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<p>MANUS: Redaktør vil bistå med ferdig dokumentmal i Word format. Manus leveres på diskett. Noter skrives som fotnoter.</p> <p>Signerte artikler gir ikke nødvendigvis uttrykk for redaksjonens syn.</p>	

Forord

Refleks har i 2007 kun utkommet med ett nummer, og som i 2006 fokuserer flere av artiklene på ekklesiologi. Første artikkel, om Witness Lees menighetsforståelse, er en engelskspråklig versjon, klippet fra en tidligere publisert artikkel om Watchman Nee og etterkommeren Witness Lees ekklesiologiske forståelse. Denne etterfølges av en historisk presentasjon av norske menighets- og fellesskapsgrupper som på en særskilt måte har vektlagt gjenreisning av såkalt nytestamentlig menighetsliv. Tidligere artikler over henholdsvis plymouthbrødrene, Watchman Nee/Witness Lee, T. Austin-Sparks, Lance Lambert, Poul Madsen, Charles P. Schmitt, Gene Edwards og britisk Restorationism har alle hatt det til felles at de ville (1) dokumentere miljøsegmenter som har stilt seg i spenningsfeltet mellom Keswickbevegelsens antropologi og plymouthbrødrenes ekklesiologi og (2) danne bakgrunn for en presentasjon av de norske fellesskapsgruppens tilblivelseshistorie og ideologiske forankring.

Tredje artikkel, av Paul L. King, gir et oversiktsbilde over den såkalt profetiske bevegelse. Heller ikke denne står helt på egne ben, men kan med fordel sees i forlengelse av Kings artikkel i *Refleks* 5-1 (2006), om den såkalt apostolske bevegelse som i stor grad overlapper førstnevnte bevegelse.

Fjerde artikkel, av William DeArteaga, presenterer Agnes Sanford, en viktig forløper for den karismatiske fornyelsen i USA og dessuten sannsynligvis den viktigste premissleverandøren for understrømninger innen den karismatiske bevegelse som på en særskilt måte har vektlagt såkalt indre helbredelse.

Siste artikkel, av Paul Elbert, søker, med blant annet dekonstruktivistiske hermeneutikere som samtalepartnere, å tilrettelegge en pinseorientert kunnskapsteori.

God lesning!

Gress hie

The ecclesiology of Witness Lee

Geir Lie has a master's degree from the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology in Oslo, Norway.



Witness Lee (1905-97) and his 'Local Church' movement have never attained numerical significance. As a western researcher, what fascinates me most about this missionary movement is the fact that it is non-western in origin. True enough, their missionary emphasis is not primarily on the salvation of 'souls', but on the oneness of the Body of Christ expressed locally through churches untainted by doctrinal 'sectarianism'. The ground of the church, they claim, is 'based [entirely] on locality' – not on doctrine or other 'man-made' methods: "A New Testament church is the meeting together for worship, prayer, fellowship, and mutual edification, of all the people of God in a given locality, on the ground that they are Christians."¹ According to their logic, a church established on doctrinal grounds – e.g. on the immersion of believers in contradistinction to infant baptism – is not a church at all, but a 'man-made' sect which a true believer needs to abandon completely.

'Local Church' adherents are usually quite suspicious of Christians outside of their own circle. (During a visit to Manila several years ago I contacted some people I knew were part of this movement, and they were not even willing to tell me when and where they came together as a church!) Although scattered references to their history can be found both in their own written materials and in polemical writings against them, no systematic history of the movement has ever been written. A detailed history lies beyond my scope here, but I would like to note some highlights in the movement's early history in the U.S, and, as a Norwegian living in Norway, provide some insights into the movement's genesis here in Scandinavia.

