

Global Pentecostal Movements: Migration, Mission, and Public Religion

Edited by

Michael Wilkinson



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THE ROLE OF AMERICAN EVANGELIST TOMMY HICKS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARGENTINE PENTECOSTALISM

Seth N. Zielicke

Introduction

The history of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America is shaped by local events as well as the influence of North American missionaries and evangelists (see Martin 1990; Stoll 1991; Westmeier 1999; Smith 2010). For example, David Bundy writes that the earliest Pentecostal missionaries to Argentina were Berger Johnson from Norway and Alice Wood, a Canadian Methodist Holiness missionary, both of whom arrived in early 1909 (2002, 23). In the same year, Italian Pentecostal missionaries, Luis Francesconi, Giacomo Lombardi and Lucia Menna, arrived in Argentina and opened the Iglesia Asambles Cristiana. In contrast, Jose Saracco believes that Luis Francesconi was the first Pentecostal missionary to arrive in Buenos Aires on October 9, 1909 and that Alice Wood arrived on January 15, 1910, at the port of Buenos Aires, and was met by two independent missionaries (1989, 12, 55–56; cf. Hiatt 1987, 6). Alice Wood's personal diary confirms she did in fact arrive on January 15, 1910 and was met by "Brother Stewart" who took her to "Brother Welch" who had been waiting all day to meet with her.¹ Alice Wood's significance for Argentine Pentecostalism is that she is regarded as one of the first recorded missionaries to establish "a permanent Pentecostal witness" in Buenos Aires (1989, 55).

However, the first Pentecostal missionaries arrived before 1909. Thomas B. O'Reilly, an Irish Catholic man who claimed to have had a powerful conversion experience, healing, and deliverance from alcohol (1910, 7), went on to work with Christian and Missionary Alliance churches and Pentecostal churches. O'Reilly preached at the Azusa Street Mission eleven nights before eventually heading to South America (17). In a letter dated October 3, 1908, O'Reilly gives several reports of the Spirit's work in Buenos Aires (1909a, 11) and implies that this is not his first trip to South America. He follows this up again in April, 1909, in *The Bridegroom's*

¹ Alice Wood's diary is arranged by date, not page number. Therefore, I reference her quotes by date.

Messenger with additional testimonies which use very early Pentecostal language, including phrases such as “the fire” and “baptized in the Holy Ghost” (1909b, 4). O’Reilly was not the only person contending for Pentecostalism in Argentina. Earl W. Clark’s report in the March 1, 1910 issue of *The Pentecost* writes about an existing Pentecostal work in Argentina and it appears as though other missionaries, including Christian and Missionary Alliance missionaries, may have planted even earlier seeds for the Pentecostal movement.²

While the early Pentecostals from North America attempted to expand into South America with the message of Pentecost, the impact of the movement during the first half of the twentieth century was minimal. Very few people joined the Pentecostals and many congregations struggled (Anderson 2007, 200–201). In 1920, the missionary Lucy Leatherman complained that the largest city in the southern hemisphere, presumably Buenos Aires, had only one Pentecostal mission and that it had been only for Italians. In 1949, a census of the Christians in three of the most successful evangelical denominations in Argentina totaled 574 members (Grams 2006, 32–33). Large churches of the time consisted of seven members. In the early 1950s, a census of the Assemblies of God counted only 174 adherents throughout all of Argentina. Although missionaries, like Alice Wood, had some success in the early decades of the twentieth century, during this period, revival type religion was often scoffed at in a country with so few evangelicals. However, it was not until the middle of the 1950s when significant growth among Pentecostals occurred in Argentina.³

Between 1945 and 1955 a period of social and political change occurred in Argentina (see Turner and Miguens 1988; Lewis 2003). Following WWII, Argentina experienced a brief period of economic growth with low unemployment rates and the reduction of national debt. Constitutional changes were made and workers were given more rights. These changes coincided with the presidency of Juan Péron and the movement associated with him known as Peronism. However, in the early 1950s, the economy took a down turn and protestors were met with resistance by the government.

² Questions about the origins of Pentecostalism in Argentina are debated. Through some archival research I am beginning to trace the role of several missionaries who played prominent roles although they are not part of the current historical record. This is a project for further research.

³ Missionary R. Edward Miller began praying in early 1949, after a failed mission attempt in the foothills of the Andes Mountains. After many months, a revival came to his small congregation. However, momentum eventually slowed, followed by two difficult years preceding the Tommy Hicks campaigns.

