whole life. Dowie, unfortunately, was never able to stick to this winning formula. His undoubted megalomania and *folie de grandeur* always led him to ever-greater projects that ate up his funds. Over time he overpaid his underlings, overspent on grandiose religious structures and publishing ventures, and also maintained an expensive lifestyle for his family. Even at his height, when he was making almost \$250,000 a year in tithing income, Dowie seems to have been short of cash.

In order to make up his cash shortfalls, Dowie almost inevitably ended up gouging his followers. After leaving Melbourne, he seems not to have perpetrated further insurance fraud. But by the early 1890s he was buying up securities of bankrupt companies and selling them off to his followers as lucrative investments. Unfortunately for Dowie, two women whom he had defrauded in this way took him to court and successfully sued him.³⁹

In this aftermath of this legal and public relations defeat, Dowie moved to Chicago in 1890.

³⁷ *London Daily Mail* 24 October 1900; *Melbourne Truth* 19 March 1904.

³⁸ J. Dowie, *American First Fruits* (San Francisco: Leaves of Healing, 1889).

³⁹ I.D. Bowman, *Dowieism Exposed* (Philadelphia: 1904) 10-1.



Figure 3 John Alexander Dowie, the founder of Zionist Christianity

Between mid-1890 and the opening of the World's Fair, Dowie was often away from Chicago evangelizing.⁴⁰ During this time he initially rented office space for his Association in the Pullman Building in Chicago, but in 1892 was based in the Evanston area. He listed his occupation as the editor of "The Laws of Healing", a propagandistic broadsheet that promulgated his claims as a great healer.⁴¹

Dowie's reputation did not grow in the Chicago area until he rented a small building near the World's Fair, which opened in 1893. At this location, he staged faith healings every day and attracted large crowds to his tabernacle. During this time he developed a large following, and began to build churches and "healing homes" in various districts of Chicago. By the time he disbanded the IDHA in 1896 and founded the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, he was thought to have 6-10,000 followers in Chicago, and many others across the globe.

How did Lake, then, meet Dowie? Lake claimed that "I knew him from the beginning,"⁴² which would seem to indicate that he encountered Dowie in his early Chicago days barnstorming the suburbs. If Lake indeed attended Christian and Missionary Alliance meetings after arriving in Chicago as alluded to earlier, his earliest contact with Dowie would have occurred in mid-1891, when Dowie and the Alliance conducted revivals together in the suburb of Western Springs. Dowie, though, fell out with the leader of the

⁴⁰ See *Chicago Inter-Ocean* August 29 1891, which mentions his holding a series of healing revivals in the suburbs of Chicago for the last year. *Leaves of Healing*, 1st Ser 1, 9-11 (1891): 196-275, also records Dowie's travels and problems with his Chicago members in his absent periods.

⁴¹ See entries for his name in City Directories; *Evanston, IL, 1890* (Evanston, IL: University Press Co., 1890), n.p.; and *Evanston, IL, 1892* (Evanston, IL: Evanston Press Co., 1892), 132.

⁴² *John G Lake*, 217.

Alliance, A.B. Simpson, after a few meetings, and launched a vicious expose regarding Simpson's use of a runaway convict in a fraudulent healing ceremony at one of them.⁴³ Lake, though, is not mentioned as being one of Dowie's early Chicago members in 1890-1, and nor is his healing mentioned in any of Dowie's publications at this time. Given that Dowie publicized practically any successful healing he was responsible for, one could say with certainty that Lake was not healed by Dowie in in the early 1890s.⁴⁴

A potential key to the solution is the picture of the young Lake in the early 1890s, sitting on a porch wearing a priest's outfit and holding a bible in his lap.⁴⁵ Lake was not an ordained minister, but he clearly was willing to dress up as one and to have his photo taken as one. Hence, Lake had taken to impersonating a Priest while living in Chicago (in later life ne would twice arrested for impersonation). Did he do this on behalf of Dowie, or did he become attracted to Dowie after recognizing him as a fellow "religious adventurer"?⁴⁶ Given that Dowie's close friend in Australia, the aforementioned con man Holding, was known to impersonate clergymen, it is not far-fetched to assume that Dowie encouraged Lake along these lines.⁴⁷ Another potential answer to the early Lake-Dowie relationship would seem to lie in a series of dubious healings that Dowie claimed to have undertaken from 1894-6. During these years a number of "Harvey" residents were healed in public ceremonies, yet it would seem that none of them were actual Harvey residents (or even real people for that matter). The first of these "healings" involving a putative "Harvey" resident was that of an alleged "Civil War veteran" named "James Nichols".⁴⁸ Like almost all of the rest of the Harvey healed, Nichols cannot be found in local records, nor in modern databases.⁴⁹ During the next two years "Mrs H Cowan", "George W Madden", "Lewis Breaw", and "Captain Redman" were all healed as well. The only Harvey resident cured by Dowie who can be identified in the historical record was the famous Lucy Gaston, the editor of the *Harvey Citizen* and famed temperance advocate.⁵⁰ It would seem, therefore, that Lake's early role with Dowie was to supply him with

⁴³ On these Western Springs meetings, see "Cures Them By Faith," *Chicago Herald* June 22 1891; *Leaves of Healing*, 1st Ser 1, 9-11 (1891): 199-201.

⁴⁴ See *Leaves of Healing*, 1st Ser 1, 9-11 (1891): 196-275.

⁴⁵ See Burpeau, *God's Showman*, frontispiece.

⁴⁶ The label "religious adventurer" was one that Lake attached to some of his fellow-travelers in South Africa in 1910. See his court testimony in *Rand Daily Mail* 24 November 1910.

⁴⁷ On Holding see E. Sheldrake, ed., *The Personal Letters of John Alexander Dowie* (Zion City: W.G. Voliva, 1912), 314-6.

⁴⁸ *Leaves of Healing* 1 (1894-5): 97.

⁴⁹ There were only 5,000 Harvey residents in the early 1890s of whom six were allegedly healed by Dowie. I have looked in various Harvey city directories, as well as in modern genealogical databases and have not found any of the identified individuals.

⁵⁰ *Leaves of Healing* 3, 28 (1897): 433-4. In later years, Lake claimed to have been the *Harvey Citizen* editor at this time.

individuals who could provide fake healing testimonies. After Lake returned to the Soo in 1896 there are no more claims of Harvey residents being healed in Dowie's publications.

Lake claimed to have learned the art of faith healing from Dowie and nobody else: "Personally, I received my ministry in the gospel of healing though John Alexander Dowie, a man whom I have loved with all my soul."⁵¹ If that is the case, it would appear that he got his start organizing false testimonials and by acting as an audience plant (such as by impersonating a minister) for him.

If these instances of Lake organizing fake testimonies for Dowie are inferred rather than proved, there can be no doubt that the majority of the Lake family ended up providing false healing testimonies for him later on. The first member of the Lake family to be cured by Dowie was not John, but his brother Fred. In 1895 the latter travelled to Chicago, and was miraculously "healed of hemorrhage of the gums, and joints strengthened" by Dowie.⁵²

This assistance would continue after Lake and his family left Harvey. In late 1896, after having left Chicago, Lake and his family members helped Dowie stage a "distant miracle" at a Chicago meeting. The "distant miracle" was one of Dowie's favorite faith healing cons, and Lake himself would go on to use it many times and spread the technique in South Africa. In this case, Lake used his older sister, Maggie, to help Dowie effect the con. In this case, the deception involved a fake telegram, a messenger to take it to Dowie, and Maggie Lake to act as an audience plant. Just as Fred Lake was brought in from Sault Ste Marie to be healed, in this case Maggie Lake journeyed south from her hometown to execute the con. It is worth quoting in full because it illustrates not only how the distant cure worked but exactly how the Lakes aided Dowie's deceptions. The event is designed quite cleverly, since another (unknown) spectacular healing of John G Lake himself is referred to in order to add further dramatic effect.⁵³

Last night I read to the assembled guests a little letter, which will illustrate to you what goes on at some of these meetings...The guests having talked for some time in an informal manner... there came a telegram for me from Sault Ste Marie.

The telegram told of a sick child of a Mr. Lake who was dying, as was thought. I immediately called the attention of the guests to the case, and said, 'Let us pray.'

⁵¹ *John G Lake*, 217.

⁵² *Leaves of Healing* 2, 25 (1896): 367.

⁵³ *Leaves of Healing* 3 (1897): 100.

Before I began to pray, however, my colleague Dr. Speicher, who is here on my left, said to me, 'Doctor, the man who sends that telegram was in Zion Home, and was healed here.'

