



A Church for the People and A Priest for the Common Man: Charles W. Savidge, Omaha's Eccentric Reformer

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Article Summary: Though he is little remembered today, the Reverend Charles Savidge was a modern innovator, a religious entrepreneur whose product was an idealized version of the old-time Methodism of America's recent past, applied in practical ways to problems in the emerging industrialized city of Omaha.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Edward Rosewater, Jane Mitchie, C O Lobeck, Bertha Liebbeke ("Fainting Bertha"), John H Mickey

Religious Leaders: Charles W Savidge, Sam Jones, John Morrow, Charles Sheldon, David N McInturff, Finis Yoakum

Place Names: Omaha, Nebraska; Spokane, Washington

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Photographs / Images: frontispiece of Savidge's book, *The Way Made Plain, or, Out of Darkness Into Light*, 1897 (photograph of Savidge); frontispiece of Savidge's book, *Arrows: Sermons for the Common Folk*, Vol. I, 1892 (photograph of Savidge and family); Boyd's Opera House, Omaha; illustration showing Savidge's 1891 departure from the Methodist denomination; Anna Savidge; Omaha, early 1900s; inset articles related to Savidge's dispute with Bishop McInturff of Spokane (*Spokane Daily Chronicle*, June 5 and June 8, 1900; *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 22, 1900); illustration showing Savidge sitting up in bed to stare at a vision of a crown; penitentiary photographs of Bertha Liebbeke, 1911; exterior of the House of Hope, Omaha; preparing meals at the House of Hope; illustration showing Savidge conducting wedding ceremonies; Savidge, age sixty-four



A CHURCH FOR THE PEOPLE AND
A PRIEST FOR THE COMMON MAN:

Charles W. Savidge,

Omaha's Eccentric Reformer

BY PAUL PUTZ

The hum and bustle of reform seemed to be everywhere in Omaha in July of 1892. Economic instability and uncertainty hovered, foreshadowing the impending Panic of 1893. Midwesterners took aim at the perceived causes of their pecuniary distress with a gathering in Nebraska's Gate City. Frustration with the inequalities produced by the Gilded Age had been combined in the 1880s with a number of agricultural grievances to produce a conglomeration of Western and rural reformers eventually known as the Populist movement. In the summer of 1892, the movement came of age as the Populists gathered in Omaha to give their movement a formal political platform and to select a candidate for their party. The new People's Party approved the Omaha Platform on July 4, which included such demands as the free coinage of silver, a graduated income tax, and direct election of senators.

The winds of reform remained even after the Populists left town. A mere ten days later, another group of citizens claiming to represent the common people gathered in Omaha. Believing that the current establishment did not meet the needs of the masses, they formulated a mission statement and instituted a set of rules for their new movement. There was little doubt as to the eventual name of the organization. It would be named after the source of its energy and the reason for its existence, the people. On July 14, 1892, the First People's Church of Omaha was formally incorporated.¹ Although the new church and the new political party shared a common impulse for reform and claimed to speak for common folk, they had divergent ideas about how to best represent the people.

To Charles W. Savidge, the founder and leader of the First People's Church of Omaha, the 1892 incorporation of his congregation inaugurated a new epoch in the religious life of the Midwest.² Savidge spent over half a century in Omaha, most of it (from 1892 until his death in 1935) at the helm of the People's Church. Upon his death, the *Omaha World-Herald* described Savidge as an "Omaha institution" whose "frocks coat, black hat, stiff collar and black tie were a familiar sight in downtown Omaha." His unique physical features combined with "his courtly manners, his vast store of homespun humor . . . and his frank utterances" to make him "a distinctive figure."³ Yet despite his distinctiveness and reputation in Omaha and beyond as an eccentric preacher and reformer, very little about Savidge has been passed down in the narrative histories of Omaha or in the scholarly analysis of the radical holiness movement with

which Savidge had at least a loose affiliation.⁴ It is within those two contexts—Omaha and the holiness movement—that Savidge's importance and place in history can best be analyzed and assessed. The nineteenth century nationwide holiness movement—a collection of loosely affiliated, fervent evangelical Protestants who emphasized the importance of powerful post-conversion spiritual experiences that would enable believers to live a pure and holy life—informed the spiritual vocabulary and provided the impetus for Savidge to understand both his own personal religious experiences and his perceived duty to lead the way in helping others eliminate sin and establish holiness.⁵ The city of Omaha, meanwhile, provided the arena in which Savidge could carry out his duty. As he told a newspaper reporter in 1899, "the city is my parish."⁶

Even if his accomplishments hardly match his aspirations, there is historical insight to be gained from analyzing his aspirations in the first place and his attempts to make them a reality. On the one hand, they are a reflection of what Jackson Lears called a nationwide "yearning for regeneration" characteristic of the American cultural milieu in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁷ On the other hand, they are born out of Savidge's unique experiences. Bringing Savidge's career to light adds to recent historiography related to the evangelical reform impulse so prevalent in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, an impulse which recent historians have shown cannot be neatly divided into the "liberal/modernist" and "fundamentalist/reactionary" camps that became prominent in the 1920s.⁸ Although one of the few historians to investigate Savidge described him as a fundamentalist, Savidge does not exactly fit that label. The early fundamentalists were a collection of conservative evangelical Protestants who gained a national identity in the 1920s. They were militantly opposed to modernism and placed a very high value on having, in historian George Marsden's words, "a strong concern for the exact meaning of the printed word."⁹ Savidge, although he shared the fundamentalist desire to repel creeping liberalism, tended to be rather loose in his theological precision. For example, Savidge claimed that "a living Christian is better than an acute theologian," and he utilized a vast array of ideological influences in his sermons.¹⁰ Also, unlike the later fundamentalists of the 1920s, Savidge incorporated social welfare as an integral part of his ministry. Far from being a reactionary and separatist zealot, he proved to be a thoroughly modern innovator, a religious

Frontispiece of Charles W. Savidge's book, *The Way Made Plain, or, Out of Darkness Into Light* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897)



Frontispiece of Charles W. Savidge's book, *Arrows: Sermons for the Common Folk*, Vol. I (Omaha: Omaha Printing Co., 1892)

entrepreneur whose product was an idealized version of the old-time Methodism of America's recent past applied in practical ways to the problems created by the emerging industrialized city of Omaha.

Charles W. Savidge was born in 1850 in Ohio. His father, Charles H. Savidge, fought for the north in the Civil War and eventually became a farmer and an itinerant Methodist minister.¹¹ Charles W. wrote that in 1870 he "left my father's farm and with five dollars in my pocket" enrolled in the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis.¹² Less than two percent of the eighteen-to-twenty-one-year-olds in the United States

attended college in 1870, making Savidge's degree a rare commodity.¹³ After completing college in seven years, Savidge took a job as a Methodist minister for a congregation in Mankato, Minnesota, a move which he interpreted later in life to have been divinely sanctioned. While in Mankato, it appears that Savidge came into contact with congregants who were part of the burgeoning holiness movement, and he credited them with exposing him to "the wonderful life in God that I was a stranger to." He wrote that "They had the uttermost salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and their words and conduct left a deep and permanent impression on my mind." The blending of practical Christianity with holiness movement spirituality became a trademark of Savidge's approach to social problems.¹⁴

In 1882, Savidge moved from Minnesota to Omaha and accepted the pastorate of the First Methodist Church.¹⁵ Omaha was emerging at the time as one of the gateway cities to the West. Buoyed by the transcontinental railroad, between 1880 and 1890 Omaha grew by about 75,000 people, and in 1900 Omaha was the fourth largest city of the trans-Missouri West, trailing only San Francisco, Kansas City and Denver.¹⁶ Although Omaha was embedded within a largely rural and agricultural region of the United States, its business leaders and residents tended to be influenced more by the urban sensibilities of the conservative establishment of the East than by such rural political movements as Populism.¹⁷ Like other growing transportation hubs in America at the time, Omaha attracted an itinerant work force which did not necessarily live by the standards of Victorian morality, and the vices of drinking, gambling, and prostitution flourished.¹⁸ With little in the way of an established social welfare system, church-led and private philanthropic organizations were the only means of combating homelessness and poverty, and although some of Omaha's wealthy citizens lent a hand, one Omaha historian noted that "most unfortunates were left to fend for themselves."¹⁹ Another problem for Omaha, at least in the eyes of those who believed in the civilizing power of Christianity, was that in 1890 Omaha had the lowest percentage of religious communicants of any city west of the Mississippi.²⁰

Upon his arrival in Omaha, Savidge took to investigating the conditions of the city and then using his findings in sermons. A fellow Omaha pastor described Savidge's style by noting that "It was not his habit so much to examine a subject for discussion as to find something to say that would interest

his hearers. He appropriated the daily occurrences and scenes met with in his rounds of visiting, and applied them to good advantage in preaching.”²¹ Savidge’s investigations served a dual purpose. He learned about the lives of people he was trying to reach, making it easier to apply his common-sense brand of Methodism to their daily experiences. Savidge’s interactions with the common “people on the streets” also gave him a better sense of which topics would attract the largest crowds, and throughout his career he displayed a penchant for drumming up publicity. The appearance in 1886 of noted revivalist Sam Jones in Omaha provided further direction for Savidge in how to attract publicity in the name of social reform.²²