A wave of anti-clericalism proceeded and workers were suppressed. By the middle of the 1950s the military attempted a coup and the president went into exile. This is the context for the ministry of the American evangelist Tommy Hicks and his Pentecostal message in Argentina. Following a serendipitous meeting with government officials, Hicks was given unprecedented permission to hold mass rallies in sports stadiums as well as access to national media. The Atlanta Football Stadium of Buenos Aires with its 45,000 seats was filled to capacity during his campaign that began in April 1954. Between May and June they met in the 100,000-seat Huracán Stadium with thousands more filling the streets, many of them from the lower working classes (Bundy 2002, 24). Notwithstanding the social, cultural, and historical shifts occurring in South America at this time, evangelist Tommy Hicks was a catalyst for the Pentecostal movement. His ministry was controversial and his life story in many ways is tragic. Still, Pentecostals in Argentina regularly refer to these events as key for understanding the turning point in growth for the movement that attracted people from many churches including Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals. The impact of an American style Pentecostalism shaped the movement in Argentina for years to come, eventually leading to criticisms of its institutionalized and traditional form (Marostica 1999; Míguez 1999). Yet, very few scholars have given attention to the roll of the mass campaign of Hicks in Argentina. This chapter focuses upon his contribution to the Pentecostal movement during this period of social change in South America.⁴

Background

While not certain, multiple sources claim Tommy Hicks was born in 1909. A copy of the LIFE Bible College (International Foursquare Church) graduation list shows that Theodore M. Hicks graduated from the night school in 1935 (LIFE 1935).⁵ The five-story Bible College had been built in

⁴ Methodologically, I rely upon a historical approach that recognizes the complex relationship between social change and religion. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address these issues. The ministry of Hicks illustrates one way in which the people of Argentina responded to religion, and specifically the Pentecostal movement. For a discussion on the issues surrounding theoretical and methodological issues for researching Pentecostalism, see Anderson, Bergunder, Droogers, and van der Laan, 2010. For a discussion on the relationship between history, biography, and issues surrounding the limitations of findings, see Luisa Passerini, 2000.

⁵ Special thanks to Foursquare archivist Steve Zeleny, who graciously supplied some of the archival material for this section.

1924, next to Angelus Temple and Aimee Semple McPherson's parsonage. McPherson taught at LIFE, so Hicks likely would have studied under her (Zeleny 2010). Her classes on divine healing may have influenced Hicks in his future evangelistic work. In 1936, Hicks was ordained with the Foursquare Church where he pastored for many years, served as an evangelist, a District Supervisor, and a speaker at Foursquare Conventions (Foursquare 1936).⁶ The March 1942 *Foursquare Crusader* states that during Hicks' pastoral ministry in Macon, GA, his son, Theodore Murry Hicks Jr., died at age two (Zeleny 2010). Tragedy struck again in 1949 when Hicks had a cerebral hemorrhage resulting in paralysis (Mitzner 1954). Hicks claimed that when God raised him up from his sickbed in 1949, "He told me I was to *hate* sickness and disease and sin" (Hicks 1954, 11).

As far back as he could remember, Tommy Hicks says "the call of God" was upon him and he wanted to go everywhere and tell people of Jesus and his love. At one point, Hicks began praying for South America, having "a great burden" for that land. Hicks claimed God spoke to him and said he was going to go to Argentina. Early one morning, after he had been praying for hours, he suddenly had a vision of multitudes. They seemed to come in waves as he knelt beside his chair, weeping and thanking God for His eternal love. Hicks asked God who those people were when suddenly he saw a map of South America. What first looked like a great harvest field with ripe golden grain turned into people, with their hands in the air, beckoning in Hicks' direction, and seemed to be saying, "Come, come" (Hicks 1956a, 7–8). God told him that before two snows passed over the earth, he would not go by boat, or by land, but that he would fly to South America and preach.