¹ Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life* (Anaheim, California: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), 77,

Witness Lee

Lee (Li Chang-shou) grew up in Chefoo in northern China,² was converted through female evangelist Peace Wang in 1925³ and soon joined a local Plymouth Brethren assembly (Benjamin Newton group). That very same year⁴ he was introduced to the ministry of Watchman Nee, first of all through the latter's *Present Testimony* magazine.⁵ In 1933 he joined Nee's work as his co-laborer.⁶ Just before the communist take-over in 1950 there were approximately 1000 churches connected with Nee's ministry.⁷ In 1949 Lee was sent to Taiwan, where a church planting initiative had commenced two years earlier. In fact, only about 200 believers on the entire island considered themselves a part of Nee's church planting efforts. A few months after Lee's arrival, however, this group had been augmented to some 800 believers.⁸ When Lee after four months of travelling within South East Asia returned to Taiwan

² Witness Lee, *History of the Church and the Local Churches* (Anaheim, California: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), 59.

³ Lee, *History*, 113; Witness Lee, *Watchman Nee. A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age* (Anaheim, California: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), 284.

⁴ Angus Kinnear errs writing that Lee was introduced to Nee's magazine two years later – in 1927. (Angus Kinnear, *Against the Tide* [Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1978], 144.)

⁵ This was Nee's first magazine and appeared in 1923. It was replaced by *The Christian* appearing monthly from 1925. However, it ceased after two years and *The Present Testimony* reappeared for seven additional years. Then (1934) both magazines were published, together with a third magazine entitled *The News of the Churches*. (Lee, *History*, 61, 101-102, 136.)

⁶ Lee, *History*, 35.

⁷ James Chen, *The Passing of the Torch* (Auburn, Maine: Christian Books Publishing House, 1988), 4.

⁸ However, we need to keep in mind that at least 500 of these were mainland refugees who already identified with Nee's church building praxis. (Norman Howard Cliff, "The Life and Theology of Watchman Nee." M.Phil. thesis, Open University, 1983, 102.)

in March 1953, the work had grown additionally.⁹ He himself claims that the churches grew from 500 to 20,000 between 1949 and 1955.¹⁰ A critical article from Hong Kong, however, suggests that the membership rate in Taiwan included some 50,000 in 1955.¹¹ According to this particular article, in 1952 Lee had started to train future co-laborers, beginning with two individuals and having some 200 after one year was completed. The movement experienced tremendous growth all over Southeast Asia, and particularly in Taiwan and in the Philippines where the churches numbered some 6,000 members in 1968.¹²

⁹ Tung Siu Kwan, "The Waves of the 'Local Church'," *Bridge* (Hong Kong), No. 57, Jan.-Feb. 1993, 2. We have good reason to suspect that much of the recruiting took place among people who were already believers: "Following the Chinese Communist occupation of mainland China, a large number of the Chinese Christians came to Taiwan to live. Upon their first arrival, they found most of the churches on the island using Taiwanese. They were unable to understand what the preachers were saying. However there was a small number of the churches which used Mandarin. The Church Assembly Hall (Nee's group), the True Jesus Church, and the chapel in the Y.M.C.A. which used Mandarin, filled the gap. They were able to meet the religious requirements of many mainland Christians who at one time were literally a lost flock. On the mainland there were many denominational churches which they could attend, but when they came to Taiwan, their missionary friends were unable to catch up with their movement and supply their spiritual needs." (Hallington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan. A History*. [Taipei, Taiwan: China Post, 1961], 110.)

¹⁰ Lee, *History*, 59. Jack Sparks writes in *The Mind Benders* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2nd. ed., 1979), 221: "Between 1949 and 1955 it appears that the size of the Little Flock grew from 500 to 23,000 on the island." The authenticity of this claim is verified by Hallington K. Tong, writing: "[...] 52 churches of the Church Assembly Hall located in various places on the island, with a combined attendance of more than 20,000" (*Christianity in Taiwan*, 113.). Also cf. Allan J. Swanson, *Taiwan: Mainline versus Independent Church Growth. A Study in Contrasts* (South Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1970), 190 ff.