Other than Dwight Moody, Jones was the best-known revivalist of his day. With quick wit and humor, Jones represented an urban revivalism which sought to reform cities by cleansing them of vice and sin.²³ Although Jones was a southern Methodist who claimed to be baptized by the Holy Spirit, his approach to reform revealed a shared assumption with theologically liberal social gospelers, mostly northerners, who would have rejected other aspects of his sensationalist style.²⁴ The social gospel movement, which gained traction among a select group of Protestant intellectuals and pastors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasized the need for Christians to move beyond mere evangelism and doctrine in order to fully Christianize the social and institutional elements of society in practical ways. Revivalists like Jones and Savidge should not be mistaken for social gospelers, but they were part of a distinct form of socially conscious revivalism that existed at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁵

Sam Jones came to Omaha in November of 1886 after holding a revival in Toronto and immediately caused a stir. A newspaper report claimed that the crowd which came to see Jones on the second night was “the largest audience that ever greeted a public speaker in Omaha.”²⁶ From November 8 until November 30 Jones preached sermons geared towards reforming Omaha. He warned Omaha’s citizens that the city “will never be what you want it to be on the line you are now running with two or three hundred barroom doors wide open and your gambling halls advertising on the Sabbath.”²⁷ The measure of success for his campaign, he told a reporter, could be found not in souls saved but in “moral improvement and increasing church membership.”²⁸ Although it would be difficult to measure the impact Jones’s revival had on the morals of Omaha’s citizens, it seemed to

especially influence Charles Savidge, who was present for many of Jones’s sermons.²⁹ Savidge, clearly impressed with what he observed, called Jones’s revival a “grand triumph” and declared that Jones did “more good than any evangelist we have ever had in Omaha.”³⁰ Soon after Jones’s departure from Omaha, Savidge began preaching “sensational sermons which attracted more people than the house would accommodate.”³¹

Savidge’s sermon series followed in Jones’s footsteps by articulating an aggressive practical Christianity that could meet the needs of Omaha’s citizens. He addressed his sermons to specific vocational groups, including street car operators, salesmen, and domestic servants, and offered pointed advice on how each could be better Christians. Savidge also tackled the typical personal moral issues of the time such as Sabbath-breaking, temperance, and the use of tobacco.³² His handling of an item of hot debate amongst Omaha’s clergy, playing baseball on the Sabbath, was indicative of Savidge’s typical approach. He showed at least surface-level empathy for working class baseball fans, recognizing that Omaha’s baseball associations felt an economic need to play Sunday games. However, Savidge noted, being poor was not an excuse to be wicked. He took care to acknowledge the benefits of baseball, calling it a “healthful and manly sport,” and demonstrated familiarity with the game by rattling off the names of famous players such as Cap Anson. Sam Jones railed against baseball playing on any day, but Savidge, for his time and vocation, took a moderate approach, asking only that it be kept off the calendar on Sunday. After all, Savidge said, even “the free thinker, the infidel, [and] the atheist needs a Sabbath for the contemplation of a universe without a God.”³³

When one of Omaha’s most influential newspapers, the *Omaha Bee*, began publishing Savidge’s sermons, the crowds appeared in droves and Savidge gained regional notoriety. The *Bee*’s editor, Edward Rosewater, a “colorful and controversial” Bohemian Jew and one of Omaha’s most important political figures, occasionally offered editorial comment on Savidge’s sermons, which only brought him more publicity.³⁴ Rosewater’s promotion of a Christian pastor like Savidge was not unusual. For example, Rosewater also gave money to Christian organizations such as the First Methodist Church and the YMCA.³⁵ Even though newspapers as far away as Fort Worth, Texas, also took note of Savidge’s sermons, not everyone was impressed.³⁶ An editorial in a Lincoln newspaper, albeit one that was regularly dismissive of its rival Nebraska city,

In 1890 Omaha had the lowest percentage of religious communicants of any city west of the Mississippi.

Boyd's Opera House, on the northeast corner of Fifteenth and Farnam in Omaha. In 1889 Savidge launched his "People's Church" there.

NSHS RG2341-831



described Savidge as “the minister who created a mild sensation in Omaha by talking common sense from the pulpit” which “seemed to be a novelty for Omaha.”³⁷

Even if the sermon series caused only a minor stir, Savidge’s career was irrevocably changed. He collected the best of his practical sermons printed by the *Bee* and put them together in 1888 as part of a book called *Shots from the Pulpit*. Fittingly, Sam Jones, the man who seems to have inspired Savidge on his course of practical social reform, penned the introduction.³⁸ Rosewater deemed the book a “very readable little volume” and said it should be “commended upon two points—the brevity of each sermon, and the practical subject treated upon.”³⁹ For his part, Savidge claimed the *Bee* was “responsible for the publication” of the book, and in his 1914 autobiography, Savidge referred to Rosewater as a “staunch friend.”⁴⁰ Savidge never forgot how useful a good relationship with newspaper editors could be in promoting his work. One former Omaha reporter recalled that the editor of the *Omaha Daily News* considered Savidge a

“good friend of ours,” and numerous other publications offered consistently favorable impressions of Savidge’s work.⁴¹

The same year that Savidge published his first book, a plan to put Savidge to work among the poor and destitute in Omaha gained momentum. The plan, which had the backing of some of Omaha’s leading businessmen, was to set up a church and a school in an area in town known as “Hell’s Half-Acre.” Savidge, said to have “peculiar fitness” for the work, would bring his brand of practical Christianity to the masses deemed by respectable society as most in need of the message.⁴² In 1889, Savidge, under the auspices of the Methodist Church, launched what he called the “People’s Church.” Services were held at Boyd’s Opera House each Sunday, and even though Savidge still identified himself as a Methodist minister, the new church had a nondenominational character influenced by the holiness movement.⁴³ On top of his work at the People’s Church, Savidge began raising support for a new nondenominational

charitable institution, which he said “will be managed in the interest of no church or religious creed simply to do good.”⁴⁴ Savidge’s star seemed to be rising on a national level, too, as excerpts from his sermons were quoted in the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *New York Times* interviewed Savidge about his support of temperance advocate Francis Murphy.⁴⁵

Though reports of Savidge’s work at the People’s Church were mostly glowing, the enterprise at Boyd’s Opera House proved unsustainable. Six months after Savidge began services at the People’s Church, he was reassigned to Newman Methodist Church. While there, he experienced “the greatest revival of Holy Ghost religion that up to that time I had ever had any part in.”⁴⁶ The revival served to deepen Savidge’s commitment to an emerging branch of the holiness movement deemed “radical” because of its insistence on austere living, stark reliance on the Holy Spirit, and pure churches that were not corrupted by comfort, wealth, and worldly power.⁴⁷ He announced from the pulpit that he was putting away his diamond stud and his gold watch, a trademark move for those in the radical wing of the holiness movement.⁴⁸ His announcement was a powerful gesture that revealed his frustration with a modern church that he believed had lost its bearing. To Savidge, the church had become a club for the wealthy and a shelter for the worldly to fool themselves into thinking they were truly converted. Finding himself “out of harmony and out of sympathy with the machinery of the modern denominational church,” Savidge believed the church could be made relevant again only through the work of spirit-filled Christians who were especially empowered to take the Christian message to the poor and needy. Only the Holy Spirit could provide the solution to the problems of the industrialized world.⁴⁹

Before 1890 Savidge was moderate in his support of the holiness movement and emphasized instead a pietistic and practical evangelical moralism.⁵⁰ So long as Savidge subjected his belief in second-blessing holiness spirituality to the machinations of the Methodist denomination, he caused few problems. However, after his experience at Newman, Savidge became more outspoken about what he believed were the logical implications of holiness movement spirituality. Namely, he came to believe that private piety and private religious experiences were not enough, but that they must be practically applied for the salvation and betterment of others. He believed that he had been given a call from God to work among the poor and distressed, and that “if God talked to man in Bible times, why

shouldn’t He now?”⁵¹ His belief caused friction with the Methodist leaders, and by June of 1891, Savidge concluded that “the Methodist people wanted me to call my work by their name, and I saw the inconsistency and impossibility of this.” Believing that “God wanted me to step out where He could speak to me and I could obey Him without asking somebody’s consent,” Savidge gave up his Methodist credentials, and returned to the slums of Omaha to begin, for the second time, his People’s Church movement.⁵²

The First People’s Church of Omaha, Nebraska, was formally incorporated in July 1892.⁵³ The articles of incorporation included the People’s Church statement of purpose, which was to “win lost souls to God, and to build up the church in righteousness and true holiness” and to do “charitable work in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴ In an interview with the *Omaha Bee*, Savidge, who did not receive a regular salary from the church, gave further insight into the nature of his congregation. It was to be, he said, “absolutely non-sectarian” and “every energy and every effort will be directed toward the elevation, morally and spiritually, of the humbler classes of this city.”⁵⁵ The People’s Church shared similarities with the Salvation Army, which was the quintessential expression of holiness movement urban social work during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.⁵⁶ However, the People’s Church was local in its orientation and was influenced by a variety of movements brewing on the fringes of the evangelical establishment at the time. For example, Savidge believed that Christians could be miraculously healed from sickness (a belief often referred to as divine healing) and he advocated premillennialism, which differentiated itself from the dominant Protestant eschatology of postmillennialism because premillennialists believed that Christ would return before the millennium (and thus, before the world had been thoroughly Christianized).⁵⁷

Although Savidge’s premillennialism and focus on a literal interpretation of the Bible seem to place him in the company of the fundamentalists, such a label was not used at the turn of the twentieth century, as the fundamentalists were still a couple decades away from gaining any sort of identity. Moreover, Savidge rarely emphasized his belief in premillennialism, and his theological views certainly did not lead him to view social work as simply a means of spiritual salvation, as fundamentalists were inclined to do. Instead, Savidge maintained a firm belief that heaven, at least in part, could be realized on earth. Sounding like a social gospeler, he criticized the Methodist church for telling him

To Savidge,
the church had
become a club
for the wealthy
and a shelter for
the worldly to fool
themselves into
thinking they were
truly converted.