I did not remember the name, but when he recalled the nature of the case I remembered what a marvelous healing he had received. Just as I was about to pray, it was added, 'And his sister is here in this room.'

I turned to where the communication was made and saw a lady who was weeping bitterly, for her little nephew was the baby... 'It is all right, we will pray for the baby and the baby will be healed.'

The telegram said that he was in a dying condition, so I prayed at once, but before I prayed with the guests, I said, 'Please tell me all about the healing of your brother,' and she told us a very remarkable story, which I will not go into now, but it was a very remarkable healing.

She left with her husband the following Tuesday for her home in Michigan, and yesterday I received this little letter, which I read to the guests last night:

'Wyandotte, Michigan, 27 November, Dr. Dowie, I just received a letter from my sister telling of the healing of the baby for whom you prayed last Saturday night. The baby was healed immediately, and was around playing that evening as if nothing had been the matter. As some of the guests inquired of me before I left, I thought it be well to write and you could tell them. Maggie Lake Otto.'

By 1896, then, Lake had enlisted his brother, sister, and even his infant son in order to provide false healing testimonies for Dowie. Many more were to follow.

Lake decided to leave Chicago in 1896 with his growing family, just as Dowie formed the new Christian Catholic Church. Lake's explanation for moving back to Sault Ste Marie was that his wife had been "pronounced incurable of consumption," and needed to move north to a different climate.⁵⁴ This seems highly dubious on a number of levels. In the first place, Dowie preached that all sickness was caused by the Devil, so "incurable consumption" would indicate in Zionist terms that Jennie had lost her Christian faith! Additionally, the presence of Dowie as a formidable healer would mean that he had failed to cure her! Jennie Lake's "consumption", then, was probably a fiction and not the reason for the move. More logical explanations, such as the end of the construction boom in Harvey, would seem to be more germane, as would the growth of Sault Ste Marie following the completion of the new locks in 1895. Whatever the case was, after returning to Sault Ste Marie in 1896, Lake was busy using his construction skills on local projects there, and Jennie's "consumption" is never mentioned again.

⁵⁴ Lindsay, *John G Lake*, 3. Jennie Lake gave a highly contradictory account of this period some six years later, by which time she had been involved in several other "distant cures". She maintained that following the birth of her third child she developed curvature of the spine, then diphtheria and consumption. Doctors could not cure her, and advised her to move north. Once in Sault Ste Marie, she began reading Dowie's literature, and asked her husband to pray for her. While praying, she heard the voice and Jesus and was instantly cured of all her ailments! A year later she was also cured of pneumonia! See "Written Testimony of Mrs. Jennie Lake," *Leaves of Healing* 9 (1901): 226-7.

The Sault Ste Marie Sojourn, 1896-1901

For a five-year period, Lake pursued his career in his hometown as an independent “carpenter” and building contractor. Initially he was distant from Dowie’s organization, only helping him to stage a few fake miracles. In 1898, though, he rejoined Dowie and organized a Zionist chapter in Sault Ste Marie. He would run this small congregation for three years, before deciding to migrate to Dowie’s new urban utopia, Zion Illinois, in 1901. These years were the first in which Lake tried to pursue faith healing on his own, and he also began to draw in more of his family members as his accomplices.

In later years Lake would claim that on his return to the Soo, he started up the *Sault Times* newspaper and that he taught Sunday School classes for the Methodist church. Both of these claims are false, as local newspapers make clear.⁵⁵ Lake’s ambition on arriving back in his home town was clearly to establish himself as a builder. On first arriving home halfway through the year, he bought a house on Easterday Ave and spent more than \$1000 upgrading it.⁵⁶ Not long after he obtained “several important contracts” in his wife’s hometown of Newberry, which he completed in December.⁵⁷ Lake sold the Easterday Ave residence, and in 1897 purchased a new house on Adams Ave, which he spent \$800 upgrading that year despite the house being struck by lightning!⁵⁸ In other words, Lake was purchasing houses, upgrading them, flipping them, and moving on. Lake did not try to make it big, and never advertised in newspapers or tendered for large government contracts. Today we would refer to him as a “house-flipper”, and he was listed in the 1900 census as a “carpenter”.⁵⁹

During 1898 the Lakes moved on to another residence, but in this year began a new Zionist chapter in Sault Ste Marie. After a year the congregation had twelve official members, with roughly twenty-five attendees a week. Meetings were held in the attic of the Lake family house on Bingham Ave (see picture below), and Lake’s first account of starting the church was published in *Leaves of Healing* in 1899.⁶⁰ From the very beginning, the Sault Zionists were focused on faith healing. Some of these faith healings were conducted by Lake himself, while others were done by Dowie in absentia.

⁵⁵ See *Sault Ste Marie News* February 20 1897; March 6 1897. These reports show that Lake was not associated with the Methodist Episcopal Sunday Schools, and that George Ferris started the *Sault Times*.

⁵⁶ *Sault Ste Marie News* December 19 1896. It would appear that Lake returned home after making good money in Harvey.

⁵⁷ *Sault Ste Marie News* December 12 1896.

⁵⁸ *Sault Ste Marie News* September 6 1897; December 18 1897.

⁵⁹ *US Census 1900 Michigan, Chippewa, Sault Ste Marie, Ward 02, District 0020*, entry for John G Lake.

⁶⁰ *Leaves of Healing* 6 (1899-1900): 773.

Baptisms and converts in Sault Ste Marie were few and far between. In order to get the ball rolling, Lake's first claimed faith healing was his wife's—the first of a string of such testimonies she gave on his behalf. In late April 1898, Jennie Lake was cured at a service after claiming "doctors" could not cure her of "heart trouble." After Lake laid hands on her and the congregation prayed, she was miraculously healed.⁶¹ During this year Lake also used another of his baby sons, (this time Otto), to be the subject of a "distant cure" by Dowie in Zion. Otto, who was "dying", was cured by Dowie after a telegram was sent to him.⁶²

1898 seems to have been a slow year for Lake and the new congregation, but in 1899 the pace of healings and baptisms picked up. Some local children were cured of "eye disease" and "scarlet fever", and Jennie Lake also required faith healing attention again. In June she apparently developed a serious case of the skin disease erysipelas, and was instantly cured by Dowie after Lake telegraphed him requesting prayer.⁶³

In August Lake helped effect a second dramatic faith cure. While visiting the local charity home in Sault Ste Marie in August, Lake found an orphan named Georgie Armor who was apparently both comatose and also "in convulsions". Lake contacted Dowie, who prayed for the boy, and who awoke from his coma afterwards. Several days later one Claude Stephens was also healed by Dowie after another telegram. Lake maintained in the *Leaves of Healing* that Armor's healing caused considerable commotion in town.⁶⁴ Once again, as in the case of the Harvey testimonials from the early 1890s, neither Armor nor Stephens is listed in any historical documents, and neither was counted in the 1900 census. Neither one seems to have ever existed! Lake also enlisted his sister Maggie to testify to another cure for Dowie. In 1900 she testified to having had "five cancers" that a number of doctors in Detroit had failed to find a cure for. The Lakes brought her to Chicago, and took her into a Dowie service on a stretcher, and soon she "was utterly healed" and the tumors were expelled from her body by Dowie.⁶⁵ Yet another of Lake's sisters soon after seems to have contracted a hemophiliac-type problem relating "the issue of blood," and was healed in absentia by Dowie after her heart had stopped beating.⁶⁶ By 1900, then, seven of the Lakes had been miraculously cured by Dowie.

⁶¹ *Sault Ste Marie News* August 4 1900.

⁶² *Leaves of Healing* 7 (1900): 471.

⁶³ *Leaves of Healing* 5, 34 (June 1899): 650.

⁶⁴ *Leaves of Healing* 5, 43 (Aug 1899): 839.

⁶⁵ *Leaves of Healing* 7 (1900): 471. See also *John G Lake*, 200, 238

⁶⁶ *John G Lake*, 238-9.

By 1900 Lake was becoming better known as a preacher in Sault Ste Marie, and "cited numerous cases of alleged healing in the county through faith."⁶⁷ He was not yet an official in Dowie's church, although he was referred to as a "Conductor" in northern Michigan. He had pleaded in the *Leaves of Healing* for Dowie to send an official to organize the area, an eventuality that never occurred. A number of local doctors had petitioned versus "Illegal Practitioners" of medicine⁶⁸, but the Zionists did not attract a lot of comment until Jennie Lake was accidentally shot in the summer.