¹¹ Kwan, "The Waves of The 'Local Church'," 2.

¹² Sparks, *ibid*, 222. Neither should the work in Hong Kong be ignored. It was started by K.H. Weigh and Faithful Luke in 1937. They immediately initiated "open air meetings and cottage meetings" as they understood that all Protestant denominations were negative towards them. Luke later relocated to Singapore in order to pioneer a new work, and was replaced by James Weigh who came from mainland China. Growth boomed significantly after a visit by Nee and Lee in 1949, and by Nee again in 1950. According to a 1956 estimate they then counted some 2,500 believers. (Cliff, *ibid.*, 100-101.)

Additional laborers sent out from mainland China

Lee, however, was not the first laborer sent out from mainland China. Simon Meek (Miao Shou-hsun) had labored in the Philippines since 1931. And Stephen Kaung (Chiang Sheo-tao), who was introduced to Nee's meetings in Shanghai during the latter's high school years and who "joined the work" in 1935,¹³ ministered briefly in Singapore¹⁴ before he via India had a narrow escape back to China as the Japanese invaded Singapore. During the Sino-Japanese war he ministered in the city of Chungking¹⁵ until 1949 as he was sent out to the Philippines¹⁶ where he remained for three years.

The movement arrives in the U.S.

In 1952 Kaung arrived in the US visiting a small church fellowship in Hollis (New York City), originally influenced by the the teachings of the British 'Keswicean' T. Austin-Sparks.¹⁷ A certain Mr. Lind of Scandinavian ancestry, who had formerly pastored a Swedish church in Minnesota, had established the church fellowship in Hollis. At some point he was introduced to Austin-Sparks¹⁸ and visited the latter's Honor Oak assembly in London on several occasions. As the missionary couple Thornton and Carol Stearns returned from China to the U.S., they were encouraged by Austin-Sparks to get in touch with Mr. Lind. And they

¹³ Stephen Kaung, "Life of Watchman Nee," tape 2 in a series of 3.

¹⁴ Kinnear, *ibid.*, 205. Daniel Tan seems to have been the first coworker being sent to Singapore, probably already during the 30s. (Kinnear, *ibid.*, 181.).

¹⁵ Kinnear, *ibid.*, 217.

¹⁶ After having sent his colaborer Simon Meek to the Philippines in 1931, Nee remained a month in Manila en route to England via Singapore in 1937. The next year he sent Lucas Wu to assist Meek in the work. After Witness Lee visited Manila in 1950 [1951?], the recruitment of new members increased significantly. During Angus Kinnear's visit in 1955, the latter estimated that the Manila church alone counted some 1,200 believers. (Cliff, *ibid.*, 98-99.)

¹⁷ For further information on Austin-Sparks, cf. Geir Lie, "T. Austin-Sparks – a brief introduction." *Refleks* 3-1 (2004): 48-52.

¹⁸During a certain period of time Austin-Sparks visited the U.S. annually. Some of the groups he had contact with included Lind's group and the Hepzebah House (guesthouse for missionaries) – both located in New York City.

soon decided to be a part of the church fellowship in Hollis.¹⁹ In fact, Watchman Nee had become acquainted with the Stearns already back in 1931.²⁰ Thornton, who was a “Professor of Orthopedics in the Medical School” and ministered out of the Presbyterian field in Tsinan (in the Shantung province),²¹ and then in Shanghai,²² - later even as a church elder²³ - contributed to the ‘Austin-Sparks fellowship’ gradually receiving a more ‘Watchman Nee-perspective’. Bakht Singh from India visited the church fellowship in 1960 and taught a similar message to what they already were accustomed to.²⁴

Stephen Kaung knew the Stearns before he arrived in the U.S. Lind had by now passed away and the church fellowship only counted some 30-40 believers. Nonetheless, Kaung decided to make his visit a permanent one and remained until 1970.