"A short time after this I handed in my ordination papers to my bishop, and at that time I wrote a letter to the conference, stating my kindly feeling, but also my determination to step out independently."

An artist's rendering of Savidge's 1891 departure from the Methodist denomination, from Savidge's book, *Have Faith in God: Autobiography of Rev. Charles W. Savidge, by Himself* (Omaha, Neb.: The Beacon Press, 1914), 55.

"the substance of our teaching refers to the future life" and that "if I lived right I should wear golden slippers hereafter" even though "I and my family needed calf-skin shoes here."⁵⁸ Even the typical refrain of liberal theology, that Christianity was simply the "fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," was appropriated by Savidge for a sermon. There is no doubt that the main emphasis of Savidge's work was the salvation of sinners. Yet, his conception of salvation included the temporal, physical world as well as the spiritual.⁵⁹

Throughout the 1890s, Savidge's vision of a church designed to improve the earthly and spiritual lot of the poor gained steam in Omaha. The

church combined evangelistic work with ideas similar in form to those being attempted by Jane Addams and other social settlement pioneers, which at the time of the founding of the People's Church were in their incipient stage as a movement.⁶⁰ Savidge's wife, Anna, ran a sewing school for young girls, and boys could attend a rescue home to receive training in a trade or to be sent out to work on farms in western Nebraska.⁶¹ An unnamed wealthy citizen wrote to the *Omaha Bee* in praise of Savidge's work of "saving men by making them comfortable physically as well as mentally and spiritually."⁶² Another described the People's Church as a "new and hitherto untried scheme for the betterment of Omaha" which could be "of incalculable benefit to the material welfare of our proud city" and "bring about a new era in the spiritual and religious interests of not only Omaha, but the whole Christian world."⁶³ On top of his work for the church, Savidge kept himself involved in the day-to-day affairs of the community, giving talks at current event clubs and occasionally discussing local political issues from the pulpit.⁶⁴ By 1898, the People's Church claimed to have roughly two hundred members, all of whom agreed, in typical holiness-theology fashion, to live pure lives by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and other vices. Those who did not or could not adopt the strict standards of the holiness movement behavioral code were still welcome to attend church, and an estimated three hundred non-members regularly attended services.⁶⁵ An 1899 article printed in the *Omaha Bee* described Savidge as a man "who has left the beaten tracks and blazed a new trail through the forest for himself."⁶⁶ Savidge seemed to agree, declaring that "the People's church is the church of the future."⁶⁷

Given the state of the American evangelical world in the 1890s, Savidge's work truly was pioneering. The rise of a nondenominational understanding of being evangelical was decades away from reality. Instead, a "common-core" evangelical Protestant world was led mostly by the white Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and Baptist denominations, with accommodations made in some locations for newer and smaller sects like the Disciples of Christ or the Christian Churches.⁶⁸ There were no fundamentalists or Pentecostals, and even the social gospel was in its infancy. It was in this context that independent holiness churches, partly influenced by the effects of harsh economic conditions, began to increasingly advocate ideas considered radical at the time, such as the redistribution of wealth or drastic



reliance on the supernatural.⁶⁹ A general sense of kinship had previously pervaded the many expressions of the holiness revival, but the era of good feelings increasingly unraveled into rival moderate and radical factions as the turn of the twentieth century dawned.⁷⁰ One splinter cell in the early 1900s became the Pentecostal movement, which differentiated itself from the holiness movement by its focus on speaking in tongues as a sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ More moderate factions coalesced particularly around Phineas F. Bresee's Church of the Nazarene. Countless other denominations, sects, and independent churches formed as well.⁷²

With no overarching denominational government to control it, the 1890s independent holiness movement was a spiritual wild west. Those who identified with the movement had to police themselves, a task which Savidge took to with relish. In 1895, Savidge "discovered" the existence of a church in Omaha led by John Morrow, a man formerly associated with A. B. Simpson's Christian and Missionary Alliance, which in the 1890s espoused its own unique brand of holiness theology and belief in divine healing. Morrow's miniscule Omaha congregation apparently accepted Morrow's teaching that, in order to "prove that shame and fear and passion were dead," female members needed to discard their shame and their garments and

bathe with Morrow.⁷³ Savidge, who had previously considered Morrow a solid Christian, was horrified by his discovery and dutifully alerted the press to Morrow's unique theology. Although Morrow's case seems extreme, it illustrates the tenuous nature of the line between respectability and fanaticism in the radicalized holiness movement.

By 1899, Savidge's travels

brought him into contact with another fellow holiness movement pastor, this one from Spokane, Washington.⁷⁴ Like Savidge, Daniel N. McInturff had been a Methodist pastor before forming his own congregation in Spokane in 1896, which was also called the People's Church.⁷⁵ McInturff's People's Church, like Savidge's, emphasized social work, and McInturff apparently had an entire city block devoted to his spiritual and social enterprises.⁷⁶ Also like Savidge, McInturff was a believer in more radical doctrines like premillennialism and divine healing. McInturff, though, seemed to emphasize the doctrines more aggressively than Savidge.⁷⁷

In December 1899, McInturff came to Omaha on Savidge's invitation for the purpose of carrying out revival work. Within a few weeks, announcements in both Spokane and Omaha newspapers declared that the People's Churches of Omaha and Spokane would be joining forces with the goal of launching new People's Churches throughout the West. The reports were mostly celebratory, declaring it a "notable epoch in the religious work of Omaha."⁷⁸ Soon after the initial announcement, plans were unveiled for a new three-story church to be built in Omaha, a building which would include reading rooms, baths, lodging, and a gym and auditorium. The church building was to be used to "touch every phase of downtrodden life" and was especially targeted to help working girls and railroad men.⁷⁹

As Savidge and McInturff set the details in motion for their merger, they also began to drum up financial support for the massive new project. When Savidge got word that noted social gospeler Charles Sheldon, the author of *In His Steps* and a Congregational pastor in Topeka, would be running a newspaper "as Jesus would" for a week, he decided to make a trip to Topeka to raise support for his new endeavor. With People's Church member and future U.S. Congressman C. O. Lobeck as company, Savidge reached Topeka in March 1900, but was told there was no available space in the newspaper.⁸⁰ A disappointed Lobeck sardonically remarked that "I don't believe Jesus would have turned us down after we had come 250 miles."⁸¹

Anna Savidge, From *Our Philip: A Tribute*, a privately printed booklet in memory of the Savidges' two-year-old son who choked to death on a button in 1896.



Undeterred, Savidge and McInturff continued with the merger plans for two more months, until the enterprise suddenly came to a crashing halt in May of 1900.

It is difficult to comprehend all of the specifics related to the failed merger of People's Churches. However, some basic facts can be ascertained from the newspaper coverage. The first report of the split came on May 22, 1900, while Savidge was visiting Spokane. Apparently, McInturff denounced Savidge from the pulpit because Savidge associated with gamblers and other "wicked people." As to McInturff's charge that Savidge was on friendly terms with those typically seen by holiness advocates as worldly, there can be no doubt. Savidge made a career out of his strong relationships with those who did not share his religious beliefs. A logical outgrowth of his holiness theology was his belief that the Holy Spirit empowered him to work closely with sinners without fear of contamination. Along with his friendship with Omaha's worldly newspaper editors, Savidge was considered a friend of Omaha's notorious madam, Anna Wilson, and even attended her funeral.⁸² In his sermons, he often spoke of how sinners acted more Christ-like than those who professed to be Christians. When he needed money in a pinch, he turned not to a Christian but instead to a "gambler, one of my neighbors . . . who knows he is wicked and says so, but who, thank God, is neither a Pharisee nor a hypocrite."⁸³

Savidge could also be open-minded in his approach to immigrants and Catholics, two (often interlocking) groups who frequently caused fear in the Protestant establishment at the time. Savidge did not see immigrants as a corrupting influence on the morals of Americans. Instead, he believed that Americans were the negative influence on immigrants. According to Savidge, "Americans have taught other nations how to swear and drink whiskey" and "the Frenchman takes wines, the German takes beer, the Scotchman takes ale, the Irishman takes whiskey, but the American takes anything he can lay his hands on."⁸⁴ In 1890s Omaha, when an anti-Catholic organization called the American Protective Association gained prominence and even support from some of Omaha's clergy and local municipal leaders, Savidge dismissed the claims of the APA, saying "I have heard frightful stories of what the Catholics were about to do" but "all I have to say is that these prophecies have been long in coming to pass."⁸⁵ Savidge could be fiery from the pulpit in denouncing what he regarded as sin, but he saved most of his venom for those within the church instead of outside.⁸⁶ "If people want to go to hell," he once remarked, "I don't see why they can't be glad about it and go with a shout, instead of hypocritically going to hell through the churches."⁸⁷

McInturff, on the other hand, could not countenance Savidge's association with sinners. McInturff was likely also engaging in a preemptive power

