

## Stewart, James Alexander <sup>[1]</sup>

### Stewart, James Alexander

by Tucker Reed Littleton, 1994

**13 Feb. 1910–11 July 1975**

James Alexander Stewart, missionary, evangelist, and author, was born in Glasgow, Scotland, the third of six children. His parents were John and Agnes Jamieson Stewart, both of whom had moved from Northern Ireland to Scotland, where they met and married. Following his youthful conversion, he began preaching publicly at age fourteen and became an effective worker for the London Open-Air Mission in its evangelistic efforts along the border between England and Scotland.

After founding the Border Movement in 1928, he was fully engaged in the evangelism of the Scottish border and areas throughout England until 1933. In 1934 he began his evangelistic career on the continent of Europe, starting in Latvia, where he was associated with Pastor William Fetler (Basil Malof). Stewart carried his mission work to Poland and Estonia in 1935 and to Czechoslovakia in 1936–46. While working in Czechoslovakia he occasionally made missionary trips to Hungary during 1937–38. On one of his visits to Hungary, he married on 23 May 1938 Ruth Mahan, a Southern Baptist missionary, who from that time on became his faithful companion and colleague in his evangelistic efforts. Also in 1938 he visited the United States for the first time and organized the European Evangelistic Crusade, locating its American headquarters in Seattle, Wash.

From 1938 to 1947 the European Evangelistic Crusade sponsored an aggressive campaign throughout Poland, Austria, Greece, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Carpatho-Ruthenia, and Germany. Again in 1939 his work in Czechoslovakia was interrupted by missionary activities in Poland and Ruthenia. In 1939–40 he made frequent trips to Yugoslavia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Bessarabia. Similar endeavors characterized the work of the European Evangelistic Crusade until almost the moment that World War II erupted.

In 1943 the European crusade moved its headquarters to Buffalo, N.Y., which served as Stewart's base of operations until the end of the war. In 1945 he bought the home in [Asheville](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, N.C., which later became his headquarters and legal address. As soon as the [war](#) <sup>[3]</sup> was over, he sought to return to postwar Europe, and in 1945–46 he was back in Czechoslovakia to complete ten years of ministry, which had had its longest interruption during the war. Stewart had the distinction of being the first preacher from the Free World to go behind the iron curtain. From 1945 to 1950 he organized relief work for the war-torn countries of Europe, and in 1947, when the work was most intense, he made additional missionary journeys to Norway, France, and Switzerland.

In July 1948 North Carolina became Stewart's official residence. In 1949–59 he launched a program of radio evangelism to Europe over Radio Luxembourg. Scandinavia beckoned in 1953, and from there he traveled to Norway and Denmark. In 1954, when the world evangelist became a U.S. citizen (19 May), he began an evangelistic outreach to his native Scotland. In 1958 he returned to the Scottish and English borders of his youth and organized a new program for the evangelization of that area. Years of missionary work had brought him into contact with many leaders of the Western world, and by the time he resigned from the European Evangelistic Crusade in December 1952, he had preached in Morocco, Israel, Mexico, the United States, and every country in Europe except Albania.

His last efforts were channeled through Gospel Projects, Inc., which he founded in 1957 as a vehicle for raising funds to support missionary projects worldwide and for distributing Christian literature to missionary workers and native pastors around the globe. Through the organization's publishing arm, called Revival Literature, numerous works, written or edited by Stewart, were offered for sale in the United States and distributed free to missions. Stewart directed Gospel Projects until his death. Also in 1957 Stewart took over the work of the Russian Bible Society—at the request of its founder, Basil Malof—and became international president. While performing these duties, Stewart briefly served as pastor of a [Baptist church](#) <sup>[4]</sup> in Spartanburg, S.C.

Stewart, who devoted most of his later years to writing, was the author of more than fifty books and pamphlets, edited the works of several older Christian authors, and saw many of his publications translated into several foreign languages. His first book, *The Phenomena of Pentecost*, was written in Swansboro in 1960. Among his most widely read volumes were *Evangelism Without Apology*, *Heaven's Throne Gift*, *I Must Tell*, and *Come, O Breath*. In addition, he wrote biographies of William Chalmers Burns, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and Basil Malof.

In June 1960 Bob Jones University awarded him an honorary doctor of divinity degree. From 1970 to 1975 Stewart was plagued by ill health; he died at his home in Asheville. He was the father of three children: Sheila, James, and Sharon.

#### References:

*Asheville Citizen*, 12 July 1975.

James A. Stewart, *I Must Tell* (no date).

Ruth Stewart, *James Stewart: Missionary* (1977).

**Subjects:**

Biographies <sup>[5]</sup>

Religious Leaders and Clergy <sup>[6]</sup>

**Authors:**

Littleton, Tucker Reed <sup>[7]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

Buncombe County <sup>[8]</sup>

Asheville <sup>[9]</sup>

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press,<sup>[10]</sup>

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