In July 1900 Jennie had ventured to Chicago with her husband, when he was appointed a Deacon in the Zionist church. On this trip Dowie once again cured her (this time for "rheumatism") and "new life poured through [her] bones."⁶⁹ Soon after their return, on August 2, she had gone to the home of a friend, Mrs Samuel Richards, taking her son along. According to Jennie, Otto Lake pulled a revolver out of a drawer, and, thinking it was a toy, shot her in the back with it. The bullet passed through her back, just missing her spine, and lodged in her stomach just underneath the skin.⁷⁰

Subsequent events are not easy to unravel, despite the existence of several eyewitness and newspaper accounts. After being shot, Lake and some others took Jennie back to her home on Bingham Ave and refused to allow doctors to treat her. Once home, messages were sent to Dowie, and Mrs Lake felt better after his *in absentia* prayers. After falling asleep, she had a vision: "A Voice answered me saying, "This is God's Holy Hill of Zion, and you are healed."⁷¹ She felt better immediately and her fever passed.

Meanwhile, large groups of people had assembled on Bingham Ave (Figure 4), and their numbers increased following newspaper reports of the incident. "Mr Lake believes that it is prayer alone that saved his wife."⁷² Crowds continued to mill around the house, since the Lakes refused to let outsiders in, and public opinion was against Lake preventing a doctor to see her, "the head of the family is taking chances."⁷³ After a few days the Lakes felt it was advisable to allow some outsiders in, but this action led to immediate relapses on Jennie's part: "In my wife's critical condition I found that when persons came near the sufferer who in their hearts even entertained a doubt of God's power or willingness to

⁶⁷ *Sault Ste Marie News* August 4 1900; cf *Marquette Daily Mining Journal* August 13 1900.

⁶⁸ *Sault Ste Marie News* August 6 1898.

⁶⁹ *Leaves of Healing* 7 (1900): 441.

⁷⁰ "God's Witnesses to Divine Healing," *Leaves of Healing* 9 (1901): 225-6.

⁷¹ "Written Testimony of Mrs. Jennie Lake," *Leaves of Healing* 9 (1901): 226.

⁷² *Sault Ste Marie News* August 4 1900.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

heal, she was immediately injured...the presence of an unbeliever checked the healing."⁷⁴



Figure 4 The Lake home on Bingham Ave, Sault Ste Marie, the site of the "vanishing bullet miracle"

Dowie sent one of his promising young officers, Daniel Bryant, from Wisconsin to help quell the situation. On arrival, Bryant found that Jennie Lake had relapsed, was "lame" and unable to move. Meanwhile the bullet "had lodged just beneath the skin." Just as disturbing, "an incensed doctor organized a gang of men, who, under his leadership, were to mob us last night, and smash up the furniture and destroy the literature in Zion's little hall." What happened next was a miracle. Bryant and Lake prayed relentlessly for Jennie, and relayed requests for in absentia prayers back to Overseer Piper in Chicago. Then "in a few days, however, [the bullet] was gone."⁷⁵ After the miraculous disappearance of the bullet, Jennie Lake improved rapidly, and was walking around Sault Ste Marie within a few weeks.

The "vanishing bullet miracle" was ascribed by Bryant and the Lakes in public testimonies to prayers by Overseer Piper back in Chicago. A far more logical explanation can be given—the Lakes lived on top of a butcher's shop, and Lake's father was a butcher. How difficult could it have been for the Bryant and the Lakes to obtain a sharp utensil and extract the bullet that lay just under her skin? When people asked Lake, "Where is the

⁷⁴ "Confirmation of his Wife's Testimony by Deacon John G. Lake," *Leaves of Healing* 9 (1901): 227.

⁷⁵ "Confirmation of Mrs Jennie Lake's Testimony by Elder Daniel Bryant," *Leaves of Healing* 9 (1901): 226.

bullet?" he responded, "I don't know where the bullet is, and I don't care. God will look after it and attend to it."⁷⁶

The vanishing bullet mirade calmed the crowds on Bingham Ave down and ended the controversy. Within a week Jennie was recuperating well.⁷⁷ Bryant subsequently returned to the town several times before the end of the year, holding large services at Bingham Ave and other locations. Zionist baptisms increased, although the Sault Ste Marie congregation never grew particularly large.⁷⁸ The controversy surrounding the incident seems to have hurt Lake's reputation rather than enhanced it. When he returned to give a lecture in early 1903, he received death threats stating "he would be given a chance to try again the efficacy of divine healing on bullet wounds"⁷⁹

In 1901 Dowie opened his new utopian community at Zion, north of Chicago. This theocratic town was 100% owned by Dowie, who leased out residences to his congregation for 1,100 years. Lake ventured to Zion in May 1901,⁸⁰ and purchased a lease on a property at Gabriel and 30th (Figure 5). He and his family took up residence there in late summer 1901. They lived in a tiny house on this property for six years, although it is unclear whether Lake built it himself. By the time of their exit from Sault Ste Marie, the Zionists were becoming increasingly unpopular. The local newspaper began running stories unfavorable to Zionists as well as editorializing against them.⁸¹ In Lake's absence, his schoolteacher sister Clara was appointed the local Evangelist in 1902, and she led the group until it petered out a few years later.

Lake's Years in Zion, 1901-7

Lake never rose to a prominent position in the Zionist church, and remained a Deacon until Dowie's demise in 1905. As Zion City's utopian promise faded into bankruptcy and Dowie's disgrace, Lake sought employment outside the city. Eventually he would become an early convert to Pentecostalism, before the threat of mob violence once again led him to leave for greener pastures.

Lake talked very little about his time in Zion. What he says is neither revealing nor true:

In 1901, I joined the Dowie Institution and moved to Zion City with the object of becoming a student and teacher of Divine Healing. I remained there until 1904. I was made manager of Dowie's Building

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *Marquette Daily Mining Journal* August 13 1900.

⁷⁸ *Sault Ste Marie News* November 24 1900; March 9 1901.

⁷⁹ *Sault Ste Marie Evening News* 2 February 1903.

⁸⁰ *Sault Ste Marie News* May 23 1901.

⁸¹ *Sault Ste Marie News* May 24 1901; June 3 1901; July 23 1901.

Department. During that year we put through our office business amounting to \$100,000 per month, or \$1,200,000 a year. We issued 1200 building contracts.⁸²

Lake was never in charge of the Building Dept, and was a mere employee in it, described as “a pretty good B[uilding] & M[aintenance] man” by some former colleagues.⁸³ One of the reasons for Lake’s lack of progression is that he seems to have got into an argument with Dowie, which was unacceptable to the latter since he cultivated an atmosphere of near-complete sycophancy. According to Lake’s recollections, Dowie admonished him, “at present, you are an operator, not a constructor.”⁸⁴ During this period of time, Dowie often complained of “the lack of competent, spiritual, and practical men for heads of Departments,” and does not seem to have considered Lake to be of sufficient leadership material.⁸⁵



Figure 5 The Lake home in Zion, IL

In 1902 Lake was considered worth giving some evangelical duties to, and he began proselyting for Dowie in southern Wisconsin. At various times he was in small towns such

⁸² *John G Lake*, 269.

⁸³ *Zion Banner* July 24 1903 shows that Deacon Harper led the Building Dept. Quote is from *Zion Herald* July 12 1907.

⁸⁴ Reidt, *John G Lake*, 23.

⁸⁵ See Deacon Judd to Dowie, October 6 1902, repr in *Leaves of Healing* 18, 26 (1906): 461; and *Chicago Examiner* December 8 1903.

as Kenosha and Racine, not far from Zion,⁸⁶ and it would seem likely that he undertook this work on weekends, taking the train north. Working with some future Pentecostals such as Cyrus Fockler and Fred Bosworth, Lake reported no miraculous healings and very few converts and baptisms from these efforts. Nor do his activities seem to have generated any coverage in the *Wisconsin Press*.⁸⁷ In short, Lake was not particularly successful at this second attempt at evangelism.

It is at this time that we have our first independent description of his preaching style, which he had only been working on for a few years. Several years of preaching for Dowie had clearly moved Lake some way towards realizing the bombastic, domineering speaking style he aspired to cultivate on the pulpit. Now bearded and attired in his trademark black suit, it was clear that his persona was crafted:

Mr Lake was very earnest and when warmed up to his work of exploiting Dowie's doctrines on the humbug of medicine, he became positively vindictive...His face was not illumined with the fire which is usually an accompaniment to martyrdom...His enthusiasm was apparently a cloak to be donned and doffed at will. The writer judged that Lake was reciting a well-learned lesson, with his foot on the loud pedal at all times. At no time did he appear to be possessed by a divine mission.⁸⁸

Although Lake later maintained he left Zion in 1904, this does not seem to be the case as he remained a resident until late 1907. In late 1904 he did become a victim of the shambolic financial situation of Zion, when wages were slashed across the board twice, and Dowie began to lay off his employees in the face of bankruptcy proceedings.⁸⁹ By this time millions of dollars his congregation was forced to deposit into his pseudo-bank were unaccounted for. Dowie, who had declared himself first the reincarnation of the prophet Elijah, and then the "First Apostle" of the entire Christian World, was losing both his grip on reality and on Zion City.