Six or seven months later, Hicks was at the home of Rev. and Mrs. David Klotz in Northern California when Mrs. Klotz gave him the same prophecy that not two snows would pass over the earth before Hicks would go by plane to the land God called him. This confirmation greatly excited Hicks, so much so, that during a future campaign in Tallahassee, Florida, he knew the day had come, so he cancelled all his meetings and left for South America. Money began coming in from all over the country to cover his travel arrangements. Hicks said he had \$47.00 left after expenses and headed to the airport, assured that God would provide. Upon arriving at the airport, his friends surprised him by giving him hundreds of dollars. Art Wilson, a businessman, prayed, "We want to claim 50,000 souls in this

⁶ Multiple Foursquare sources exist which allude to "Rev. and Mrs. T.M. Hicks."

campaign” (Hicks 1956a, 10). The number startled people because Argentina had been closed to great mass meetings and no one had ever had revival campaigns there.

Preparing for the Argentine Campaign

According to Hicks’ book, *Millions Found Christ: History’s Greatest Recorded Revival*, after an hour on the plane, he was “possessed of a loneliness that I had never known in my life” (Hicks 1956a, 11). He was going to a land where he knew no one, no one knew he was coming, and he did not speak the language. Suddenly, he claimed he felt a hand on his shoulder, followed by peace and then ecstasy and joy filling his body so much so that he began laughing. Later, on that same plane ride, a thought came to him that he had to go see the president of Argentina. While he was thinking about this, the name Perón came to him, over and over. When the stewardess came by, Hicks asked her if she knew anyone by the name Perón in Argentina. She looked at him for a moment and said Mr. Perón is the president of Argentina.

However, Juan Carlos Ortiz, Hick’s personal assistant in Argentina, said he personally heard Hicks tell the story many times, and that is not the story he told (Ortiz, 2009). Ortiz claims Hicks knew full well who Perón was. While in Chile, Hicks met a senator who was a friend of Perón.⁷ This senator arranged a meeting between Hicks and Perón.⁸ Hicks then contacted Luis Stokes (another evangelist) and told him he was going to meet with Perón, and asked if Stokes could meet him at the airport and pick him up. Hicks said, “God told me He will give me Argentina. And I have a letter for the president.” Stokes had seen Hicks’ name in an American magazine called, *The Voice of Healing*, which had the names of all the healing preachers including Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn and Tommy Hicks, among others. Coincidentally, at this time, several Argentine pastors were preparing for a campaign with T.L. Osborn. When Stokes picked Hicks up from the airport, he checked his post office box, and there was a letter from T.L. Osborn saying he could not do the campaign. Although no one knew Tommy Hicks, Stokes looked in *The Voice of Healing* magazine and saw Tommy Hicks’ name and figured, “this must be a good man.” They

⁷ According to Ortiz, that Chilean evangelistic campaign was unsuccessful.

⁸ Hicks needed this senator to get him a meeting with Perón because Perón was a dictator and you needed permission from him to use a stadium for a campaign. Up to this point, no open-air campaigns like this had ever been done before.

started to prepare for a campaign with Hicks, believing God undoubtedly sent him.

However, other versions of the story differ significantly from the account given by Hicks. According to Bundy (2002, 24), Assemblies of God missionary and pastor Louis B. Stokes presided over a committee composed of representatives from several Pentecostal churches in Buenos Aires who wanted to hold a campaign with T.L. Osborn in Buenos Aires. Stokes even visited the T.L. Osborn evangelistic campaigns in Chile. However, at the end of 1953, shortly before the campaign, Osborn stopped in Buenos Aires, on his way from Chile to Uruguay (Saracco 1989, 206). During the visit, he expressed his feelings that he was not the right person for the campaign that was only several months away. The committee then decided to follow Osborn's suggestion of using another evangelist. Later, Osborn suggested Tommy Hicks as a possible alternative.

Despite the differing accounts of how Hicks arrived in Argentina, more sources agree about what happened once he arrived. When Hicks arrived in Argentina, on March 9, 1954, he wanted to hold a mass campaign. However, since the evangelical churches had so few members and no one had undertaken such a campaign, the leaders opposed Hicks and told him it would be impossible for him to get permission from the President to hold such a meeting. Why, they asked, would Perón meet with Hicks, an unknown American evangelist, when he refused to even meet with other high level foreign government officials including high ranking American government officials (Miller 1964, 34; 1999, 63)?