Spokane Daily Chronicle,
June 5, 1900

SAVIDGE'S VICTORY

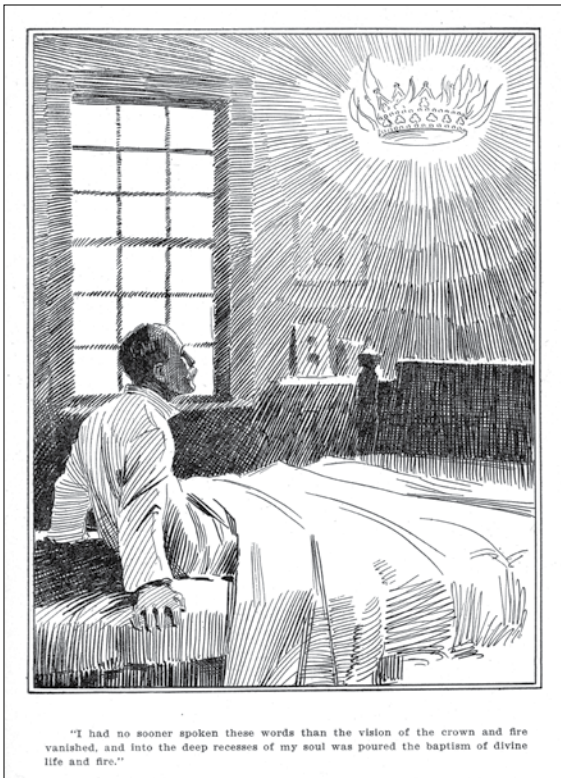
Omaha Church Sustains
Him by Overwhelm-
ing Vote

AND WILL CUT LOOSE

From the People's Unite
Church, if the Law Will
Permit.

DEFIED THE BISHOP'S WISHES

Listened to the Widow's Story and
Dr. Savidge Told What He
Heard in Spokane.



From *Have Faith in God*, 71.

**SAVIDGE HAD
A STORMY TIME**

**Hints That Dr. McInturff
May Meet Bodily
Harm.**

Rev. Dr. Savidge is evidently having troubles of his own in Omaha as well as in Spokane. The *World-Herald* of Omaha of Tuesday gives the following report of the condition of affairs in that city in the People's United church:

Last night after three hours of stormy session, hurling of charges and counter charges, some of them bordering largely upon the sensational, after a period of bitter recrimination, followed by a baptism of tears, succeeded by a grand spectacular schismatic exit to waltz time, the People's United church of Omaha severed its connection with the union of similar churches, of which Bishop McInturff of Spokane is the head and animus, and returned once again to its independent status and the leadership of Rev. Charles W. Savidge.

Spokane Daily Chronicle, June 8, 1900

move to keep himself in control of the nascent movement. Savidge did not take McInturff's rebuke lying down. Instead, he went on the attack himself and accused McInturff of taking advantage of Jane Mitchie, a wealthy widow living near Omaha who loaned McInturff \$500. Per the contract, McInturff provided no collateral and would pay no interest on the loan for three years, a fact which both Savidge and Mitchie claimed to be unaware of at the time McInturff borrowed the money. Savidge accused McInturff of dishonesty and used the Mitchie incident as ammunition in June 1900, when he held a meeting to convince members of his Omaha congregation to withdraw from their merger with the Spokane branch.

Although most of the congregation decided to support Savidge, four of his most important allies, including three deacons in the church and city councilman C. O. Lobeck, sided with McInturff.⁸⁸ With his church split apart, the loss of influential members, and the public embarrassment of having vicious accusations bandied back and forth in the press, Savidge's People's Church movement never fully recovered its previous momentum, even though it did fare better than McInturff's church.⁸⁹ The failure of the merger, even if it seems inevitable in hindsight, was certainly not a foregone conclusion. It occurred in a wide-open era for the development of new national holiness denominations. Leading newspapers from two major cities had reported favorably on the initial developments of the enterprise, and a number of respectable citizens participated in aiding the movement. Given the checkered and volatile history of some holiness and Pentecostal denominations still in existence today, it would not be a stretch to imagine a world in which People's Churches could have dotted the landscape from Omaha to Spokane.

The spectacular public failure had a profound impact on Savidge, turning him ever more reliant on God. He had spent the 1890s leading a church that emphasized the need for a postconversion spiritual experience of sanctification. Yet, according to Savidge's 1914 autobiography, it was not until 1901 that he himself received the baptism of the Spirit. He linked his increasing connection to God specifically with the McInturff debacle, writing that he began receiving visions "in earnest" from God "when a great western preacher . . . crossed my path."⁹⁰ Savidge's visions warned him about McInturff, and his wife supposedly recognized that McInturff was a thief. However, Savidge did not heed the warnings, and McInturff, according to

SAVIDGE IS COMING HOME

Omaha Pastor Meets a Rebuff in Spokane, but Wins the People with Him.

SPOKANE, Wash., May 21.—(Special Telegram.)—Rev. Charles W. Savidge started back to Omaha tonight. The attack on him from the pulpit yesterday by the local People's church minister is bitterly resented. Plans to unite the People's churches of Spokane and Omaha are likely to fall through as a consequence of this unfortunate incident.

Omaha Daily Bee,
May 22, 1900

Savidge's exaggerated narrative, "stole everything that was not nailed down . . . split the church and left me destitute and broken-hearted."⁹¹

Following in the pattern of spiritual self-narratives common among those in the holiness movement, it was the moment of crisis brought on by the collapse of his church that caused Savidge to "give the death yell."⁹² Emerging from the depths of despair, he wrote that in the "deep recesses of my soul was poured the baptism of divine life and fire" and that he experienced "such delight I never knew it was possible for a being on earth to enjoy."⁹³ Savidge's account of his shift in 1901 to ever-more expressive spiritual experiences is corroborated by a mention in April 1901 in the *Omaha Bee* of a "peculiar . . . experience meeting" at the People's Church in which "shouts of gladness and tears of joy saw the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the multitude."⁹⁴ The experience of the Holy Spirit, though rooted in a desire to encounter Pentecost as the Christians in the New Testament did, empowered Savidge forward in the modern world. It also seemed to make him more combative.

In the years after 1901, Savidge engaged in a number of headline-grabbing spats. After leading a 1906 Colorado revival alongside faith healer Finis Yoakum, Savidge left in disgust because "sick and crippled people are imposed upon by fake healers in the name of religion."⁹⁵ Savidge also accused

Yoakum of being a "fanatic" because Yoakum preached that "godly" women should continue to submit to and follow their "ungodly" husbands. "What we need today," Savidge said, "is spirit-filled men and women, but we need to be level-headed men and women, too."⁹⁶ Although Savidge had denounced Yoakum's faith-healing practices, Savidge clearly believed in modern-day manifestations of the miraculous. From 1904 until 1914 Savidge famously attempted to save a notorious pickpocket and thief nicknamed "Fainting Bertha." In 1913, Savidge announced plans to cast the devils out of Bertha through prayer. Naturally, newspaper editors were curious about this "interesting experiment from the modern viewpoint."⁹⁷ A month after the demons were supposedly cast out, all seemed to be well. "It looks as if Fainting Bertha was more susceptible to Savidge methods than to savage ones," the *Omaha Excelsior* commented, "can it be true that Omaha's people's preacher has actually reformed the woman?"⁹⁸ By May of 1914, however, Bertha was back to her old ways, causing Savidge to publically "wash his hands" of her and admit that she would have to work out her own salvation.⁹⁹

Politics were not off-limits to Savidge. After 1901, he became a more militant proponent of Prohibition, using the pulpit to rebuke Omaha's mayor for refusing to enforce Sunday closings of saloons and also to urge his congregation to pray that Prohibition

Notorious for picking pockets after pretending to faint, Bertha Liebbecke is shown in 1911 after being sentenced to three years for grand larceny from two department stores. Savidge tried for years to reform "Fainting Bertha."
NSHS RG2418-5693





Front View of the House of Hope—958 North Twenty-seventh Avenue.

opponent Dr. Thomas J. Mackay, a rector at All Saints Episcopal, would repent.¹⁰⁰ He angered fellow Republicans in 1904 and made the pages of the *Chicago Tribune* when he preached a sermon titled “Should we consider morals in politics, or shall I vote for John H. Mickey for Governor?” Mickey was a staunch Methodist with possible social gospel proclivities, but Savidge lambasted the incumbent gubernatorial candidate for Mickey’s alleged moral failures.¹⁰¹ According to Savidge, Mickey was a “modern Shylock” who “grinds the face of the poor” by charging high interest rates.¹⁰² Savidge’s claims did little to sway voters, and Mickey won a second term. Savidge’s accusations, even though they were likely misguided, revealed his continuing impulse to fight for the poor and disenfranchised. In the early 1890s, it led him to split from his Methodist denomination and form a new church. In 1904 it led him to break from his party and denounce the Republican candidate. In both cases, though, Savidge’s approach was essentially focused on himself as the prophetic individual sent from God to speak out against societal sin. He showed little interest in reforming the complicated political,

social, and economic structures that were likely doing much more damage to the poor and destitute.

Savidge’s post-1901 activities were not exclusively devoted to controversy. He continued to pour himself into a variety of social and religious initiatives in Omaha and beyond. He also continued to use his People’s Church as an institution of relief and aid for the poor. For example, he raised money for a new reading room in the church, and he also organized a soup kitchen for children.¹⁰³ He embraced modern techniques such as advertising and film, and used them to bring publicity to his work. Newspapers took notice of his willingness to merge the world of marketing with the ministry, and Savidge even gave a lecture on “Grace, grit, and greenbacks in modern advertising” to an Omaha advertising club.¹⁰⁴ As early as 1912, Savidge began showing movies for free at his church, telling one newspaper reporter, “Many people attend picture shows who can’t afford to do so . . . it will be a work of charity to provide them a place where they can be entertained free of charge.”¹⁰⁵ Omaha newspapers continued to

Front view of the House of Hope, 958 North Twenty-seventh Avenue, Omaha. From *Have Faith in God*, 148.