With so many problems paying his employees, in 1904 Dowie gave permission to Zion City residents to seek employment elsewhere as long as they deposited their wages in his unregistered bank. The building of a new trolley from Zion to the main rail line made commuting an option for the first time, and Lake seems to have taken the opportunity to use the Zion-Waukegan trolley to seek new work there.⁹⁰ By 1906 he was selling land and insurance in Waukegan for a local speculator and entrepreneur named E.V. Orvis, working out of modest office space in downtown Waukegan (Figure 6).⁹¹ Just as in Sault

⁸⁶ *Sault Ste Marie Evening News* 30 January 1903.

⁸⁷ See *Leaves of Healing*, passim, 1902-3.

⁸⁸ "Deacon Lake Held Forth," *Sault Ste Marie Evening News* 2 February 1903.

⁸⁹ See *Chicago Examiner* December 8 1903.

⁹⁰ *Inter-Ocean* February 7, 16 1904; *Chicago-American* January 31 1904, February 1 1904, and June 3 1904.

⁹¹ *Waukegan Daily Sun* 2 January 1907.

Ste Marie, Lake was a small-time operator, running small advertisements for his services in the local newspapers. In addition to hawking Orvis's properties, Lake also sold fire and life insurance for the People's Life Assurance Society. As an evangelist, Lake maintained that he had founded People's Life Assurance himself with the backing of an array of Chicago's leading industrialists. In fact it was a small company founded by other people.⁹² Lake, then, was living as a small-town insurance salesman after his job with Dowie ended. He does not appear to have been a particular success, unlike his patron, E.V. Orvis, whose presence graced the society and business pages of the local papers on a very regular basis.

After establishing this new career, Lake entered into a new and volatile period of his religious life in which he emerged as a religious leader in his own right for the first time. Between late 1906 and 1907 Lake was associated with, and came to co-lead, the Pentecostal "Parhamite" sect in Zion. Because of the dramatic and lurid events that occurred there, Lake and other Parhamites such as F.F. Bosworth did their best thereafter to minimize any knowledge of their involvement with it.⁹³

⁹² People's Life was run by the insignificant Elona G Nelson and Fremont Hoy, whereas Lake maintained he was financed by Jim Hill, Tom Lawson, Ed Harriman, and Thomas Ryan. The latter four were heavily involved in developing the suburb of Harvey Illinois in the early 1890s when Lake was a builder in that town. As his biographer notes, there is no evidence that Lake knew any of these magnates, all of whom were conveniently deceased by the time he began dropping their names. Cf *ibid*, and Burpeau, *God's Showman*, 39ff.

⁹³ Fred Bosworth was another Dowieite who in later life, like Lake, would become a faith healer. His biography is by E. Perkins, *Joybringer Bosworth: His Life Story* (Dayton, OH: John J Scruby, 1921), with some very confusing and obfuscatory sections on his Parhamite period found in Chs 7 and 8.

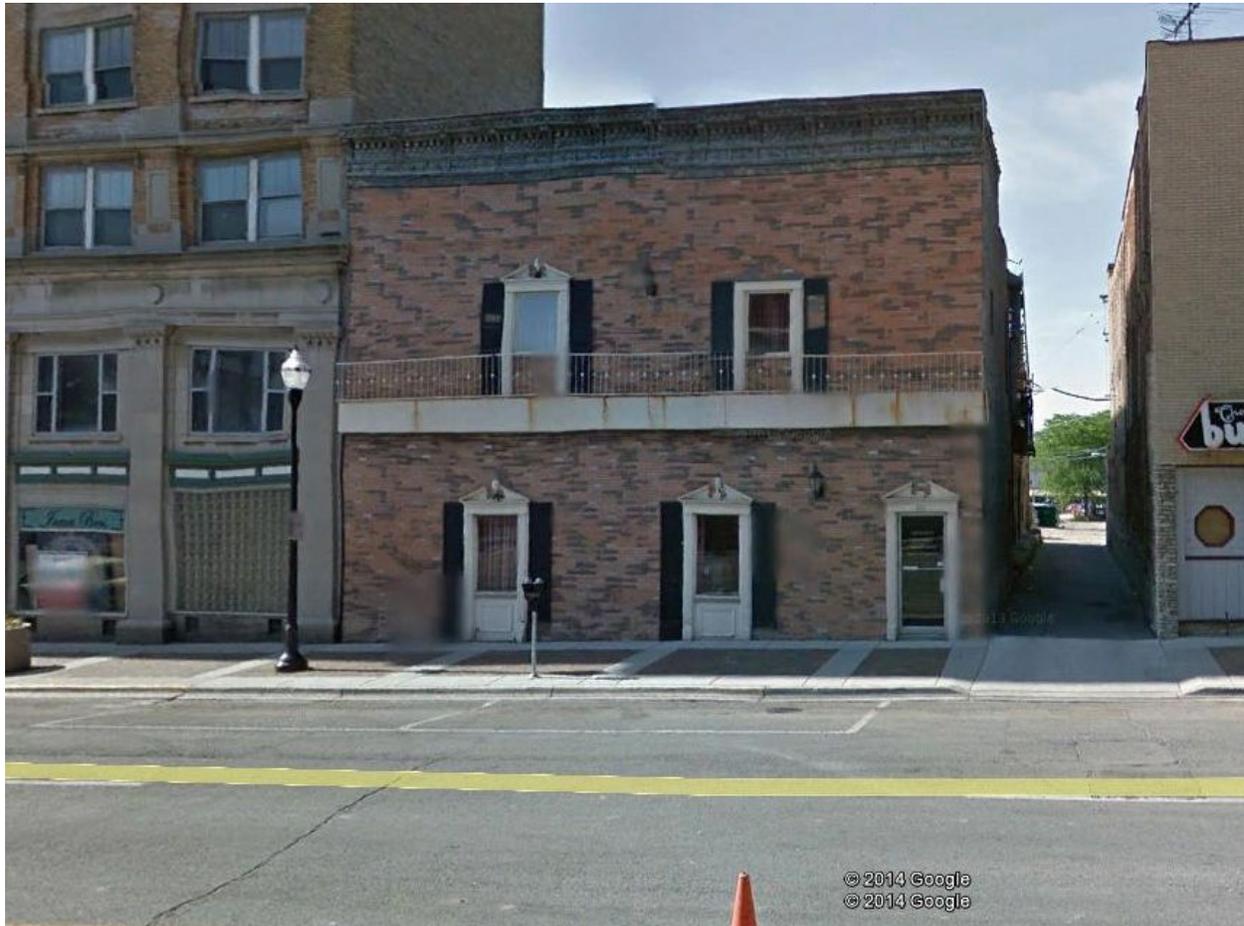


Figure 6 Lake's office in Waukegan, IL

The Parhamite sect had its origins in the dissolution of the Dowie empire. After having the courts seize his bankrupt empire in 1904,⁹⁴ Dowie spent much of the remainder of his life outside of the United States. Increasingly senile and losing followers and the tithes that he relied on to finance his lavish lifestyle, he lost touch with both material and financial reality. His carnal relations with younger female members of his entourage were exposed, as were the unaccounted for millions of dollars looted from the unregistered Zion Bank. Beginning with the removal of his deputy, Charles Speicher, in January 1906,⁹⁵ Dowie and the Zionists were to feature regularly in most of the nation's newspapers for the next year. This was due to the tragicomic decline of the organization, along with the unbridled fight for power that continued with each new sign of the leader's demise. During April, a leading Zionist, W.G. Voliva, led an open revolt and seized control of the organization. In

⁹⁴ See *Chicago Tribune* December 2 1903; the whole history of Dowie's financial and legal troubles can be found in "Holmes vs Dowie et al," *Federal Reporter* 138 (1906-7): 634-43.

⁹⁵ "Bow to Dowie's Will," *Chicago Tribune* January 27 1906.

doing so, a vast expose of Dowie was made public.⁹⁶ Misappropriations, mistresses, and a whole other host of abuses were laid open in order to discredit Dowie and legitimize Voliva.⁹⁷ When Dowie finally returned to Zion, he ended up being humiliated in court.⁹⁸ In short, the affairs of the Zionists became tabloid fodder, and the church a laughing stock across the entire world. Once Dowie was removed from the scene in mid-1906, the internecine squabbles between Voliva and other pretenders to the Zionist crown would further keep the church in public view for another year.