They also opposed meeting in a stadium because it was a place where they claimed people swore and used bad language, making it unfit for preaching the gospel (Saracco 1989, 208). Furthermore, public meetings could not happen outside of designated areas. The evangelical leaders, thinking a 25,000-seat stadium would be impossible to secure and fill, tried to dissuade Hicks, suggesting that he accept a 2,500-seat auditorium (Miller 1964, 33). Determined to hold the campaign in the stadium, Hicks went to the Pink House, the Argentine equivalent of the White House. Although the details differ between accounts, all agree that Hicks prayed for someone, perhaps a security guard or a secretary, and he claimed the person was physically healed (Miller 1999, 63; cf. Grams 2006, 35). This opened a door for Hicks to secure a meeting on March 16, 1954, with President Juan Perón.

During the meeting, Hicks prayed for President Perón who claimed to be healed of an incurable skin disease on his face (Grams 2006, 35). Miller states Perón had psoriasis, a type of eczema, so severe that Perón no longer

allowed photos to be taken of himself (1999, 64–65). According to Saracco, Hicks denied praying for Perón in a personal interview, but the end result remained the same (1989, 209). After meeting with Perón, Hicks obtained the necessary permits for the stadiums and received free access to the press and the radio. The next day, evangelicals were greatly surprised to find a picture in the newspaper of Hicks standing next to President Perón with the necessary permits. Interestingly, in Hicks' account of meeting with Perón he makes no mention of any healing. Hicks (1956a, 15) said, "As I stood before [Perón], I felt such utter confidence and faith—I knew that God was going to give me the desire of my heart."

On April 14, 1954, Tommy Hicks began preaching at the Atlanta Fútbol Stadium, which held approximately 45,000 people. Ortiz said Hicks started with 500 people and said, "Next week, this place will be filled," and it was (Ortiz, 2009). Stokes, in *The Great Revival in Buenos Aires*, says about 8,000 people attended the first night (1954, 5), but, over the coming weeks, Stokes gives a daily account of growing numbers and states that in the last ten nights at the Atlanta Stadium, the average attendance was 100,000 people per night with people standing both inside and outside the stadium (31).⁹

On Saturday, May 22, Hicks and the leaders moved the meetings to the Huracán Stadium, the largest in the country, with a contested capacity of 100,000 (Stokes 1954, 32; Miller 1964, 36).¹⁰ Hicks (1956a, 19) claimed there were as many people outside the stadium as inside, and that the subways and streets were packed for more than four and five blocks in every direction. Miller (1964, 38–39) said buses, subways, trucks, trams, trains and any other available method of transportation carried people from all over Argentina and South America to the campaigns. Streets and public transportation were jammed for blocks around the stadium. When people

⁹ Although he didn't like the title, Hicks became known as the "Wizard of Atlanta."

¹⁰ Miller claims it had never been filled before and that even the president of the Huracán Fútbol Club said he had never seen such an assemblage of people and he estimated there must have been at least 180,000 in the stadium (1964, 36, 38). Rocky Grams (probably quoting Miller) claims the stadium sat 180,000 people (2006, 35), Louie Stokes claimed it sat 110,000 (1954, 32) and Internet searches are inconclusive. Despite potential numerical discrepancies, Stokes claims the first night the place was full, with thousands outside. At one point, he says 150,000 were crammed into the stadium (1954, 32–33). The August, 1954, *Foursquare Magazine* quotes the *Buenos Aires Herald* as saying, "Two hundred thousand persons... filled the Huracán Stadium last evening." The *Herald* goes on to say "four hundred thousand arms" were raised to the sky when Tommy Hicks asked everyone to raise their hands.

asked the chauffeurs where the campaign was being held, they were told to get off where all the other people are getting off, and follow them.¹¹

Although the *Los Angeles Times* questions why no medical doctors confirmed any of the healings, the article nevertheless reports what happened, quoting both first hand sources and the *Christian Century*:

[Hicks] shrieks, "Let them go, Satan, get out of them, let them go." Suddenly, a mass hysteria seems to hit everybody. The paralyzed bestir themselves and take halting steps. Mothers cry with gratitude as little children walk. . . . Crutches and canes are waived into the air to signify that they are no longer needed. One yells, "I can see!" And another shouts, "I can hear!"

. . . Every Bible warehouse in Argentina was emptied and many thousand more Scriptures were flown in. . . . Struggling evangelical churches that after years of labor had congregations of 40 or 50 were suddenly overwhelmed by crowds of 1200 and 1300. . . . Three hundred thousand decision cards were turned in during the first weeks of the campaign and then there were no more cards because the country had run out of paper on which to print them (Thrapp 1954, E-7).

