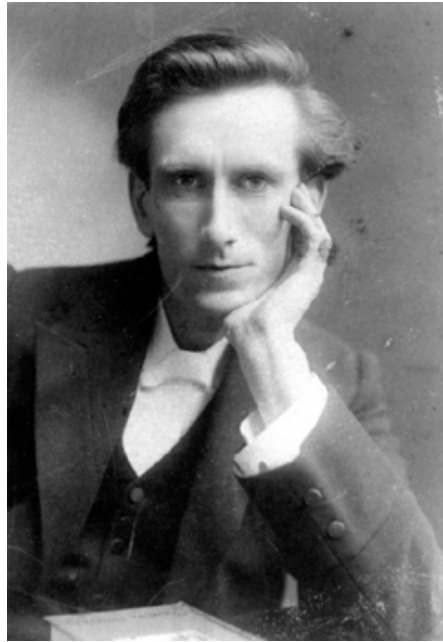


Oswald Chambers

Oswald Chambers (24 July 1874 – 15 November 1917) was an early-twentieth-century Scottish Baptist evangelist and teacher who was aligned with the Holiness Movement.^[1] He is best known for the daily devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*.

Oswald Chambers



Chambers in 1906

Born

Oswald Chambers

24 July 1874

Aberdeen, Scotland

Died

15 November 1917

(aged 43)

Cairo, Sultanate of
Egypt

Alma mater	<u>Royal College of Art</u> <u>University of Edinburgh</u>
Occupation(s)	Christian minister and teacher
Spouse	Gertrude "Biddy" Hobbs Chambers
Children	Kathleen M. Chambers

Youth and education

Born to devout parents in Aberdeen, Scotland, Chambers moved with his family in 1876 to Stoke-on-Trent when his father, Clarence Chambers, became Home Missions evangelist for the North Staffordshire Baptist Association, then to Perth, Scotland when his father returned to the pastorate, and finally to London in 1889, when Clarence was appointed Traveling Secretary of the Baptist Total Abstinence Association.^[2] At 16, Oswald Chambers was baptized and became a member of Rye Lane Baptist Chapel.^[3] Even as a teenager, Chambers was noted for his deep spirituality, and he participated in the evangelization of poor occupants of local lodging houses.^[4] Chambers also demonstrated gifts in both music and art.^[5]

From 1893 to 1895, Chambers studied at the National Art Training School, now the Royal College of Art and was offered a scholarship for further study, which he declined.^[6] For the next two years he continued his study of art at the University of Edinburgh^[7] while being greatly influenced by the preaching of Alexander Whyte, pastor of Free St. George's Church.^[8] While at Edinburgh, he felt called to ministry, and he left for Dunoon College, a small theological training school near Glasgow founded by the Rev. Duncan MacGregor. Chambers was soon teaching classes at the school and took over much of the administration when MacGregor was injured in 1898.^[9]

Holiness minister

While teaching at Dunoon, Chambers was influenced by Richard Reader Harris, KC, a prominent barrister and founder of the Pentecostal League of Prayer. In 1905, Reader introduced Chambers as "a new speaker of exceptional power." Through the League, Chambers also met Juji Nakada, a Holiness evangelist from Japan, who stimulated Chambers' growing interest in world evangelism. In 1906, Nakada and Chambers sailed for Japan via the United States.^[10] In 1907, Chambers spent a semester teaching at God's Bible School, a Holiness institution in Cincinnati, then spent a few months in Japan working with Charles Cowman, a co-founder of the Oriental Missionary Society.^[11]

Arriving back in Britain by the end of the year, Chambers found the Holiness movement divided by the advocates and opponents of founding a new denomination and by supporters and detractors of the tongues movement. Chambers did not oppose glossolalia but criticized those who made it a test of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.^[12]

Sailing back to the United States in 1908, Chambers became better acquainted with Gertrude Hobbs, the daughter of friends, whom he had known casually. They married in May 1910; and on 24 May 1913, Gertrude (whom Chambers affectionately called "Biddy") gave birth to their only child, Kathleen.^[13] Even before they married, Chambers considered a partnership in ministry in which Biddy—who could take shorthand at 250 words per minute—would transcribe and type his sermons and lessons into written form.^[14]

Bible Training College

In 1911 Chambers founded and was principal of the Bible Training College in Clapham Common, Greater London, in an "embarrassingly elegant" property that had been purchased by the Pentecostal League of Prayer.^[15] Chambers accommodated not only students of every age, education, and class but also anyone in need, believing he ought to "give to everyone who asks." "No one was ever turned away from the door and whatever the person asked for, whether money, a winter overcoat, or a meal, was given."^[16] Between 1911 and 1915, 106 resident students attended the Bible Training College, and by July 1915, forty were serving as missionaries. ^[17]

YMCA chaplain

In 1915, a year after the outbreak of World War I, Chambers suspended the operation of the school and was accepted as a YMCA chaplain. He was assigned to Zeitoun, Cairo, Egypt, where he ministered to Australian and New Zealand troops, who later participated in the Battle of Gallipoli.^[18] Chambers raised the spiritual tone of a center intended by both the military and the YMCA to be simply an institution of social service providing wholesome alternatives to the brothels of Cairo. When he told a group of fellow YMCA workers that he had decided to abandon concerts and movies for Bible classes, they predicted the exodus of soldiers from his facilities. "What the skeptics had not considered was Chamber's unusual personal appeal, his gift in speaking, and his genuine concern for the men." Soon his wooden-framed "hut" was packed with hundreds of soldiers listening attentively to messages such as "What Is the Good of Prayer?" Confronted by a soldier who said, "I can't stand religious people," Chambers replied, "Neither can I."^[19] Chambers irritated his YMCA superiors by giving away refreshments that the organization believed should be sold so as not to raise expectations elsewhere. Chambers installed a contribution box but refused to ask soldiers to pay for tea and cakes.^[20]