In spite of his arrival to the U.S. in 1952, Witness Lee still claims that the first expression of genuine ‘church life’ within the U.S. originated in San Francisco in 1958. Here a Chinese-speaking ‘Local Church’ assembly with connections to Lee’s ministry in Taiwan was established. That very same year Lee visited the U.S. for the first time and also came to New York, Los Angeles²⁵ and, naturally, the church in San Francisco. Lee returned to the U.S. in 1960 and was received among groups who were familiar with English translations of Watchman Nee’s books. One of these groups was the Navigators headquartered in Glen Erie, Colorado.²⁶

¹⁹ Stephen Kaung, informal phone conversation dated April 15 1996.

²⁰ Kinnear, *ibid.*, 145-46.

²¹ Kinnear, *ibid.*, 145.

²² Kinnear, *ibid.*, 167.

²³ Kinnear, *ibid.*, 200-1.

²⁴ For further information on Singh, cf. Daniel Smith, *A Prophet of God: Bakht Singh of India* (Washington D.C.: International Students, Inc., 1959) and Bakht Singh, *The Skill of His Loving Hands* (Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, n.d.).

²⁵ Kaung used to recommend the church Westmoreland Chapel in Los Angeles to Chinese people who arrived in the U.S desiring to settle down on the West Coast. In that respect it is only natural that Witness Lee also sought out the city of Los Angeles.

²⁶ Sparks, *ibid.*, 223.

Westmoreland Chapel

Prior to Lee's first visit to the U.S. in 1958, a brother-in-law of Watchman Nee had moved to Los Angeles and started to attend Westmoreland Chapel.²⁷ The church had befriended T. Austin-Sparks before their first pastor James R. Graham moved to Taiwan where he established two Christian colleges. During the mid 50s, when Austin-Sparks visited them, he was asked whether he had somebody in the Honor Oak fellowship who could lead them on 'in the Lord'.²⁸ He then sent them Charles John Bacon Harrison (1901-67),²⁹ a former Anglican vicar. The latter left London in 1957 and found his place among Westmoreland Chapel's leading 'brothers'.³⁰ Several Chinese families attended the assembly from 1957 to 1962 but "they never fully merged into the identity of Westmorland [sic] Chapel."³¹ Lee left Taiwan permanently and moved to the city of Los Angeles in 1962.³² He also introduced himself to the church, but as he insisted that Harrison should proclaim the assembly to be 'The Church in Los Angeles' thereby signifying that he could not recognize the legitimacy of other Christian assemblies within the city, a schism was inevitable. Shortly thereafter several of the church members – not only the Chinese – left Westmore-

²⁷ In the early 40s about 100 individuals left "a certain large church in Los Angeles" based on the issue of divorce-remarriage. The newly established group then contacted Dr. James R. Graham, a 'come outer' who had recently severed ties with his own denomination asking him to be their pastor. ("Westmoreland Chapel," unpublished manuscript.)

²⁸ "Westmoreland Chapel."

²⁹ Harrison was born and grew up as a missionary kid in India. After graduation from Cambridge University with an M.A. in 1928, being ordained in the Anglican Church two years previously, later serving as vicar in Christ Church, Bomley, Kent, he left the Anglican Church in 1935 becoming a member of Austin-Sparks' church fellowship on Honor Oak Road in London. (Josephine Taylor, "A Brief History," unpublished manuscript, dated August 1996.)

³⁰ Taylor, *ibid.*

³¹ Sparks, *ibid.*, 223. James Reetzke writes in "The Lord's Recovery of Experiencing Christ and Practicing the Church Life in Oneness" that Samuel Chang in 1959 "moved from the church in Hong Kong to Los Angeles. He began to meet with our group and to share with us concerning the ground of the church." (<http://www.lordsrecovery.org/history/iv.html>) This means that the theological basis was quite well prepared when Lee returned permanently to Los Angeles in 1962.