Some people who could not get into the stadium claimed to touch the stadium walls and be healed (Grams 2006, 36). So many people experienced healing, claimed the Pentecostals, that the City of Buenos Aires had to send out trucks every day after Tommy Hicks' campaigns to, "pick up everything from wheelchairs, crutches, etc., left behind on the streets by the sick who had been healed" (Ortiz 2008, 8). Ambulances would bring people from hospitals to the stadium and his hotel (Miller 1999, 71; cf. Saracco 1989, 212). Every newspaper or magazine at the time mentioned the Tommy Hicks campaigns numerous times (Saracco 1989, 211). Hicks had become so popular that he had to leave the hotel in a disguise, sometimes dressed as a woman (Saracco 1989, 216; cf. Ortiz 2009). Some of the people who tried stopping his car as it left the hotel claimed to be healed just by touching the car (Ortiz 2008, 10). Often he took different routes to the stadium, like a President (Ortiz 2009). When Hicks finally arrived

¹¹ So many people attending the Hicks campaigns that it is unclear at times when people estimate the crowd size if they are counting both the people inside and outside the stadium, or if they are confusing the 400,000 hands raised as meaning 400,000 people. Saracco claims Federal Police estimated that in the 62 days Tommy Hicks preached, a total of 6 million people attended the campaigns, with 400,000 attending the last night alone, June 12, 1954 (1989, 210). Miller concurs (1999, 71). Ortiz said he remembers city officials stating 400,000 people had attended the last night (2009), which would have been nearly 6.67% of the city's population. The *Los Angeles Times* placed the estimates at 200,000 and claimed Hicks' meetings were the largest revivalist meetings in modern times, larger than any of Billy Grahams' meetings to date (Thrapp 1954, E-7).

at the stadium, it would sometimes take him an hour or two to make his way through the crowd (Hicks 1956a, 19). After the campaign, the trains and subways were packed with people trying to return home. Ortiz says he remembers going home on the subway and seeing nonbelievers who accepted Christ that night running around, shouting about how they could not walk or see but now were healed (Ortiz, 2009).

The Role of Healing

One notable encounter involved the sister of the Vice President of Bolivia who brought her children to see Hicks, including one who had an incurable disease. When the child was instantly healed, the medical doctor ran to Tommy Hicks, wrapped his arms around his leg, profusely crying out, "Tell me about your God; I want this God! I want this Jesus. I can serve a God that will do this for little children" (Miller 1999, 74).

When asked why he spent so much time talking about healing and ministering to the sick and oppressed, Hicks gave three reasons: 1) He was following Jesus' footsteps and spreading the gospel as Jesus did. He quoted Matthew 10:7–8 where Jesus told the disciples, "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." Jesus set the example by healing all who came to him. 2) Since a majority of Christians deal with sin and ignore the cry of the suffering and sick, Hicks was determined to dedicate himself solely to the ministry of healing, making up for the silence of so many in this area. 3) The promise offered in James 5:15 states, "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven" (Hicks 2008, 32–37). Hicks believed when you pray for someone who was sick with faith, two things happened simultaneously; the person was freed from sin and sickness.

Hicks taught that sickness did not exist before sin entered the world and would not exist after Satan is destroyed. Therefore, God does not desire sickness, nor does sickness come from God. Hicks (2008, 72) goes so far as to claim sickness and pain are one of humanity's five great enemies because they prevent people from serving God to the best of their ability. Hicks taught that the secret to healing is to have as much of God's word sown into their hearts as they could. This way, when Satan came against them with sickness and disease, they could confront Satan with the Word of God, not like a sword, but like a machine gun (1958, 30–31). Hicks said

people must have a sense of urgency when they pray, and approach God not like a stranger, but like a Father, from whom they can demand and expect great things (2008, 125–126).

Hicks believed that when someone had faith, there was no end to the miracles God could do, but where there was unbelief, God could do nothing (1952, 20). He goes on to state how in the Bible, people are healed differently, each according to his or her different measure of faith. He points out how in Mark 5, Jairus believed that if Jesus came and laid his hands on his daughter, she would be healed (v. 23). When Jesus laid his hands on her, she was healed (v. 41–42). In Mark 5:24–34, there was a woman with an blood-related illness who believed if she touched Jesus, she would be made whole, and she was healed, according to her faith, when she touched him. And in Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10, there is the centurion who told Jesus that if he just spoke the word, the servant would be healed. Hicks used these examples to point out how God responded to their measure of faith. If someone made up their mind and believed they could be healed now because Jesus already paid the price for their healing, they could be healed immediately.