Preparing meals at the House of Hope, from *Have Faith in God*, 108.

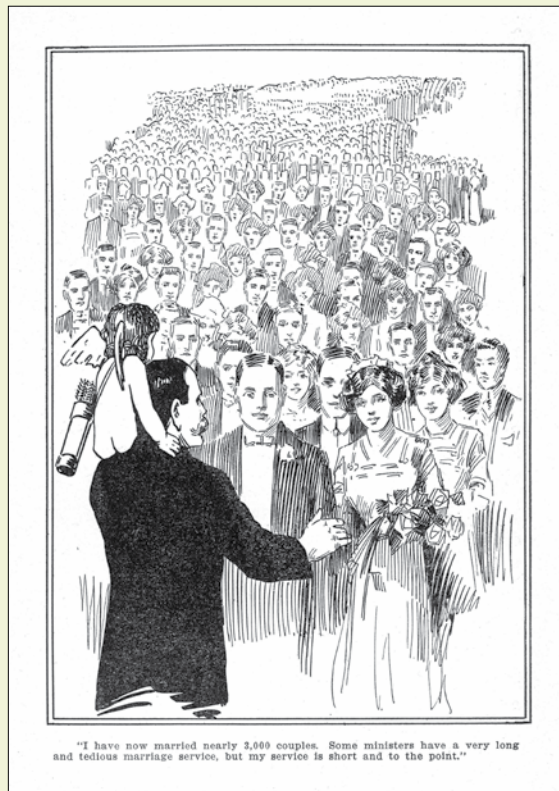


BILL THOMPSON.

RILEY SEARLES (Cook).

CHARLEY STOCKMAN.

From *Have Faith in God*, 90. Savidge performed more than 6,600 weddings in his lifetime.



"I have now married nearly 3,000 couples. Some ministers have a very long and tedious marriage service, but my service is short and to the point."

recognize Savidge's unique work. They described it in 1906 as "a distinctly Omaha organization, which has cared less for membership than for activity."¹⁰⁶ His longest-lasting social initiative was launched in 1906 with the creation of the "House of Hope,"

a home for the aged and indigent that is still in existence today.¹⁰⁷ Notable Omaha residents George Payne and Luther Kountz were vice-president and secretary of the home, evidence of Savidge's ability to maintain a friendly relationship with leading men in Omaha's business community.¹⁰⁸

The social program most dear to Savidge's heart, however, was his role as a "marrying parson." With a combination of advertising, publicity, and a willingness to perform on-the-spot marriages for obliging couples, Savidge earned nationwide fame by performing over 6,600 weddings in his lifetime.¹⁰⁹ Along with providing an extra source of income, his marrying work was clearly a practical attempt to solve one of the perceived social ills at the time. He claimed that he had "made a special study of the effect of marriages upon the community and the individuals" and concluded that "the greatest tragedy of this age" was "the single life men and women are leading."¹¹⁰ He suggested that "we can never beat the evils of the present day except the people enter the marriage relation and establish their own homes."¹¹¹ The *Boston Globe* described Savidge in 1920 as "so much in earnest about the marriage question that he carries advertisements in Sunday newspapers in many large cities."¹¹²

His zeal for encouraging men and women to get married caused him to create a matrimonial bureau at the People's Church, which included a secretary, a matchmaking service, and a courting room for use by couples.¹¹³ His entrance into the



Savidge at age sixty-four. Frontispiece from *Have Faith in God*.

matchmaking business seemed to be inspired by the publicity he received in 1904, when a Nebraska rancher wrote to Savidge asking for help finding a wife. Savidge eventually obliged, and the oddity of having a minister playing Cupid caught the attention of the *New York Times*.¹¹⁴ Soon, Savidge began receiving letters from women and men all over the country looking for a spouse.¹¹⁵ At one point, Savidge attempted to take his matchmaking business global, telling the *Boston Globe* that “American women seem to be crazy to get on four-inch heels, hose so thin they can be seen right through, and corsets so tight they can’t bend over.” The American farmer, Savidge argued, had no choice but to “go to Europe to get his wife.”¹¹⁶ Savidge’s plan to send a ship full of eligible European ladies back to the waiting arms of Midwestern ranchers apparently never reached fruition.

Savidge spent a lifetime roaming the streets of Omaha and beyond, seeking to convict people of sin and to help them receive power from the Holy Spirit in order to live godly lives in ungodly circumstances. For all his effort, in 1929 he looked

at the state of his city and felt that Omaha was in worse spiritual condition than it had been when he first began his work. In a speech given to the Omaha Philosophical Society he claimed that people were more dishonest, newspapers were more demoralizing, parents were less responsible, and drunkenness and prostitution in the city were worse than ever before.¹¹⁷ Savidge had long since turned against Prohibition, arguing that it created a “taste for liquor” and that noted Prohibitionist and evangelist Billy Sunday was a “false prophet” for suggesting it would cure society’s ills.¹¹⁸ If the city in which he served failed to live up to his expectations, and if his efforts did not result in any lasting structural impact on Omaha, then what, exactly, had Savidge been able to accomplish in his unique career? There is no doubt that Savidge did provide many individuals with temporary aid and comfort. It must be noted, however, that perhaps no one benefitted more from Savidge’s many reform-oriented efforts than Savidge himself.

Historian Susan Curtis has argued that the social gospel “began in opposition to industrial developments” but “eventually mirrored and affirmed important dimensions of their emerging culture.”¹¹⁹ It transitioned from a movement zealous to reach the poor and oppressed, to one which “created an agenda of reform that gave anxious middle-class Americans purposeful work” and which ultimately “helped ease the transition from Protestant Victorianism to a secular consumer culture.”¹²⁰ Savidge’s career is emblematic of the same transition. In 1890, Savidge felt called to throw away his diamonds and gold, to reject a regular salary, and to create a church aimed at reaching the poor. In doing so, he unwittingly opened up a world of possibilities to create a name for himself and to provide himself with challenging, meaningful work. Furthermore, by rejecting a regular salary, Savidge actually increased his personal income. Freed from denominational obligations, he pursued other sources of income, and he had the time to perform thousands of marriages and funerals. It was estimated in 1921 that Savidge had made \$35,000 in free-will donations for his marriage services alone.¹²¹ For comparison’s sake, the average salary of a Methodist minister in 1916 was \$1,223, a rate at which twenty-nine years of service would be needed to reach \$35,000.¹²² Considering that Savidge also accepted regular free will donations from the People’s Church, performed thousands of funerals, accepted regular speaking engagements, and published four books, it appears that he did quite well for himself financially. There is no doubt that

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Savidge was doggedly active in his work among the poor in Omaha. Yet, Savidge is another example that even though Progressive Era social reform often appeared to be focused on bettering the lives of the poor, it tended to provide as much help, if not more, to the careers of sociologists, social gospelers, and holiness movement pastors.

In the foreword to his autobiography, Savidge's son Mark described a smooth wooden board, two feet long and three feet wide, that hung above the door of his father's Omaha home. Carved into the board in plain lettering was Savidge's life motto: "Have faith in God." In many ways, the board was a symbol of both Savidge's life and of the epoch in which Savidge lived. Its handmade craftsmanship reflected the agrarian, producerist values of the "old" America. At night, however, the wood board was transformed into a beacon of modernity as electricity pulsed through wiring to light up the words for passers-by.¹²³ One would be hard pressed to find a better representation of Savidge's fifty-year career as Omaha's eccentric religious reformer. As a revivalist, pastor, entrepreneur, and matchmaker, Savidge took the simple old-time religion of the American frontier that said "Have faith in God" and transmitted it in the most modern of ways, and to the most modern of communities—the industrialized city. The church that Savidge started did not survive, disappearing from the *Omaha City Directory* church listings by the early 1950s. Yet the innovative religious spirit utilized by Savidge in the name of "back-to-the-Bible" Christianity continues in the United States today.

NOTES

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¹ Charles W. Savidge, *Arrows: Sermons for the Common Folk* (Omaha: Omaha Printing Co., 1892), 219.

² There were a variety of "People's Churches" in the late-nineteenth century throughout the United States. The People's Church which has received the most attention among historians to date has been the Unitarian People's

Church in Kalamazoo, MI, pastored by Caroline Bartlett Crane until 1898. See Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 59-71. An example of a People's Church which fell more in line with Savidge's holiness movement theology is Daniel N. McInturff's People's United Church of Spokane, WA. See Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes, the Formative Years* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), 49.

³ "Rev. Savidge Expires at 84: Marrying Parson Wed 6,633 Couples in Half Century Here," *Omaha World-Herald*, Jan. 14, 1935.

⁴ There are two minor exceptions to this: Savidge was mentioned as the sponsoring pastor for a Maria Woodworth-Etter revival in Wayne Warner, *For Such a Time as This: Maria Woodworth-Etter Her Healing and Evangelizing Ministry* (Gainesville: Bridge-Logos, 2004), 272-73. Savidge was also included in the narrative of a notorious mentally unstable woman known across the Midwest as "Fainting Bertha" in Tommy R. Thompson, "Feeble-mindedness, Criminal Behavior, and Women: A Turn-of-the-Century Case Study," *Iowa Palimpsest* 71, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 137.