³² Witness Lee, *The Practical Expression of the Church* (Anaheim, California: The Stream Publishers, 1974), 184.

land Chapel and established 'The Church in Los Angeles'.³³ A critic of Lee, Jack Sparks, writes:

An issue came up over Witness Lee himself. The Chinese faction sided with Lee, while others from Westmorland [sic] opposed this faction. As a result, the group split and in 1962 the divisive element from Westmorland [sic] Chapel, under Lee's not-too-well-disguised leadership, "claimed the ground" in Los Angeles. The movement was now fully underway in the United States.³⁴

The Church in Los Angeles

Already back in 1963 the newly started church arranged its first yearly training – i.e., several weeks of intense Bible teaching. Quite a few of the attendants came from other parts of the nation but decided to relocate in order to be a part of Lee's work. During September-October 1969 some 200 newcomers made the church its own. Lee was also represented in Texas through three small churches in Lubbock, Waco and Denton, respectively. That very same year, though, most of the church decided to move to Houston where they established 'The Church' there. Two years later some of them again relocated, this time to Dallas, while 'The Church in Austin' came into existence in 1973.

The church planting endeavor in Houston probably served as a catalyst for Lee-adherents within the North East part of the U.S who then decided to move to Akron, Ohio. Around the same time about 40 individuals left the Los Angeles church for Atlanta, Georgia, and a similar sized group of people left for Chicago.

Witness Lee versus Stephen Kaung

Lee and Kaung had collaborated in the Far East. Their relationship was severed around 1970, though. Although Kaung speaks approvingly of Nee's ecclesiology

³³ Taylor, *ibid.* On May 27 1962 some 20 believers met in Samuel Chang's home as 'the church in Los Angeles.' Lee was not present during this gathering, but was in Seattle. However, he had intimate contact with the group and came from time to time down to Los Angeles in order to provide teaching. On November 30 he moved permanently to Los Angeles. (Reetzke, *ibid.*)

³⁴ Sparks, *ibid.*, 223.

(as it is expressed in the latter's book *The Normal Christian Church Life*) he now considers Lee to having become too extreme and exclusive.³⁵

In contradistinction to Lee, Kaung had maintained good relations with various church fellowships, and around 1970 he moved from New York City to Washington D.C where he ministered among his fellow-believers until 1976. The tension between him and Lee was just about to surface, and in 1973 Lee had sent 16 people

³⁵ One of Lee's former 'muskateers', William T. Freeman, authored a polemical defense for Lee's 'Local Church' movement in 1981 - *In Defense of Truth (A Reply of the Local Churches to the Book "The God-Men")* [Seattle: Northwest Christian Publications, Inc., 1981]. This polemical work was primarily a response to Neil T. Duddy and The Spiritual Counterfeits Project's book *The God-Men, An Inquiry into Witness Lee & the Local Church* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1981). Freeman has since withdrawn from Lee's movement due to disagreement with "some of the present attitudes, emphases, and practices of the local churches and the Living Stream Ministry." (Freeman, letter to the author, dated March 14 1996.) However, he still stands by his former defense of Lee, who according to him, was "grossly misrepresented by various cult writers." (In practice the alleged misrepresentation came through the above mentioned book by Neil Duddy, in addition to Jack Sparks, *The Mind Benders* (this book already being cited in previous footnotes). The latter work was counterresponded to by Gene Ford, *Who Is the Real Mind-bender?* (Anaheim, California: Gene Ford, 1977), Ron Kangas, *Mind Bending or Mind Renewing?* (Anaheim, California: Gene Ford, 1977) and J. Gordon Melton, *An Open Letter Concerning the Local Church, Witness Lee and the God-Men Controversy* (Santa Barbara, California: Institute for the Study of American Religion, 1985). However, Lee still chose to sue Duddy and Sparks, the result being that the publishers withdrew *The Mind Benders* from the market while the author and publisher of *The God-Men* was sentenced to pay almost 12 million USD. After Freeman's leaving the 'Local Church' movement, he departed from Seattle and moved to Scottsdale, Arizona. He has since relocated to Spokane, Washington. (http://www.whitworth.edu/whitworthian/spring2005/0222/news/freeman_index.htm)