Some said they were going to pray all night for their miracle, if necessary. Hicks (1952, 29–36) said, “It is not necessary. But if you say that, it will be necessary. Your faith will not operate until after you pray all night.” Hicks taught that each person had a measure of faith and should exercise their faith by claiming God’s promises and making their requests known to God with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6), believing they would have an answer, and thanking God for what they would receive (1952, 39). He preached that when someone believed, they already had it, and as they believed, God began healing them. The reason people did not receive their healing or deliverance was because they did not know what God said in His word (1952, 37–39). Hicks firmly believed God would bless and honor the word.

People asked Hicks why he taught instantaneous healing when Jesus prayed twice for the blind man before he was healed (Mark 8:22–26), or how the ten lepers were not instantaneously healed after Jesus prayed for them (Luke 17:11–19). Hicks responded, saying he taught instantaneous healing because then, more people would believe and be healed. The idea of instantaneous healing is that one did not have to wait for healing to occur over a long period of time, which he believed revealed a lack of faith for healing. People needed to expect healing to occur and if they had faith it would occur immediately (1952, 40).

Hicks (1952, 24, 27) also had answers for why people received healing from touching objects. In the Old Testament, Samson used a donkey's jaw that sat lifeless in the desert for many years to kill his enemies. Moses employed the same shepherd's rod he used for daily work to bring judgment over Egypt. David killed Goliath with the same slingshot he used for play, hunting, and protection. In the New Testament, a woman with an incurable blood-related illness touched Jesus' clothing and was healed (Mark 5:25–34). And, "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (Acts 19:11–12). Hicks pointed out that there is no doctrine about how to use objects in scripture. Rather, he writes (1952, 27), "Necessity demands that we use anything and everything to set captives free."¹² The practice of healing has long played a role among Pentecostals with a range of beliefs, expectations, and cultural traditions, including those that shaped Hicks (see Gunther-Brown, 2011).

Salvation and Social Status

Despite having high-level government officials or their wives visit him, Hicks (1952, 13) strongly believed, "God does not favor one person over another and His power is available to any who desires it." He confidently asserted someone could have as much power from God as they wanted, no matter who they were (1958, 49). He believed that God was no respecter of persons and that led him to treat everyone equally. Hicks had everyone, regardless of social position or status, say the sinner's prayer first. He believed the soul should come first, before the healing (1958, 49). Two examples that are recounted by Hicks underscore his commitment to impartiality, promising no special treatment for people of means or power. Hicks recounts a time when the wife of the vice-president of

¹² This belief still exists in Argentina. I have personally witnessed contemporary Argentine pastors and revivalists pray for the personal possessions, photos and clothing of loved ones and for items which were taken to the sick—especially during services when the Spirit's presence is felt. In both Argentina and Colombia, I witnessed pastors and revivalists pray for the flags of nations and then see powerful manifestations of the Spirit when those flags were thrown on the people. Those same leaders sometimes pray for people in services by hitting them with handkerchiefs or their suit coats, with the end result often-times being manifestations of the Spirit.

Argentina showed up at the hotel along with a famous business owner's wife and several senators' wives. The hotel manager demanded that Hicks meet them in the VIP room, but he refused, insisting they be treated like everyone else. Hicks always met everyone in his hotel room; he never met people in the VIP room. When the women realized this discussion was causing the delay, they immediately marched to Hicks' room. Hicks claimed he never treated one person different from another.

However, political factors did contribute to Hicks' success. President Perón had a complex relationship with Catholicism. Although he had previously utilized the Catholic Church's support to amass a large political base and secure power, struggles between Church and State left Perón at odds with the Catholic Church (Saracco 1989, 204; cf. González and González 2008, 166). When Hicks first arrived in Argentina, Perón was seeking support from other religious bodies. Although evangelicals had not been able to secure permits for open-air meetings for the previous five years, Perón eagerly awarded Hicks the permit, likely as a political move. The relationship between Pentecostals and politics, including their views about equality and social position, are complex (Yong 2010). Furthermore, while Hicks appeared to receive favor from the government, his timing was far more serendipitous than a well thought out political or social analysis.