⁵ Three excellent sources for a better understanding of the holiness movement are Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Melvin Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980).

⁶ "Ministering to the People: Preacher who Does Not Believe that Costly Temples are Helpful," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 15, 1899, 12.

⁷ Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 1-2.

⁸ For examples of this argument, see Benjamin L. Hartley, *Evangelicals at a Crossroads: Revivalism and Social Reform in Boston, 1860-1910* (Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 6; R. G. Robins, A. J. Tomlinson: *Plainfolk Modernist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 19; Alan F. Bearman and Jennifer L. Mills, "Charles M. Sheldon and Charles F. Parham: Adapting Christianity to the Challenges of the American West," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 32 (Summer 2009), 121; Matthew Bowman, "Sin, Spirituality and Primitivism: The Theologies of the American Social Gospel, 1885-1917," *Religion and American Culture* 17, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 96.

⁹ Thompson, "Feeble-mindedness," 137; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 61.

¹⁰ Savidge's sermons were replete with quotations and references to leaders and thinkers across the theological spectrum. They range from those in the Protestant/Methodist pantheon (Martin Luther, John Wesley, Peter Cartwright, Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Madame Guyon, Archbishop Fennelon), to noted philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Kant) to contemporary intellectuals (Robert Ingersoll, John Ruskin), to contemporary evangelical leaders (De Witt Talmage, Dwight Moody, Hugh Price Hughes, George Muller, Sam Jones), to contemporaries associated more with the holiness or divine

healing movement (A. J. Gordon, R. A. Torrey, Carrie Judd Montgomery, Charles Cullis, Andrew Murray, Daniel Steele), to liberal Christian leaders (Samuel Coleridge, Theodore Parker, Asa Gray). See Savidge, *Arrows*, and Charles W. Savidge, *The Way Made Plain or Out of Darkness Into Light* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1897) for specific quotation examples.

¹¹ Charles W. Savidge's father became a Methodist minister in Nebraska three years after Charles W. arrived. See *Minutes of the North Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 4th Annual Session, 1885* (Omaha: F. C. Festner, 1885), 17, Nebraska United Methodist Church Historical Center, Lincoln, NE.

¹² Charles W. Savidge, *Have Faith in God* (Omaha: The Beacon Press, 1914), 20, 24.

¹³ Statistic quoted in Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 365.

¹⁴ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 31.

¹⁵ *Minutes of the North Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2nd Annual Session, 1883* (Omaha: F. C. Festner, 1883), 22, Nebraska United Methodist Church Historical Center.

¹⁶ Lawrence H. Larsen et al., *Upstream Metropolis: An Urban Biography of Omaha and Council Bluffs* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 162, 173.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 125. When William Jennings Bryan ran for president in 1896, he lost Omaha by about one thousand votes, even though he won the rest of Nebraska.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 138-40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 157. This fact was not lost on two of Omaha's citizens, who wrote in 1894 that in regards to Omaha's support of those in poverty, "Omaha is far behind many cities of less population and importance" even though "the needs . . . are fully appreciated by the better class of citizens." See James W. Savage and John T. Bell, *History of the City of Omaha* (New York: Munsell and Co., 1894), 201.

²⁰ Larsen et al., *Upstream Metropolis*, 168. The figure, 13 percent, may have been deflated by the exaggerated census numbers for the city in 1890. However, even in 1906 when census numbers were considered more definitively accurate, Omaha's percentage of religious communicants (27 percent) trailed other cities like Kansas City and Denver.

²¹ James Haynes, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Omaha and Suburbs* (Omaha: Omaha Printing Co., 1895), 84.

²² Jones's arrival was slated for Nov. 6, 1886. See "Sam Jones," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 27, 1886, 2; "Lots in Omaha or Heaven: Sam Jones Query Concerning the Future Place of Abode," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Nov. 8, 1886.

²³ Kathleen Minnix, *Laughter in the Amen Corner: The Life of Evangelist Sam Jones* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 73.

²⁴ Liberal Chicagoan social gospeler H. W. Thomas joined fellow progressive Chicagoan David Swing in praising Sam Jones. See Mrs. Sam P. Jones, *The Life and Sayings of Sam P. Jones: A Minister of the Gospel* (Atlanta: The Franklin-Turner Co., 1907), 211-15. The fact that two theological liberals would praise a nationally renowned revivalist such as

Jones reveals the socially active nature of revivalism at the turn of the twentieth century. Holiness radicals, revivalists and progressive preachers could all agree on the need for Christians to live a sincerely Christian life, one which focused on the betterment of mankind on earth as well as heaven.

²⁵ Another example of a social reformer and revivalist was Benjamin Fay Mills. Omaha journalist Elia Peattie wrote an editorial in support of Mills's work in Omaha, and interestingly, she contrasted Mills's refined, dignified style specifically with the more sensational style of Sam Jones. See *Impertinences: Selected Writings of Elia Peattie, a Journalist in the Gilded Age*, ed. Susanne George Bloomfield (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 141-46. Peattie's apparent disdain for Jones's primitive style did not keep her from supporting the work of Jones's disciple, Charles W. Savidge, and she even wrote the introduction to Savidge's second book, *Arrows: Sermons for the Common Folk*. That Savidge had Jones write the introduction to his first book and Peattie (who openly disdained Jones) the introduction to his second, illustrates the wide-reaching nature of Savidge's relational network.

²⁶ "Lots in Omaha or Heaven."

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ "The Revivalists Last Words with the 'Bee' Man," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Nov. 30, 1886.

²⁹ For examples of sermons in which Savidge was listed as being onstage with Jones, see "Patience and Temperance," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Nov. 12, 1886, 2, "Men and Their Meanness: Seven Thousand Men Hear Sam Jones Sermon to Men Only," Nov. 15, 1886, "Helping the Young Men: Sam Jones Takes Up a Collection for the YMCA Building," Nov. 29, 1886.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, "Sam Jones and His Methods," Nov. 14, 1886, 7.

³¹ Haynes, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 115.

³² For a couple examples of these sermons, see "Talking to Clothing Men: The Rev. Charles W. Savidge Continues his Practical Sermons," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 18, 1887, 8, "Mercy for Magdalenes, Rev. Mr. Savidge Holds up a Crucified Savior for Fallen Women, A Heaven Even for Harlots," July 25, 1887, 8. For the complete sermon series, see Charles W. Savidge, *Shots from the Pulpit: Sermons for Every Day Life* (Omaha: Republican Printers, 1888).

³³ "Base Ball on the Sabbath: Views of the Rev. Savidge," *Omaha Daily Bee*, June 27, 1887, 8.

³⁴ Larsen et al., *Upstream Metropolis*, 143. For examples of Rosewater's comments on Savidge's sermons, see Untitled editorial notes, *Omaha Daily Bee*, Feb. 21, 1888, 4, July 9, 1888, 4, Aug. 1, 1887, 4. In general, Rosewater offered friendly bits of constructive criticism or shared his own opinion on how the problems addressed by Savidge could be solved.

³⁵ Receipts of financial aid given, Edward Rosewater, Correspondence and Addresses 1878-1908, Box Number 1915, American Jewish Archives, microfilm, Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter NSHS), Lincoln, NE.

³⁶ Untitled editorial notes, *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, Apr. 18, 1888, 2. The editor remarked that "Rev. Charles W. Savidge, in a recent sermon in Omaha, emits the clearest ray of light that has come from the pulpit on the subject of Sunday newspaper work in some time."

³⁷ “Bye the bye,” *Capital City Courier*, July 6, 1889, 1. See “Courier Comments,” *Capital City Courier*, Dec. 17, 1887, 2 for another example of the *Courier’s* attitude towards Omaha. Comments in that issue concluded that Omaha “is still far behind the metropolis of Nebraska and the capital of the state.”

³⁸ Savidge, *Shots from the Pulpit*, unnumbered introduction. Jones wrote, in part, “This volume of sermons, preached by my friend and brother Rev. C. W. Savidge, goes to the public full of fire and life.”

³⁹ “Shots from the Pulpit,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Apr. 24, 1888, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 39. Rosewater no doubt was friendly with Savidge and consistently offered him positive publicity within the pages of the *Bee*. However, Rosewater was a man concerned with bigger fish than a local independent pastor like Savidge. He was heavily involved in Republican politics at both state and national levels, and no record of correspondence between Savidge and Rosewater was preserved in the Rosewater collection held by the American Jewish Archives.

⁴¹ Charles B. Driscoll, *East and West of Wichita*, prepared in electronic form by Erin Lee Kellerhals, Matthew L. Jockers, Stanford University Department of English, <http://portal.tapor.ca/my-texts/884.text>. Driscoll, who did not remain in Omaha long, seemed to have a different impression of Savidge than his editor, calling Savidge a “little lunatic with a dirty head and scraggly mustache.” For references to Savidge’s good relationship with newspapers, see “Quacks by the Ugly Duckling,” *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 22, 1910, 4; “Rev. Mr. Savidge Succeeds,” *Nebraska State Journal*, July 19, 1908, 13; “Rev. Savidge Expires at 84.”

⁴² “A Home Mission Church: It should be built, Rev. C. W. Savidge will be its Pastor,” *Omaha Herald*, Aug. 27, 1888; “Hell’s Half-Acre,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Aug. 30, 1888.