Death and influence

Chambers was stricken with appendicitis on 17 October 1917, but resisted going to a hospital on the grounds that the beds would be needed by men wounded in the long-expected Third Battle of Gaza. On 29 October, a surgeon performed an emergency appendectomy; however, Chambers died 15 November 1917 from a pulmonary hemorrhage. He was buried in Cairo with full military honors.^[21]

Before he died, Chambers had proofread the manuscript of his first book, *Baffled to Fight Better*, a title he had taken from a favorite line by Robert Browning.^[22] For the remainder of her life—and at first under very straitened circumstances—Chambers' widow transcribed and published books and articles edited from the notes she had taken in shorthand during the Bible College years and at Zeitoun. Most successful of the thirty books was *My Utmost for His Highest* (1924), a daily devotional composed of 365 selections of Chamber's talks, each of about 500 words. The work has never been out of print and has been translated into 39 languages.^[23]

Awards and recognition

Chambers House, one of the four academic student houses of the YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College, was founded by YMCA of Hong Kong, and was explicitly named to commemorate Chambers; other houses are named for J. Hudson Taylor, Robert Morrison, and YMCA founder George Williams.^[24]

References

1. *Kostlevy, Wiliam (2009).*

Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement (<https://books.google.com/books?id=HGoD6HLU1iIC>) . *Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow-Rowman & Littlefield. pp. 49f, 130. ISBN 9780810863187. Retrieved 19 November 2024.

2. McCasland, 26, 27, 29. *The Chambers lived at 114 Crofton Road, Peckham.*
3. McCasland, 34.
4. McCasland, 35.

5. *McCasland, 37. See inclusion of Chamber's design in J. M. Bowles, "Initials and Title Pages: The Record of the First Modern Art Composition," Modern Art, 3:1 (Winter 18950, 26.*
6. *McCasland, 39–40.*
7. *McCasland, 47–50.*
8. *McCasland, 47–52.*
9. *McCasland, 65–72, 75–76.*
10. *McCasland, 90–97.*

11. *McCasland, 101–29. Chambers did not object to the more emotional and boisterous American Holiness movement, but he told his students at God's Bible School that "more than half the side-tracks and all the hysterical phenomena that seize whole communities of people, like a pestiferous epidemic, from time to time, arise from spiritual laziness and intellectual sloth on the part of so-called religious teachers."*(106)

12. *McCasland, 133–38.*

13. *McCasland, 139–49, 173, 190.*

14. *McCasland, 140–41, 169.*
15. *McCasland, 182. The address was 45 North Side.*
16. *McCasland, 184–86. "Savvy London residents were appalled by Chambers' seeming lack of discernment in a city known for its network of beggars who quickly told each other the location of 'easy marks.'" Chambers replied, "My responsibility is to give. God will look after who asks."*
17. *McCasland, 201.*
18. *McCasland, 193–213.*

19. *McCasland*, 211–27.

20. *McCasland*, 233.

21. *McCasland*, 255–59.

22. *McCasland*, 249, 266.

23. *"My Utmost for His Highest - Available Translations"* (http://www.oswaldchambers.co.uk/My_Utmost_for_His_Highest_-_Available_Translations.html) . Oswald Chambers. Retrieved 4 January 2013.. Among Chambers' readers was George W. Bush. D. Jason Berggren and Nicol C. Rae, "Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush, Foreign Policy, and an Evangelical Presidential Style," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 36:4 (December 2006), 615.

24. *Staff of the YHKCC (2014).*

*"Student Leader Groups, Houses
—House System: Chambers
House (Blue)" (https://web.archive.org/web/20200220103100/http://www.yhkcc.edu.hk/en/student_development/extra_curricular_opportunities/houses/index.php) .
YHKCC.edu.hk. Hong Kong,
China: YMCA of Hong Kong
Christian College (YHKCC).
Archived from the original (http://www.yhkcc.edu.hk/en/student_development/extra_curricular_opportunities/houses/index.php) on*

*20 February 2020. Retrieved
19 November 2024.*

Sources

Biography

- McCasland, David (1993). *Oswald Chambers: Abandoned To God: The Life Story of the Author of My Utmost for His Highest*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Discovery House Publishers. ISBN 1572930500.


Further reading

- Kostlevy, Wiliam (2009). *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement* (<https://books.google.com/books?i>

d=HGoD6HIU1iIC). Historical
Dictionaries of Religions,
Philosophies, and Movements
(2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow-
Rowman & Littlefield. pp. 49f, 130.
ISBN 9780810863187. Retrieved
19 November 2024.

External links

- Oswald Chambers Publication Association (<http://www.oswaldchambers.co.uk>).
- My Utmost for His Highest Online Devotional (<http://utmost.org>).

- Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110126225952/http://www.wheaton.edu/learnres/ARCS/collects/sc122/index.html>).
- Works by Oswald Chambers (<http://librivox.org/author/18730>) at LibriVox (public domain audiobooks) 

Retrieved from

"[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oswald Chambers&oldid=1270379369](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oswald_Chambers&oldid=1270379369)"

This page was last edited on 19 January 2025, at 07:17 (UTC). •

Content is available under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) unless otherwise noted.