Returning to America

Hicks left Argentina in 1954, exhausted. Between praying for people during the day, preaching at night and then praying for people sometimes until three or four o'clock in the morning, Hicks rarely slept (1956a, 26). When he finally did get some time for himself he answered letters and took long-distance calls from America. Hicks received a warm welcome from churches when he returned to the United States. The *LA TIMES* ran an ad listing Tommy Hicks, who preached to over 3 million people in Argentina, as preaching on July 18 at Angelus Temple (Thrapp 1954, E-7). The August 1, 1954 Angelus Temple bulletin lists Tommy Hicks as a guest preacher. Hicks went on to have an international preaching and healing ministry, which drew large crowds (Hicks 1958; cf. Nickel 1956). In his absence in Argentina, Saracco claims many of the churches were unprepared to deal with the growth. Consequently, many people who converted at his campaigns, it was claimed, were not connected with or nurtured by a congregation, and some were won over by Tibor Gordon, an occult-

ist associated with spiritism (Saracco 1989, 215). Stokes tells a different story and focused on how more than thirty churches cooperated in the campaign (1954, 5–6, 16, 36).¹³ According to Stokes, every night during the campaign the pastors spoke about the location and time of their church services. Beginning Wednesday, April 28, Stokes claims they began handing out church guides and salvation cards, which included a place for the person to put their church preference so they could become integrated into a local church. The campaign ended with over 300,000 cards filled out and the local pastors saying, “our churches are full and we do not know what to do with so many people” (38–40). Stokes said he had five services on Sunday to accommodate over 1,000 people, that new churches were opening because of the campaigns, many young pastors were now praying for the sick with increased faith, and that they were beginning a Night Bible School. Stokes also reported that Hicks’ ministry impacted many people from the interior of the country who travelled to Buenos Aires and that revival was breaking out throughout Argentina. Miller (1999, 78; also see Martin 1990) describes the years following the Hicks campaigns as ones of great growth.¹⁴

Conflict in Argentina

Hicks, however, could not stay away from Argentina for long. He decided to return to Argentina in 1955 for what he described as “the most historic journey of my life” (1956b, 1). However, Perón was losing power and there was great conflict between the government and the Catholic Church. Hicks (1955, 4) stated, “Then, suddenly, as though a great unseen hand had pulled a curtain of darkness down upon that land and huge locks were placed upon the gates, war had been declared between the state and the church.” Saracco believes this political crisis was the root of Hicks’ disappointing results in 1955 (1989, 215). Although Hicks’ meetings started with 50,000 people, pressure from the Catholic Church made things difficult (Foursquare 1955a, 7). The February 3, 1955, Foursquare *Convention Minutes* read, “. . . at the present time [Hicks] is being held in a hotel and does not have his freedom. It seems that Perón is out of the city,

¹³ Stokes says 35 churches participated by the end.

¹⁴ Stokes also reported that many people from the interior of the country who travelled to Buenos Aires claimed to be immensely blessed by Hicks’ ministry and that revival was breaking out throughout Argentina.

and we are praying he will soon be released" (1955c, 5). The day before, February 2, 1955, the Foursquare *Cabinet Minutes* read, "The situation concerning Rev. Tommy Hicks was discussed, and the fact that his life seems to be in danger at this time" (1955b, 2). On March 13, 1955, *The Evangel* ran an article titled, "Evangelist Arrested in Argentina," and stated Hicks was held in confinement for two weeks in a hotel because, after a week of meetings, one of the Ministers of the Government ordered the meetings closed down (Cunningham 1955, 2).¹⁵ No official reason was given for shutting the meetings down, but the article's author speculated it was due to friction between the Argentine Government and the Catholic Church. What they were probably unaware of at the time was that a coup was taking place and the military was taking control (see Turner and Miguens 1988; Lewis 2003).

Hicks was released on February 4, and forbidden to hold further meetings. Yet, despite the "failure" of Hicks' second missionary journey to Argentina, Thomas Nickel (1956, 10) reports:

[I]nspiring and heart-moving scenes of the first great campaign which moved the land from one end to the other, opening wide the door... way out even to the most remote village in distant areas. During this second visit a very real work has been accomplished in establishing the work done in the first visit... Many small towns and cities have been reached.