To say that Dowie's followers were discouraged would be an understatement. Lake's close friend, F.F. Bosworth, noted in the lugubrious language of Pentecostalism, "the time was at hand, when, as a Christian he was to wake up to the utter falsity of the claims which were even then developing in the mind and purpose of the mistaken, tho really great leader of Zion City, and to decline to have further association with so misguided a man."⁹⁹

Into this morass stepped Charles Parham, the originator of the Pentecostal faith. Parham, whose followers had found the gift of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, had sparked a new Pentecostal movement that was to sweep the Christian world following the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906. Parham and most other early Pentecostals preached that speaking in tongues was evidence of an individual's "baptism in the holy ghost". Moreover, the recovery of speaking tongues was interpreted to mean that the world was reverting to the apostolic stage of Christianity found in the Book of Acts, and that the Second Coming of Jesus was imminent. On a broader level, Pentecostalism privileged religious ecstasy, feeling, prophecy, and testimony over Scripture, and hence appealed largely to marginalized workers and urban migrants across the world. Faith Healing and other "Signs and Miracles" played a crucial role in convincing Christians to join this movement.

I have come to save the people of Zion from the selfishness and bigotry of their leaders...Four months ago I saw Zion City in a vision, and troubles of its peoples were made clear to me. 'Arise and go to Zion and take up the burden of an oppressed people,' a voice said to me. I am here and will bring you out of all your difficulties if you will trust in me.¹⁰⁰

The reported crowd of some three hundred people enthusiastically received this message in Zion: "the fervor aroused at the Parham meetings is said by those who have attended

⁹⁶ See *Leaves of Healing* 18, 25 (1906): 438ff; 18, 26 (1906): 460-3.

⁹⁷ E.g. "Final Broadside in Dowie Expose," *Chicago Tribune* April 10 1906.

⁹⁸ E.g. "Dowie Tells How He Got Free Cash," *Chicago Tribune* June 17, 1906.

⁹⁹ Perkins, *Joybringer Bosworth*, 38.

¹⁰⁰ *Cleveland Plain Dealer* September 27, 1906.

to surpass the old-time camp meetings."¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, those who gave Parham their trust found that this association would only dramatically increase their "difficulties" thereafter. John G Lake was one of the early followers of Parham, as was Bosworth and a number of other prominent Zionists. By late 1906 Lake, Bosworth, and others were preaching and speaking in tongues on the street corners of Waukegan, and in early 1907 Lake made the newspapers when he spoke in tongues at a Parhamite meeting.¹⁰²

Lake was not initially in a leadership position amongst the Parhamites. Parham himself was resident in Zion for several months, based in a large, brazier-heated tent that he erected in the face of Voliva's refusal to allow him to use worship facilities in Zion. In late January 1907, however, the municipal water tower collapsed and fell on the tent, and Parham vacated the city, saying he did not want to be seen as "a Dowie", but as only "one man in the movement".¹⁰³ Despite this hasty and permanent departure, Parham's followers continued to pay him tithes and to show considerable resiliency in the face of opposition they encountered in Zion City from the Voliva faction during a time of "divisive strife"¹⁰⁴ in Zion. Tom Hezmalhalch (Figure 7), who arrived in Zion from Azusa Street not long after Parham's departure, seems to have played a considerable role in stabilizing the group.¹⁰⁵ Although his weakness for the pleasures of the flesh had disgraced him in Azusa Street circles, Hezmalhalch was able to get William Seymour to visit Zion City and to otherwise keep the group connected to the burgeoning Pentecostal movement.¹⁰⁶ Lake himself rose in prominence within the group over the course of the year, and by summer was leading services and was generally considered (along with Hezmalhalch) as the unofficial leader.

¹⁰¹ *Chicago Record-Herald* October 18 1906.

¹⁰² See *Waukegan Daily Gazette* November 19 1906; *Waukegan Daily Sun* 3 January 1907; *Houston Post* February 19 1907. Lake may not have been at Parham's early rallies, and later recollected first meeting the Parhams at Fred Bosworth's house, *John G Lake*, 86-7.

¹⁰³ See *Chicago Chronicle* 21 January 1907. Parham's account of his time in Zion is not particularly revealing, and leaves out the water tower incident. See S. Parham, *The Life of Charles F. Parham: Founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement* (Baxter Springs, KS: Apostolic Faith bible College, 1930), 148-60, 171-7.

¹⁰⁴ *Webster City Journal* December 27 1906.

¹⁰⁵ See *Apostolic Faith* (June-Sept): 1907.

¹⁰⁶ This is when a well-known photograph of Seymour, Bosworth, and Hezmalhalch was taken. Most information on this group comes from the frequent denunciatory accounts in the weekly edition of the *Zion Herald* 4 May 1907ff.



Figure 7 Zion II 1907, Glenn Cook, F F Bosworth, Tom Hezmalhalch (back row) William Seymour, John G Lake

Lake's increasing prominence within the Parhamite sect coincided with the group's descent into a collective frenzy of insanity, demon possession, and murder. The trigger for the Parhamites' implosion was the July arrest of Charles Parham in Texas for soliciting sex from a teenage boy in Texas. These charges appeared to confirm rumors about the latter's "heinous sins" that Seymour's Midwestern deputy, Glenn Cook, had warned the Parhamites about, and which would ruin his reputation in Pentecostal quarters thereafter.¹⁰⁷ Parham's fall, which came in the aftermath of John Alexander Dowie's long slide into disgrace, meant that his followers had seen two cherished leaders exposed as frauds in quick succession. In the meantime, Zion City's economy was struggling and most of the Parhamites were in financial straits. To make matters worse, the Parhamites' biggest enemy, W.G. Voliva, was tightening his grip on Zion City's theocratic structures. In the face of these setbacks, the Parhamites evidently viewed the source of their problems as being diabolical. In the weeks following Parham's downfall, nine (seven women and two boys) Parhamites would be possessed by demons.¹⁰⁸

As the frenzy continued the Parhamites met practically daily for long, emotional services: "insanity becomes common, ravings of lunatics are heard on every hand, adulteries are committed."¹⁰⁹ Both the Parhamites and the Voliva faction had been preaching about the imminence of the "end times" since early in 1907, which undoubtedly contributed to a

¹⁰⁷ See J.R. Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 137-8, 224-5. Cook had visited the Parhamites with William Seymour in early 1907, and had been visited in Indianapolis by various Parhamites as well. See *Zion Herald* August 2 1907.

¹⁰⁸ See *Indianapolis News* 22 September 1907.

¹⁰⁹ *Zion Herald* 20 September 1907.

heightened atmosphere. Meanwhile, Voliva and the mainstream church members in Zion City were relentless in their attacks on the Parhamites, calling them "intoxicated," "demon-inspired," "a fanatical set," "an abomination," and a "barbarian horde." Denunciations of the new "Tongues Church" were a regular feature of sermons and newspapers. Meanwhile lurid descriptions of the Parhamite services, which featured excessive "emotionalism", including dancing, jumping, waving hands, "insane ecstasies", shouting, rolling on the floor, spasms, trances, and visions, were accompanied by warnings from Voliva that this behavior "would lead to demon-possession."¹¹⁰

To deal with these possessions the Parhamites fell back on Dowie's teachings, which maintained that insanity and mental illness were caused by Satanic forces that had invaded and taken control of an individual's body and mind. They also relied on Dowie's old exorcism techniques, which relied on prayer to invoke God's assistance, combined with the use of physical force to expel the demon from the body. The possessed individual would be tied up and restrained, while the healer would then use physical force to twist the demon slowly out of the body, limb by limb. These attempts could last for days at a time, and typically the afflicted individual would also be denied all food, water, and comforts in order to induce the demons to exit the body.¹¹¹

These exorcism methods ultimately led to the deaths of three sect members. Hezmalhalch and Lake did not conduct the sessions themselves, apparently because they felt they lacked the "necessary spiritual power". Referring back to this period several years later, Lake recalled that he and Hezmalhalch "had been praying for greater power for the healing of the sick and the casting out of demons at this time."¹¹² Instead, Harold Mitchell, who was a regular attendee of their services,¹¹³ had a vision "in which Mitchell was ordered to quit work and devote his time to casting out demons from the sick."¹¹⁴ Because the Zion City undertaker was a Parhamite, the three corpses were not officially registered with the State coroner. Many unnatural deaths did not get reported as such—as had been going on throughout Dowie's tenure in Zion City.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ See *Leaves of Healing* 20 (1906): 59. *Zion Herald* has numerous pieces on the Parhamites throughout 1907, e.g. "Frenzied Religion," August 2 1907.

