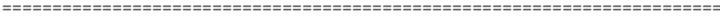


with that of its founder.” Like John Wesley, this “African sibyl,” was convinced that “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”³⁸ This was the standard that she carried throughout her ministry, and which was deeply engraved on her heart and her life.

There is little left to remind us of Amanda Berry Smith, the ex-slave and “colored evangelist,” who incessantly battled racial and gender prejudice and persecution, and labored so tirelessly for over sixty-five years to enlighten those “separated from the life of God” – to help them overcome their ignorance by sharing the good news of the gospel – to soften their hardened hearts to receive the blessing of holiness. Almost all that remains of her legacy is her nearly forgotten autobiography, a relatively recent (and overdue) biography, a few references in some aged articles, and a historical marker standing outside an old church building (now a residence) in a small town in south-central Pennsylvania.



Amanda Berry Smith in Philadelphia

The following is an excerpt from Amanda’s autobiography, pages 225-227, describing services in a number of Methodist Churches in Philadelphia in 1878.

It was in '78, I was holding meeting, first at Manayunk, Brother Rakestraw’s; then at Holmesburg, Brother Gillingham’s; then at Camden, then at Norristown, Brother Day’s. We had a good work at all these places. Many souls were saved and believers built up. Then I was called to Horton Street. Brother Robinson was pastor. There the Lord blessed us mightily. There was a sweeping revival. Every night for more than two weeks the church was packed, altar and pulpit...

One dear woman that I met last fall at the Saturday night holiness meeting, told me she was converted at that meeting; also her husband and two children. She told me how she disliked me because I was a colored woman, how she went to church full of prejudice; but when God saved her, he took it all out, and now she loves me as a sister, and thinks I have a beautiful color! Of course, I call that a good con-

³⁸Israel, 61, 147. Sibyl means “prophetess,” from the Greek word *sybylla*, referring to women in antiquity who prophesied at Greek temples. In the medieval period, these ancient female prophets were regarded as precursors among the Greeks to Christ, much as were some of the Greek philosophers.



Philadelphia's Pitman ME Church, at 23rd and Lombard, in the 1870s. Pitman Church later moved from that site, and disbanded in the 1950s.

version to begin with. Some people don't get enough of the blessing to take prejudice out of them, even after they are sanctified.

Sometime after this I went to Pitman Church. Rev. George McLaughlin was pastor. The church was not finished. We held meetings in the lecture room, a fine large room that would hold over three hundred, I suppose, and every night it was packed. Here we had a grand time from the start. On Sunday afternoon we had a marvelous meeting. At that meeting dear Brother Alkhorn got the blessing of sanctification, after seeking it for thirty years, as he said in his testimony when he arose. I shall never forget that Sabbath afternoon. The Lord wonderfully helped me to speak for Him. Brother McLaughlin was a grand, good man to work with, though he was not very definite on the line of holiness, but he said to me, "Sister Smith, you go ahead; I am with you." So he put no bands on and I had perfect freedom, thank God.

Brother Alkhorn was a local preacher; was a converted man and had been for years, and always longed for the blessing of full salvation.

He was thorough Wesleyan as well as Scriptural in his views of the doctrine. He said he would preach it and sometimes would believe he had it, then he would meet with ministers that did not see it as he did, and declare that all was done at conversion. Then he would get in the dark again, and this was the way he went on for years... He sat that Sunday afternoon about three pews from the altar, while many testimonies were given... to the experience and power of this great salvation. Then we had an altar service, and I urged those who really desired to know the experience for themselves to come forward and kneel at the altar, and settle it then and there. A number came forward. I saw Brother A. get up deliberately, take off his overcoat, fold it together, and then take his hat and cane and walk forward and hand them to some of the brethren. And as he kneeled at the altar, he said, "Brethren, I want the blessing." And he began to pray like he wanted it, indeed; and in a little while he sank down into a calm and said, "It is done, praise the Lord. The blood cleanseth; glory to Jesus." He arose and bore the testimony that I have already given...

At the same altar, kneeling just a little further along from where Brother Alkhorn kneeled, a great big man, a Dutchman, was kneeling. He had been seeking the Lord for fifteen years, off and on, but never got into clear light. The people at the altar were all getting blessed, and rising one after the other, and it was getting late and time for the meeting to close. This poor man got into an awful struggle. He cried out, "Lord, save me." He wouldn't get up. "Hold on," I shouted, "you are nearly out." I felt things were giving way, and I said, "All you need, all you want, is a little more faith in Jesus," and his poor wife felt she could not hold on any longer. She came inside the altar and was just about to throw her arms around his neck. She was overcome with sympathy for him. I caught her and said, "Oh, whatever you do, don't touch him; you will hinder him. "Oh," she said, "I have prayed so long." I held on to her and kept her back, while the brethren were encouraging his faith. In a few minutes, he sprang to his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "I am saved, I am saved. Glory to Jesus! Glory to Jesus!" I let his wife go and he caught her up in his arms, then he let her go and caught hold of some of the brethren. Oh, how he shouted! I kept out of the way; of course I wouldn't interfere. So this was a good start for our meeting for the week.

We went on for ten days, and there were scores converted. During all this time the interest never flagged one night.