⁴³ For example, Savidge invited Jennie Smith, an advocate of the holiness movement and a railroad evangelist associated with the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, to hold a rally at the People’s Church for railroad employees. See “Church Notices,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Dec. 15, 1889, 5. As another example, in 1889 Savidge attended a gathering of holiness movement leaders in Chicago, at which such luminaries as A. B. Simpson, Carrie Judd Montgomery and David Updegraff were present. Savidge recalled his visit to the 1889 meeting to a reporter six years later. “Holds a Novel Tenet: Serious Charge Made Against the Rev. John Morrow,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1895, 5.

⁴⁴ “A House of Hope: Subscriptions Already Pouring in for this Great Charitable Enterprise,” *Omaha Republican*, Feb. 4, 1890, 5. Among those listed as supporters of the House of Hope were such Omaha luminaries as L. L. Kountze, Frank Murphy, T. C. Glendenning, and John P. Newman. The newspaper reported that “It has the endorsement and hearty encouragement of men of all religious beliefs and of no religious belief. It is a movement of the people and for the people. It is practical Christianity.”

⁴⁵ “Personalisms,” *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 14, 1890, 4; “Iowa Temperance Work: Good Results of the Efforts Made There by Francis Murphy,” *New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1890, 5.

⁴⁶ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 52. Savidge’s revival at Newman apparently was not well received. When Savidge took over the church, it had 98 full members and 37

probationary members. After the revival, membership dwindled to 70 full members and 21 probationary. See *Minutes of the North Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 8th Annual Session, 1889* (Neligh: Leader Steam Job, 1889); *Minutes of the North Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 9th Annual Session, 1890* (Neligh: E. T. & C. J. Best, 1890), Nebraska United Methodist Church Historical Center.

⁴⁷ See, for comparison, William Kostlevy, *Holy Jumpers: Evangelicals and Radicals in Progressive Era America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10-30.

⁴⁸ “Church Notes,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Jan. 25, 1891, 16; Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 52. Savidge’s rejection of wearing gold put him in line with an emerging radical and “come-outer” element in the holiness movement. See, for comparison, Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 32-34.

⁴⁹ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 54; Savidge, *The Way Made Plain*, 25-26, 126.

⁵⁰ For example, in *Shots from the Pulpit*, Savidge kept his references to typical holiness themes to a minimum. Two years earlier, Savidge was on the committee responsible for writing the 1886 “State of the Church” report for the North Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and it read in part, “We urge . . . the importance of entire consecration and the baptism of the Holy Spirit” in order that the church’s mission of “spreading Scriptural holiness over the land” may be accomplished. Perhaps because of the emerging controversy between the holiness movement and Methodism’s denominational leaders, the report was unsigned. See *Minutes of the North Nebraska Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 5th Annual Session 1886* (Omaha: F. C. Festner, 1886), 30, Nebraska United Methodist Church Historical Center.

⁵¹ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 56.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 52-54; “A Church for the Masses,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 25, 1891, 12.

⁵³ Months before the official incorporation, Savidge and his band of followers had been conducting church services. See “Among the Neglected,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 18, 1891, 7.

⁵⁴ Savidge, *Arrows*, 221. For a complete list of the articles of incorporation, see *Arrows*, 221-28. The evangelically inclusive nature of Savidge’s holiness-tinged practical Christianity was represented by the church vows, which only required that members be truly converted, believe in the authority of Scripture, give money on a voluntary basis, and either practice or “earnestly seek” the second blessing of holiness.

⁵⁵ “A Church for the Masses.”

⁵⁶ Some early members of the People’s Church were also involved with the Salvation Army. See Savidge, *Arrows*, 167. An untitled notice in the *Omaha Daily Bee*, Nov. 15, 1891, 6, reported that “Madame Peyton of Paris, private secretary of Mrs. Booth Clibborn of the Salvation Army” would be giving a talk at the People’s Church.

⁵⁷ In Savidge, *Arrows*, 150, one of the People’s Church members said that he was drawn to the People’s Church because the church went beyond holiness theology and also embraced the teaching of second coming of Jesus and divine healing. He liked the fact that Savidge “took his stand

for God on more radical bible lines.” See also “Only Seven Years More: This Sinful World Will Then Come to an End, According to Dr. Savidge,” *Omaha Morning World-Herald*, Apr. 17, 1892, 13.

⁵⁸ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 114.

⁵⁹ Savidge, *Way Made Plain*, 53. Savidge told a story of a minister who gave a piece of dried-up bread to a poor boy. The boy asked a series of questions to the minister, culminating with his question, “Is God my father and yours also?” to which the minister said “Yes.” The boy then replied, “Are you not ashamed, then, to give a piece of bread like that to your brother?”

⁶⁰ The social settlement idea was borrowed from England, and in 1891 there were only six social settlements in the United States. The social settlement movement is usually associated with the social gospel, a claim which Allen Davis, a leading historian of the movement makes. See Allen Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 4-5, 10, 12, 27. One interesting connection between some social settlement workers and Savidge is their appreciation for English social critic John Ruskin. Savidge quoted Ruskin in three of his books: *Way Made Plain*, 176, *Arrows*, 230, and *Shots from the Pulpit*, 26.

⁶¹ Savage and Bell, *History of Omaha*, 336-37. For Savidge’s account of his courtship and marriage to Anna Bloor, see Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 47-48.

⁶² “To Build a People’s Church” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Dec. 13, 1891, 15.

⁶³ “A Scrap of Omaha History,” *Omaha World-Herald* (morning), Jan. 22, 1893, 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, “Current Topic Club” Oct. 18, 1892, 3. Savidge gave a discussion at a meeting of the Current Topic Club on the subject “Should Not Municipalities have the Oversight of Their Poor?”; “Nehemiah as Mayor,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 15, 1894, 8, Untitled editorial notes, Oct. 28, 1894, 12. Savidge was named as one of seven Protestant ministers to serve as “referee” in Edward Rosewater’s proposal to investigate the conduct of Thomas J. Majors, a Republican lieutenant governor from 1890 to 1894, who ran and lost the governor’s race to Silas Holcomb; “Fire and Police Matters,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 26, 1898, 5. Savidge successfully petitioned the police board to grant policemen one Sunday off per month.

⁶⁵ The number of 200 comes from a report in “People’s Church Will Celebrate,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 18, 1898, 4. A membership directory printed in 1895 revealed some specifics about the makeup of the congregation in its early years. In keeping with trends for most holiness movement churches, of the 124 members in 1895, 63 percent were women. By taking the names of the members and looking up their occupation in the *Omaha City Directory* for 1895 and 1896, the membership of the church seemed to hold mostly lower to middle class jobs, and indicative of the heavy skew towards female members, many of the jobs reflect the limited employment options that females had in the 1890s. There were four carpenters, four clerks and four domestic servants, three drivers and three laborers, two cooks, seamstresses, railroad engineers, railroad foremen and telephone operators, and also a candy maker, grocer, insurance agent, clothing salesman, jeweler, electrician and

physician. Seven members were listed simply as “widows.” At least eleven of the members were married women whose husbands were not listed as members. See *Membership of People’s Church, Omaha, Neb.* (May, 1895), directory at the library of the Douglas County Historical Society, Omaha, NE.

⁶⁶ “Ministering to the People.”

⁶⁷ “People’s Church Will Celebrate.”

⁶⁸ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 847. I qualify the denominations with the term “white” because the evangelical world was very much segregated at this time, even in the north, and African American expressions of evangelicalism often got overlooked then as they do now. A list of Omaha’s religious organizations in 1892 revealed that of the 82 Protestant churches, 75 percent of them were denominations that were part of what Sydney Ahlstrom referred to as the “common-core” Protestantism prevalent in America from 1870 until 1905 (Lutherans and Episcopalians were the major Protestant exceptions). The People’s Church was the first “holiness” church in existence in Omaha at the time. See Savage and Bell, *History of Omaha*, 322.

⁶⁹ Kostlevy, *Dictionary of the Holiness Movement*, 4.

⁷⁰ See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 94-95.

⁷¹ In 1901, students of Charles Parham in Topeka, KS, spoke in tongues, which is generally considered (along with the 1906 Azusa Street Revival) as the beginnings of American Pentecostalism. See Wacker, *Heaven Below*.

⁷² Kostlevy, *Dictionary of the Holiness* 4.

⁷³ “Holds a Novel Tenet: Serious Charge Made Against the Rev. John Morrow,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1895, 5; “Use Only a Smile,” *The Evening News*, May 31, 1895, 5.

⁷⁴ “Ministering to the People.”

⁷⁵ McInturff attempted to get moderate holiness movement leader P. F. Bresee, founder of the Church of the Nazarene, to join his People’s Church movement. Bresee declined, citing the radical nature of McInturff’s belief in divine healing. See “Bresee of Los Angeles Says his Society will not Join with the People’s United Church,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Feb. 8, 1900, 7.

⁷⁶ *Spokane 1901 City Directory*, 14, 96.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *An Illustrated History of Spokane County, State of Washington* (San Francisco: W. H. Lever, 1900), 172, 182. The author wrote that the People’s Church “is aggressive in its method and emphasizes the faith healing doctrine.” See “A New Discipline: Confession of Faith of Dr. McInturff’s People’s United Church,” *The Spokesman-Review*, June 4, 1896, 15; “Divine Healing: It is Affirmed by the People’s United Church,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, May 22, 1899, 5.

⁷⁸ “People’s Church of Omaha: Plans of Consolidation are Under Way and Notable Service is Held,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Dec. 27, 1899, 5; “Gained a New Church: Dr. D. N. McInturff Finds New Friends in Omaha,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Dec. 26, 1899, 6.

⁷⁹ “Working for the Masses: Pastor Savidge of the People’s Church Plans for a New Edifice, Church and Lodging House Combined,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, Jan. 6, 1900, 5, “People’s Church Enterprise,” Feb. 25, 1900, 5.