¹¹¹ See the string of newspaper stories in *Chicago Tribune* following the botched exorcism of Millie Logan in May 1900. "Bound at a Dowie Home," 24 May 1900; "Followers Hit At Dowie," 3 June 1900; and "State Beards Dowie in Zion," 9 June 1900. For Dowie's version of events see *Leaves of Healing* 7 (1900), 238-9.

¹¹² Blake, *Writings From Africa*, 148.

¹¹³ *Zion Herald* 27 September 1907.

¹¹⁴ *Indianapolis News* 20 September 1907.

¹¹⁵ *Indianapolis News* 22 September 1907. This was done to minimize public knowledge of the recurrent and catastrophic failures of the faith healing process.

In the case that brought the Parhamites to national attention, Mitchell and four others held down a possessed, bed-ridden woman named Letitia Greenhaulgh in her bedroom against her husband's wishes, and during a marathon exorcism eventually killed her after breaking her arms, legs, and neck while trying to force the demon out of her.¹¹⁶ Over the next few days, lurid photographs of both the accused and of Greenhaulgh's mangled corpse were published in newspapers across America and evoked extensive outrage. Her son's eyewitness account makes for difficult reading:

Mitchell took her by the hand..and pulled her arm away from the body. She screamed, oh, she screamed terribly. I jumped forward. Mitchell held me back, and put his hand over my mother's mouth and stopped her cries. He said, "of course, I shall not hurt her. Those cries are not her cries. That is the screaming of the demons and the devils as they leave her. She is all right..Mitchell and his wife again drew near to my mother. They took her arms and drew them out straight. There was a crackling sound. I found out afterwards that they broke the bones. They did the same with her legs. They pulled at her head. They pinched and worked with her flesh. She groaned and cried out. They said she would be all right. Then mother seemed to become quiet. She looked at me. She said, "I was in hell. I am in heaven now." I thought she meant she was getting better...When she said that they started working on her with renewed vigor.¹¹⁷

Two other deaths soon surfaced, although they were never prosecuted due to lack of sufficient evidence given the Zion coroner's cover-up. One involved a 15-year girl named Bertha Young, apparently also exorcized by Mitchell. A third involved a teenage boy, Frank Crowe, whose healers were never apparently determined:

The boy suffered from typhoid fever, but his parents, who were Parhamites, are alleged to have denied him medical attendance. Instead, he was subjected to the treatment of "driving out devils" and the "gift of tongues". Those who were at his bedside when he died assert that he cried piteously for water, which was refused, the fanatics telling him that the Lord would provide water. They are also said to have thrust their fingers down his throat to reach "the devils that were tormenting him." When death put an end to his torture, it is alleged that his tongue was found to have been slit as though with a knife.¹¹⁸

Could this latter healing have involved Lake? There is a cryptic passage in Lake's later writings where he and fellow Parhamite Cyrus Fockler at this time treated a boy with "typhoid fever," although in this case Lake claimed to have succeeded.¹¹⁹

Because Lake and Hezmalhalch were not directly implicated in the exorcisms, they were not prosecuted by the authorities. But neither of the two showed misgivings about what had occurred. Three days after the Greenhaulgh killing, Lake did denounce Mitchell at

¹¹⁶ See "Tortured in Rites of Fanatics: Dies," *Chicago Tribune* 21 September 1907. This story followed in all the major American newspapers for the next three days.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ "Holy City Aflame," *Oregonian* 25 September 1907.

¹¹⁹ Cf *John G Lake*, 255.

Zion City in somewhat muted terms.¹²⁰ Even so, he remained obsessed with demon-possession in months following the Greenhaulgh tragedy. Immediately after decamping from Zion City he went on a long fast. According to his own testimony on the fifth day the voice of God came to him and told him that "from thenceforth you shall cast out demons."¹²¹ Soon after this, Lake claims to have cast out a demon successfully in Indianapolis. In early 1908 he was boasting to newspaper reporters about his power to "heal the insane," maintaining that "insanity is a kind of demon--a 'nutty' demon."¹²²

If the state authorities did not hold Lake and Hezmalhalch responsible for the exorcism deaths, the local population of the Zion City area did. W.G. Voliva, the town's theocratic mayor, demanded that all the "Wizards and Necromancers of Hell" be "driven from Zion."¹²³ Further declaring that "Parham, Tom [Hezmalhalch], Lake" were "responsible in a greater or less degree" for the Greenhaulgh outrage, Voliva declared that "the time has now come for these religious fanatics to cease forever proclaiming their hellish doctrine and to forever quit our town...they have put themselves outside the rights of citizens. They are enemies of sane mankind, though claiming to be religious...They must move on."¹²⁴ Secular voices were no less harsh: "it is too much to expect Lake County people to stand any more for the Parhamites of Zion City, which these ferocious fanatics are said to belong to, and the entire sect should be driven out of Zion City and out of Illinois without mercy."¹²⁵

In the face of these threats Lake and Hezmalhalch moved quickly to Indianapolis,¹²⁶ while the rest of the Parhamites scattered too. Within a month, newspapers reported that "you cannot find a Parhamite in town anymore."¹²⁷

Only one Parhamite was left in Zion in the aftermath of the killings. Harold Mitchell, who was convicted of manslaughter in November 1907 for Greenhaulgh's death, was freed on a technicality early the next year. Given that the Greenhaulghs had fled Zion for Wisconsin and could not be found, Mitchell was let free due to the lack of witnesses

¹²⁰ *Waukegan Daily Sun* September 23 1907.

¹²¹ C. Blake, ed., *John G. Lake's Writings From Africa* (Dallas: Xulon Press, 2005), 149. See also Lindsay, *John G Lake*, 21-2.

¹²² *Indianapolis News*, 28 January 1908.

¹²³ *Chicago Tribune* 23 September 1907.

¹²⁴ *Zion Herald* 20 September 1907.

¹²⁵ *Waukegan Daily Sun* 20 September 1907.

¹²⁶ Lake's final act before leaving was to go to court on October 7th to recover money owed to him by another individual. This is a far cry from giving away his million dollar fortune as he later alleged he was doing at this time! See *Waukegan Daily Sun* 8 October 1907.

¹²⁷ *Zion Herald* 1 November 1907.

against him.¹²⁸ He would also receive legal assistance from Voliva, was given a job at the church-owned Zion Lace Factory, where he would work until his death in 1931 (when he was buried near John Alexander Dowie).

Despite the nation-wide outrage over the killings, the main reprisal for Lake and the Parhamites was their impoverishment at being forced to leave Zion. Because they had signed 1,100 year leases on their property, they effectively forfeited their houses.

All the Parhamites, including Lake, Hezmalhalch, and Bosworth, covered up their involvement in the gruesome events of September 1907, which have only come to light recently.

Sojourn In Indianapolis: October 1907-April 1908

If Lake's stay in Indianapolis was short, it was nevertheless a decisive moment in his preaching career. Any sane person caught up in the events that shook the Parhamites in the fall of 1907 would have given up the faith and sought a new career. Not John G Lake. Instead, his response was to forge forward, craft a new mystique about himself, and establish himself as a leading figure in the Pentecostal movement. While doing these things, Lake also raised funds for the first Pentecostal missionary expedition to South Africa. One his group left for Africa in April 1908, he gave up his leadership of the Indianapolis Pentecostal community.

Indianapolis was probably chosen as a source of refuge because it was the center of Midwestern Pentecostalism. Glenn Cook, an Azusa St Revival veteran and close associate of William Seymour, was the Indianapolis Apostolic Faith Mission leader.¹²⁹ He had visited the Parhamites in Zion with Seymour (Figure 7) and had also received Hezmalhalch in Indianapolis over the summer of 1907. Beginning early in 1907, Cook had built up a small but growing following of Pentecostals known locally as the "Gliggy Bluks", a nickname derived from their speaking in tongues. The group received extensive press attention in its early period, and was generally derided both for its new theology and for its non-racial ethos. "The Gliggy Bluks do not draw the color line and negroes frequently mingle with white women freely," complained the establishment press.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ "Parhamites Accused of Greenhalgh Death Disappear" *Cook County Herald* 6 March 1908.

¹²⁹ See Glenn Cook, "The Azusa Street Meeting: Some Highlights of This Outpouring," n.d., repr in http://www.seeking4truth.com/glenn_a_cook.htm, viewed April 8th 2014.

¹³⁰ "Police are Spectators at Bluks Meeting," *Indianapolis News* June 11 1907.