Despite the complex political situation in Argentina, many reports describe Hicks' ministry as bearing much fruit. The first sentence on the back cover of Grams' book (2006) reads: "Started in earnest in the 1950s, the decades-old revival in Argentina is still going strong." Ortiz said he witnessed first-hand how, before the Hicks campaign, few churches had even fifty people. Yet after Hicks' campaign, Pentecostal churches experienced growth. Protestants, who previously made up half of one percent of the population, felt empowered to take the gospel message beyond the four walls of the church. Ortiz said: "It seemed that something broke in the heavenlies. After Hicks, they had freedom to speak on the radio. Some principality fell down after that [1954] campaign" (Ortiz, 2009). In numerous reports pastors stated there was a very obvious "before" and "after" effect from the Hicks campaign.¹⁶

¹⁵ This appeared in a regular column of *The Evangel* titled, "Passing and Permanent: News Briefs from the Christian Perspective." No original source or listed, and since this was a regular column, no author was listed, either. Since Robert C. Cunningham was the editor of *The Evangel* at that time, this article is listed under his name in the bibliography.

¹⁶ Miller describes the years following the Hicks campaigns as ones of great spiritual growth, church growth and evangelism (1999, 78). More importantly, Miller claims a great

Upon returning to the United States following his second campaign in Argentina, the coming years presented Hicks with personal challenges. In 1958, he had a serious automobile accident in Germany and a heart attack in December (Zeleny 2010). Then his brother and family died in an automobile accident in the early 1960s. There is an unverified 1963 reference that Hicks had cancer. Ortiz (2009) claims Paul Sorensen, Hicks' translator and president of the Assemblies of God Bible School in Argentina at the time of the Hicks campaigns, respectfully informed Ortiz that Hicks was an alcoholic.¹⁷ This may have explained his nervousness and violent outbursts.¹⁸ Ortiz claimed he never saw Hicks drink, but adds that when he came to California in 1973 and tried to find Hicks, and heard he died of alcoholism earlier that year. Ortiz said he heard Hicks had a wife in the United States. However, Hicks never mentioned her, wrote to her, or received any letters or phone calls from her the whole time he was in Argentina.

The Foursquare Archives do not contain any of these personal problems about Hicks or any disciplinary action taken against him. The archives state that when he took over the Chicago church, he forgot to file a required IRS form, making them tax-exempt. As a result, they had to pay some back taxes (Zeleny 2010) He last paid his Foursquare credential fee in 1966, the last year his son, Paul H. Hicks was ordained as an evangelist with the Assemblies of God.¹⁹ However, if Tommy Hicks retired, it would not be unusual to let his credentials lapse. He died on January 6, 1973.²⁰ However, we do not know where he is buried.²¹

light dawned on the Argentine consciousness—overnight people became Gospel conscious (ibid). This paved the way for the 'waves' of revival that would flow in the coming decades.

¹⁷ Paul Sorenson translated for Hicks night after night, for sixty-two days. Hicks said, "When I raised my hand, he raised his; when I kicked my foot, he kicked his; when I shouted, 'Hallelujah,' he shouted, 'Hallelujah,' he was there with me in body, soul and spirit" (Hicks 1956, 18).

¹⁸ Ortiz also said Hicks only slept three or four hours per day and hardly ate, which may have explained his nervous and violent behavior as well (2009).

¹⁹ Assemblies of God records show Paul H. Hicks was licensed as an evangelist from September 12, 1963–November 22, 1966. His license lapsed due to inactivity. The AG has no additional information about him (Lee, 2011).

²⁰ Ironically, this is reported to be the same year Billy Graham went to South Korea and had the first campaign in history larger than Hicks'.

²¹ After serving as Hicks' personal assistant, Ortiz went on to have a successful ministry in Argentina. Ortiz says everything he did he learned from Hicks. He threw his coat like Hicks, preached like Hicks and borrowed Hicks' faith. The end result for the then twenty-year-old Ortiz was that he became a best-selling author and influential Argentine leader in the 1960s and 1970s. The seven churches he planted are still operating today, several of which have a weekly attendance of over 1,000 people (Ortiz, 2009). Ortiz recently retired

Conclusion

In conclusion, the early work of missionaries in Argentina since the beginning of the twentieth century saw little growth for their work. For nearly fifty years, the Pentecostal church in Argentina remained quite small. In the midst of social and political change, the evangelist Tommy Hicks arrived from America, into a context that for a brief time allowed unprecedented access to the media and large sports stadiums to hold a mass campaign. While the political motivation behind the approval for the campaign may be questioned, the result was a few months of mass meetings that initiated an unparalleled amount of growth in Pentecostal churches.

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