⁸⁰ Lobeck, a former salesman, was a city councilman at the time. He would later serve as comptroller and then as U.S. Congressman. See Ed. F. Morearty *Omaha Memories* (Omaha: Swartz Printing, 1917), 225-27.

⁸¹ "Will See Preacher-Editor: Rev. C. W. Savidge and Councilman Lobeck Leave Today for Topeka to Visit Rev. Charles M. Sheldon," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Mar. 14, 1900, 7, "Sheldon Turns a Deaf Ear," Mar. 17, 1900, 1.

⁸² "Simple Rites for Anna Wilson's Funeral," *Omaha World-Herald*, Oct. 30, 1911. Wilson is described as the "queen of the underworld" in Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell, *The Gate City: A History of Omaha* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 95. Her background is also summarized in David L. Bristow, *A Dirty, Wicked Town: Tales of 19th Century Omaha* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 2000), 209-12.

⁸³ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 138-43.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, *Shots from the Pulpit*, 64, 182.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, *Way Made Plain*, 205-10.

⁸⁶ Savidge's open-mindedness was not devoid of self-interest. As an independent pastor who did not accept a regular salary as part of his belief in the "faith principle" advocated by men such as George Muller, Savidge relied on many of those outside of his theological camp to provide money for his work. He was relentless in turning to the newspapers to publicize his needs, and was noted by many for his fundraising prowess. See Haynes, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 86; "How He Raised the Cash," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Aug. 7, 1892, 7.

⁸⁷ "Marriage Law Sends Savidge to New Field: Finds Greater Service and Twice as Much Money as Evangelist," *Omaha World-Herald*, Sept. 7, 1923.

⁸⁸ The summary of the failed merger between the People's Churches was taken from the following newspaper articles: "No Room for Dr. Savidge," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, May 22, 1900, 7; "Savidge is Coming Home: Omaha Pastor Meets a Rebuff in Spokane, but Has the People With Him," May 22, 1900, 1, "Rev Savidge Returns Home," May 25, 1900, 5, "Savidge is Not Sustained," *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 29, 1900, 10; "Savidge's Victory: Omaha Church Sustains Him by Overwhelming Vote," June 5, 1900, 1, "Savidge Had a Stormy Time: Hints that Dr. McInturff may Meet Bodily Harm," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, June 8, 1900, 4; "Harmony in People's Church," June 9, 1900, 7, "He Advises Indifference: McInturff Suggests that his Followers Pay no Attention to the Savidge People," June 16, 1900, 5, "McInturff's Olive Branch," June 22, 1900, 12, "Going Ahead with Its Work: Seceders from Pastor Savidge's Church Hold Two Big Meetings - Reorganization Under Way," July 19, 1900, 7, "Widow Accuses a Bishop," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 19, 1900, 7.

⁸⁹ For example, in 1913, church membership stood at about the same level as it had in 1895: 160 people. *Omaha city directory, including South Omaha, 1913* (Omaha: Omaha Directory Co., 1913), 41. McInturff's church in Spokane soon died out, and McInturff made a failed attempt to create a healing colony in Idaho in the vein of John Alexander Dowie's work. See "Wanted to Be Boss: Bishop's Plans Made Discord in People's United Church," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Oct. 3, 1906, 3; "People's United Church to be Reorganized," Oct. 17, 1907, 18.

⁹⁰ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 60-61.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 69-73.

⁹² For more on the evangelical self-narrative and importance of testimony and biography during the era, see Kathryn E. Lofton, "The Preacher Paradigm: Promotional Biographies and the Modern-Made Evangelist," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 95-123; Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 60-61.

⁹³ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 68-75.

⁹⁴ "Rev Savidge Praise Service," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Apr. 8, 1901, 5.

⁹⁵ "Savidge Quits Faith Healers: Preaches for them one night and then Cancels his Engagement," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 27, 1906, 8.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, "Savidge Scourges Bigots: Denounces Men Like Dr. Yoakum for Ignorance in the Pulpit," Aug. 8, 1906, 8.

⁹⁷ "Casting Out Modern Devils," *Lincoln Daily Star*, Nov. 9, 1913, 4.

⁹⁸ Untitled, *Omaha Excelsior*, Dec. 6, 1913, 13.

⁹⁹ "Fainting Bertha Must Save Herself," *Lincoln Daily Star*, May 8, 1914, 10. For a complete summary of Bertha's notorious career, see Thompson, "Feeble-mindedness," *Iowa Palimpsest*.

¹⁰⁰ "Rev Savidge Has his Say," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 29, 1901, 8; "Prays for the Pastor Who Favors Sunday Rum," *Anaconda Standard*, Mar. 25, 1906, 3.

¹⁰¹ For a brief summary of Mickey's Methodist beliefs, see Don W. Holter, *Flames on the Plains: A History of United Methodism in Nebraska* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1983), 239-40.

¹⁰² For newspaper accounts of the controversial statements, see "Rev. C. W. Savidge Visits Mr. Mickey's Home Town: Reports the Results of his Investigations and Declares the Hypocritical Candidate Should be Defeated," *Omaha World-Herald*, Oct. 24, 1904; "Calls Mickey Shylock: Preacher Makes Nebraska Executive Target of Censure," *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1904, 7.

¹⁰³ "Quacks by the Ugly Duckling," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 22, 1910, 4; "Help for New Reading Room: Money and Books are Received by Rev. C. W. Savidge, Who Appeals for More Aid," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Dec. 15, 1903, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Untitled, *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 23, 1909, 2; "Rev. C. W. Savidge of Omaha Advertises Record," *Norfolk Weekly News-Journal*, Jan. 24, 1908, 5; "Gives First Aid to the Lovelorn," *The Bisbee Daily Review*, July 9, 1913, 2.

¹⁰⁵ "Movies in Church to Illustrate Sermons: Nebraska Preacher's Innovation for Combination of Religion and Charity," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Nov. 19, 1912, 5.

¹⁰⁶ "Miscellaneous," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Jan. 1, 1906.

¹⁰⁷ Today, the House of Hope is part of Midwest Geriatrics, Inc. On their website, they mention Savidge's role in founding the organization. See "About MGI: Our History," accessed Aug. 15, 2012, <http://www.omahaseniorcare.org/about>.

¹⁰⁸ "Proposed New Home of House of Hope to Be Built at Florence," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Dec. 5, 1915, 8, "House of Hope Cottage: Home for Poor and Needy Secured by Rev. C. W. Savidge on California Street," Aug. 16, 1906; "Rev. Mr. Savidge Succeeds," *Nebraska State Journal*, July 19, 1908, 13.

¹⁰⁹ "Rev. Savidge Expires at 84."

¹¹⁰ "Callaway Band Plays July 5th," *Custer County Republican*, June 24 1909; "One Girl at head of a home is worth forty in a factory, declares the marrying parson," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Feb. 5, 1913, 1.

¹¹¹ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, 93.

¹¹² "Omaha Preacher With 4260 Marriages To Credit Wants Shipload of Young Women From Europe to Wed Americans," *Boston Globe*, Jan. 18, 1920, 54.

¹¹³ For descriptions of this matrimonial bureau and Savidge's attempts to act as matchmaker, see *Have Faith in God*, 90-95; "Has One Marrying Record Now Out After 10,000 Mark," *Boston Globe*, April 3, 1921, 62; "49 Girls Seeking Western Hubbies," *Oakland Tribune*, Oct. 2, 1917, 20; "Fifty Wives are Wanted," *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1913, 1. For an early sermon by Savidge in which he emphasized the importance of marriage as an antidote to social ills, see *Shots from the Pulpit*, 40-47.

¹¹⁴ "Too Busy to Find a Wife," *New York Times*, Mar. 8, 1904, 3.

¹¹⁵ "Sequel to a Proposal from the Pulpit," *Ashburton Guardian*, Aug 9, 1904, 1; "Fifty Wives are Wanted," *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1913, 1.

¹¹⁶ "Wives by Shipload for Nebraska," *Boston Globe*, Apr. 25, 1920, 94.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of the Omaha Philosophical Society, Mar. 24, 1929, Box 1, Reel 1, Omaha Philosophical Society, microfilm, NSHS.

¹¹⁸ "Marriage Law Sends Savidge to New Field"; "Savidge Flays Dry Law," *The Evening State Journal and Lincoln Daily News* Mar. 25, 1929, 3. Sunday held revivals in Omaha in 1915, and at first Savidge was a reluctant supporter of the well-known evangelist. See "Billy Sunday How He Strikes 'em: Bouquet of Comment by Folks Whom You All Know," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Sept. 12, 1915, 1. However, by 1919, Savidge had already soured on Sunday's brand of revivalism and on the effectiveness of Prohibition. See "Billy Sunday Brand: None of His Converts are Wanted for They Do Not Stand Hitched," *The St. Joseph Observer*, July 26, 1919, 1. For more on Sunday's revival in Omaha, see Leslie R. Valentine, "Evangelist Billy Sunday's Clean-up Campaign in Omaha: Local Reaction to His 50-Day Revival, 1915," *Nebraska History* 64, no. 2 (1983): 209-27.

¹¹⁹ Curtis, *A Consuming Faith*, xii.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹²¹ "Has One Marrying Record Now Out After 10,000 Mark."

¹²² Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies 1916* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 72.

¹²³ Savidge, *Have Faith in God*, unnumbered foreword.