While we do not know much about the early activities of the exiled Parhamites, it is clear that Lake and Hezmalhalch befriended a recent Pentecostal convert named J.O. Lehmann, who had recently graduated from Levi Lupton's small missionary academy in Ohio, and who had moved to Indianapolis after graduating.¹³¹ Not long after the runaway Parhamites arrived, though, Lake ascended to the leadership of the local Apostolic Faith Mission. Cook, apparently blessed with a short temper, was jailed in November after assaulting a member of the Pentecostal band who was trying to collect money owed him.¹³² In the aftermath of this incident, Seymour seems to have elevated Lake, who by next January was listed as "Pastor" of the Apostolic Faith Mission in the city directory.¹³³ From then until the departure for Africa in April, "Brother Lake and Brother Tom [were] the leaders of the Gliggy Bluks."¹³⁴ Bosworth, meanwhile, decided to move on, and eventually became a faith-healing revival preacher in Texas.

Lake's elevation to a position of formal religious leadership for the first time led him to craft a new, devious biography for himself that would hide his Parhamite past. The first part of this new biography was his personal calling, which he maintained had occurred earlier in 1907. A key part of this narrative was Lake's alleged decision to leave Dowie and Zion in 1904 in order to start a business career. His protégé Gordon Lindsey has summarized the rest of the story:

In 1904 he moved to Chicago and bought a seat on the Chicago Board of Trade. At the time he handled Jim Hill's Western Canadian land and made a personal friend of this great railroad man and financier. The first day Lake opened his office he made \$2500 on a real estate deal, and at the end of one year and nine months he had \$100,000 in the bank, real estate amounting to \$90,000 and also a \$30,000 paid up life insurance policy. Representing the Chicago Board of Trade he met Harriman and Ryan and others who were celebrated financiers. He was employed by Ryan to form a trust of three of the nation's largest insurance companies. Appointed manager of agencies he was offered by the company a guarantee of \$50,000 a year to continue in this business.¹³⁵

Despite this amazing success, Lake claimed to have been perpetually felt himself to be "disobedient" to God, refusing to take up life as a preacher of the Gospel. After receiving the Gift of Tongues and Baptism in the Holy Ghost he had a vision, in which "a Voice began to talk to me out of that light" and to remind him again of his "disobedience." Soon after, he was called by a friend to heal a lady who had been suffering from "inflammatory

¹³¹ Levi Lupton was a radical Quaker minister who sought to emulate John Dowie by building a utopian society in Michigan. He used the full panoply of faith healing tricks in his services and was practically indistinguishable from the Pentecostal movement by the end of 1906. Lehman is mentioned at Lupton's academy in C.E. McPherson, *Life of Levi R. Lupton* (Alliance: by the author, 1911), 106; and *New Acts* 3, 4 (July/Aug 1907): 2.

¹³² *Indianapolis News* November 25 1907; *Indianapolis Star* November 25 and 26 1907.

¹³³ 1908 *Indianapolis City Directory*, 796.

¹³⁴ *Indianapolis News* April 1 1908.

¹³⁵ Lindsey, *John G Lake*, 3.

rheumatism" for over ten years. After praying for the woman, she was healed miraculously. In light of Letitia Greenhaulgh's experience, the description of this imagined event is enlightening: "He took the crippled hand, that had been set for so many years. The clenched hands opened, and the joints began to work, first the fingers, then the hand and wrist, then the elbow and shoulder."¹³⁶

Following this experience, Lake "could not follow successfully the ordinary pursuits of life and business." He soon quit, and "disposed of my estate and distributed my funds in a manner I believed to be in the best interests of the Kingdom of God, and made myself wholly dependent upon God for the support of myself and my family, and abandoned myself to the preaching of Jesus."¹³⁷ Not long afterwards, he went on an extended fast, and prayed for the power "to cast out demons." The Holy Spirit then appeared to him, saying, "from henceforth thou shalt cast out demons," which he began to do within days.¹³⁸

It goes without saying that Lake's story bore little relation to actual events that transpired in Waukegan and Zion between 1904 and 1907.

An additional feature of Lake's new persona was his newly-derived "calling" to go to Africa. William Bryant, Lake's old boss in the Zionist church, had been sent to South Africa by Dowie in 1904. In a couple of years, he had developed the Zionists' biggest foreign congregation there.¹³⁹ Although most members of the church were impoverished African peasants, Bryant had also organized many successful tithes-paying white congregations on the Rand, including Krugersdorp, which was called "one of the most profitable centers" in the entire church.¹⁴⁰ During the period from 1904 on Bryant's region reported far more baptisms than any other section of the church, and was clearly the most successful.¹⁴¹ Following Dowie's demise, Bryant had emerged as a minor contender to the Zionist leadership, but was eclipsed by his hated rival W. G. Voliva. This defeat prompted Bryant to pull his South African congregations out of the Zionist church.¹⁴² But rather than remaining in South Africa, Bryant decided to relocate to California. As a result an existing, profitable, leaderless organization was thus ripe for the taking. Lake clearly decided to try and take it over, although, being penniless, he lacked the means to get there with an entourage.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 19.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 20.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 21-2.

¹³⁹On Bryant, see Sundkler, *Zulu Zion*, 34-41, and G.C. Oosthuizen, *The Birth of Christian Zionism in South Africa* (KwaDlangezwa: University of Zululand, 1987), 14-8.

¹⁴⁰ See letter from Emma Bryant in *Leaves of Healing* 18 (1906): 435.

¹⁴¹ See e.g. "A Glorious Year's Work For God and Zion in South Africa," in *Leaves of Healing*, 15 (July 1905): 481-94.

¹⁴² *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 21 February 1907; *Chicago Tribune* 23 February 1907.

Lake's divine calling to go to South Africa, as usual contained two notable elements: lots of small details meant to convince; and plenty of dubious logic to make his leadership role ineluctable:

I went to Indianapolis, Indiana for a 10-day visit with Bro. Tom [Hezmalhalch] who was preaching there. Then I assisted with the services and work. While visiting the home of a Bro. Osborne..the Spirit of the Lord came upon me and God talked to me concerning Africa...for years I had felt that one day God would send me to Africa, but never possessing what I regarded as the Divine Equipment necessary for a successful Christian worker. I had banished the thought and stifled the voice within...God gave me at this time a spiritual vision of Africa, especially of the Zion work there—so accurate, that when I arrived in Africa 14 months later I found it correct in every detail.¹⁴³

Not long later after this alleged incident, Lake went to pray with "Bro. Pearse" back in Zion City:

As we knelt to pray, my soul was in such anguish I felt myself being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, then commenced the most vivid spiritual experience of my life...Oh how he showed me His love for me. He showed me the lost world, dying souls, the sick and suffering, saying "all this I did for thee, what hast thou done for me?" until my heart broke and, in anguish, I cried and told him I would go all the way with Him even unto death...Then the Spirit said, Will You Go? I said, "Yes Lord, any place, anywhere. But, Oh Jesus, the burden must be yours, the responsibility is yours. Then came a series of different visions of different cities came before me: first, Zion City, IL, where the Glory of God overshadowed the old Dr. Dowie tabernacle in Shiloh Park as a heavenly light...Then he showed me the down-town district of the city of Indianapolis, Indiana, and the same illumination of God's glory...Then, Johannesburg, South Africa, and a wonderful illumination of God's glory lighting up the whole land...Again, I heard the voice, "Will you go?" "Yes, yes," I cried, "if you will prepare and equip me and go with me."...."Lord, I will go. I'll go at once."¹⁴⁴

[As an aside, it is worth noting that Lake's two sets of visions, both of which happened soon after the other, were inherently contradictory. In the first place, he was told by the Holy Spirit to give away all his possessions and to become a preacher. Not long afterwards, he is told to go evangelize in Africa, but of course he is now forced to beg for money. How Pentecostal scholars and layman have failed to see through this problem is beyond me.]

Once again, Lake skillfully hid his personal own personal agenda in these visions. According to his rendition, he is merely acceding to divine will in his actions, and his own desires to seek fame and fortune as a "religious adventurer" are conveniently obscured.

¹⁴³ Lake's "diary" preamble [c. 1910], in C. Blake, ed., *John G. Lake's Writings From Africa* (Dallas: Xulon Press, 2005), 144-5.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 146-7.

By early 1908 he was clearly communicating with Bryant, who seems to have inserted him as his heir-apparent prior to his own departure in April.¹⁴⁵

During late 1907 Lake pushed forward his agenda to launch a South Africa mission, and got the go-ahead from Seymour. In January 1908 Seymour publicized an upcoming convention in Indianapolis where the evangelizing group would be organized and funded, and directed all donations to Lake's address.¹⁴⁶ From late January to early February the conference met. Attendance was not that strong, some keynote speakers failed to arrive, but the attendees maintained that "the power is greatly in evidence."¹⁴⁷ Once the conference began, it was clear that the core of the missionary party was to consist of Hezmalhalch, Lake, and Lehmann. Lake explained to the attendees that the party was planning on "specializing just now on the art of healing...Brother Tom and I have just returned from Zion City...Now, Tom and I, when we went up there, didn't have very much of the power of healing, and as the people up there expect you to deliver the goods, we had to work mighty hard...Now we are doing much healing."¹⁴⁸

One of the highlights of the convention was the alleged glossolalic outburst of one Sister Starratt in Zulu. Lehmann, who had preached among Ndebele mine workers in Rhodesia, maintained that her uttering of "Toola Lop" (which he rendered as "cease talking") was a divine intervention to make a dissenting speaker shut up.¹⁴⁹

Not very much money was raised at the convention itself. However, after it was over, a donation was made, apparently by Los Angeles-based George Studd, the wealthiest man in the Pentecostal community.¹⁵⁰ Lake's version of events was the following:

One day during the following February my preaching partner said to me, "John, how much will it cost to take our party to Johannesburg, South Africa?" I replied, "Two thousand dollars." He said, "If we are going to Africa in the Spring, it is time you and I were praying for the money." I said, "I have been praying for the money ever since New Year. I have not heard from the Lord or anyone else concerning it." He added,

¹⁴⁵ *Bridegroom's Messenger* 2, 29 (Jan 1909): 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Apostolic Faith* 1, 12 (1908), n.p.

¹⁴⁷ See *Indianapolis News* January 28 1908. Cf. "Missionary Convection at Indianapolis, Indiana," *New Acts* 3, 5 (March 1908): 15.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ See C.M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006), 294ff.

"Never mind, let's pray again." A few days later he returned from the post office and threw out on the table four \$500 drafts saying, "John, there is the answer. Jesus has sent it. We are going to Africa."¹⁵¹

We do not know how from any source other than this how much money the Lake party actually received, although we can be sure that "God opened the way for them to go, supplying their fares."¹⁵² The amount of the money, though is important. If the Lake party indeed received \$2000 (which I doubt) then they were guilty of a number of scams on their trip to Africa. If they received far less (as is more likely), than once more another of Lake's "miracles" is rendered mundane.

The money seems to have come well after the conference, in early March, because soon after this the relevant passport applications were made. Lake, a British colonial citizen, appeared as a witness for Hezmalhalch and Lehman.¹⁵³

The party of seventeen¹⁵⁴ eventually obtained tickets for \$25 each (which included meals), following which they had, he claimed, only several dollars left. ¹⁵⁵ Unlike Dowie, who always travelled first-class on the oceans, the Lakes booked their passage in 3rd Class.¹⁵⁶ They received an enthusiastic send-off from a large group of Gliggy Bluk supporters in Indianapolis, and were also given tributes from the Pentecostal establishment. "May God send the 'Latter Rain' in a deluge over that land."¹⁵⁷ On the course of their travels, the Lakes claimed to be out of cash from the beginning. As a result of this alleged penury, Lake was able to convince other passengers to buy his sister a train ticket to her home town and to pay for the party's laundry bills. Lake was also successful in getting another large bill paid off by an unwary mark:

I knew that just as soon as we arrived at Capetown there would be dock fees and transfer accounts and hotel bills, etc, right away. Mrs. Lake and I held the matter steadfast before the Lord, and before we left the ship, while it was yet at the docks at Capetown, before the gang planks were put down, a passenger

¹⁵¹ Cited in Lindsay, *John G Lake*, 22. The money, which came from California, was almost undoubtedly donated by George Studd, who at the time was the wealthiest man in the Pentecostal community. See C.M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006), 294ff.

¹⁵² *The Pentecost* 1, 1 (Aug 1908): 2.

¹⁵³ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington D.C.; *Passport Applications, January 2, 1906 - March 31, 1925*; Collection Number: *ARC Identifier 583830 / MLR Number A1 534*; NARA Series: *M1490*; Roll #: 55, Applications of Jacob O Lehman and Thomas Hezmalhalch, Indianapolis 11 and 13 March 1908.

¹⁵⁴ The party included the Lake, Hezmalhalch and Lehman households, a disabled former Zion City resident named Ida Sackett, and a dubious family of converted Pentecostal Jews named the Schneidermans who only went as far as London.

¹⁵⁵ See Lindsay, *John G Lake*, 22; and letters from the Lake party reprinted in *The Pentecost* 1, 1 (Aug 1908): 3, 6.

¹⁵⁶ Ancestry.com. *UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. List of passengers from London to Cape Town, on Guelph, 17 Apr 1908.

¹⁵⁷ *Apostolic Faith* 2, 13 (May 1908): n.p; *The Pentecost* 1, 1 (Aug 1908): 3, 6. The send off is described in "Gliggy Bluks Off For Wilds of Africa," *Indianapolis News* April 1 1908.

touched me on the shoulder and called me to one side. He handed me an American Express order for \$200, saying, 'Boy, the Lord told me to give you that, and He has been telling that for the last two and a half weeks.' It paid all my expenses and landed us in Johannesburg.¹⁵⁸

The evidence suggests the following. If the Lake party received \$2000 then they managed to scam a number of unwary voyagers on their trip into giving them more money. Lake, who was to be well funded for several years following his arrival in South Africa, was to routinely plead poverty and beg for money in the Pentecostal press. It is certainly conceivable they had the money. If, on the other hand, they received far less, the initial miracle was highly unspectacular and exaggerated.

To conclude, it is worth examining the wreckage the Lake party left behind in Indianapolis. Just as when they left Zion some six months earlier, some human beings had been destroyed—never to be mentioned again. Before Lake assumed command in Indianapolis, faith healing was not a prominent feature of the "Gliggy Bluks", and there is no indication of any kind that this group adhered to the Dowieite proscription against modern medicine. But with Lake's arrival this changed, and his preaching on "the humbug of medicine," and his denunciatory attacks on "doctors, drugs, and devils,"¹⁵⁹ began. Faith healing took the place of medical treatment, and soon Lake boasted at the convention: "Now we are doing much healing."¹⁶⁰

It would appear that many of his followers took Lake's preaching to heart quickly.

In the case of Indianapolis, the victim of Lake's preaching was nine year-old Freddie Davis, the son of an African-American "Gliggy Bluk" who fractured his thigh a week before the outset of the Africa convention. After Freddie fell off a coal wagon and suffered the fracture, his mother, "Mrs. Galloway denied the boy a physician, saying the children gathered about that Christ would heal him...his mother and numerous followers have held repeated prayers for the child, but the leg refused to adjust itself."¹⁶¹ Under cross-examination Mrs Galloway explained why she had not called a doctor:

"Because Jesus Christ is his healer," she answered indignantly.

"But the leg hurts him," insisted the humane inspector."

"No, it doesn't if he just thinks it doesn't," she added.

¹⁵⁸ Lake's letter to Flower, May 30 1908, reprinted in *The Pentecost* 1,1 (Aug 1908): 6. This story was retold and embellished many times throughout Lake's career.

¹⁵⁹ *Sault Ste Marie Evening News* February 2 1903.

¹⁶⁰ *Indianapolis News* January 28 1908.

¹⁶¹ "Gliggy Bluk Mother Tries Faith Healing," *Indianapolis News* March 4 1908.

"But suppose you cut your finger off. What would you do about that?"

"Stick it back on and Jesus would heal it. It's all imagination."

"What's imagination?"

"Why this hurting business. Nothing hurts if your heart's right and you don't think it hurts."¹⁶²

Unfortunately for Freddie Davis, it failed to work. X-rays soon showed that his fractured thigh bones had fused in such a way as to render him crippled for life. His mother was eventually fined and sentenced to jail for neglect, while Davis spent the rest of his life on crutches.¹⁶³

As he left on his historic evangelizing mission for Africa, John G Lake was well aware that that faith healing had no chance of curing organic conditions such as broken limbs. He had no compunctions, though, about preaching that they could, no matter how damaging the results would be.

¹⁶² Ibid. This passage indicates that Lake was reading the early faith healing writer W. F. Evans and using his material in sermons. See *Healing By Faith: or, Primitive Mind Cure* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1885) Ch. 8.

¹⁶³ "Colored Gliggy Bluk Punished and Warned," *Indianapolis News* March 9 1908.