(led by Bill Mallon) to New York City to live there.³⁶ The former ‘Austin-Sparks-fellowship’ was now formally connected to Witness Lee’s network. Some of Lee’s followers relocated to Washington D.C., but the attempt to take over the church there also did not succeed. Therefore, there are now two groups there, one with connections to Kaung and another with connections to Lee. In 1976 Kaung himself moved to Richmond, Virginia. He leads Christian Fellowship Publishers which translates and publishes Watchman Nee’s books in English.³⁷

The movement – a fringe group

The ‘Local Church’-movement³⁸ is considered a fringe group, at best, by most Christians within the U.S. Cal Beisner, Robert and Gretchen Passantino have this to say:

³⁶ As early as during the 1940s, Witness Lee had made preparation for evangelical work in new geographical fields in China by relocating a representative amount of the Chefoo church membership: “Groups of families, selected as to personnel and representing a suitable cross section of trades and professions - gardeners, shoemakers, teachers, nurses, barbers - were chosen and carefully prepared for their venture. [...] All these gave themselves to the church, who supplied their travel expenses and three months’ living costs at their destination. At the end of that period they were expected to support themselves in the new setting.” (Kinnear, *ibid.*, 230-1.) At a gathering Watchman Nee held for his collaborators in 1948, it was decided to build further on Lee’s experiences from the early 1940s. It was agreed to “concentrate fellow workers for ministry in regional centers until local churches [were] fully established” (p. 232.). When the new church was an established fact, it was time to send out “whole communities” in order to plant new churches in unreached areas. The fact that this new praxis tended to conflict with their former view that the local *church* and its elders were not subjugated under the ‘ministry gifts’ that were represented within ‘the *work*’, was hardly ever touched upon.

³⁷ Kaung, informal phone conversation, dated April 15 1996.

³⁸ The term ‘Local Church’ is not recognized as a proper name among the church membership.

Problems between the Local Church and other Christians were slight and scattered until 1974. In 1974, the churches following Lee began to proselytize much more openly than before, and to make their disdain of “organized Christianity” [Catholicism and Protestantism] much more plain. Church members in the Southern California area began to disrupt other church’s services, and to call other Christians members of “Babylon”. These practices soon spread to the other Local Churches.³⁹

Let us also include a quotation from Witness Lee himself:

Judaism is Satanic, Catholicism is demonic, and Protestantism is without Christ. They teach Christ’s name, but He is not there. Do you really believe that today the living Lord Jesus is in the Protestant churches? Whether you believe it or not, the Lord says that He is outside the door.⁴⁰

Theological critiques against the movement have concentrated on their erroneous trinitarian views, among other things. The Lutheran writer Robert Passantino has identified these views with Sabellianism (“monarchianistic modalism”) and tritheism. However, Passantino’s critique has been counterresponded to by Gene Ford, a Lee-adherent:

We believe that God is three and has been eternally so. We also believe that God is one. How this can be we make no attempt to explain. We simply believe it because it is the clear teaching of the Word of God.⁴¹

Passantino has since responded to Ford’s counterresponse and claims, against the latter, that the ‘Local Church’ movement at times teaches a *logical* form of modalism (“[that] claim[s] that God cannot be both Father and Son and Holy Spirit at the same time and [...] therefore say[s] that God was first the Father, became the Son, and then became the Holy Spirit”) and at other times a *non-logical* form of modalism (“[that] recognize[s] that often the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are spoken of at the same time. These modalists try to say that the Father, Son, and

³⁹ Walter Martin, ed., *The New Cults* (Santa Ana: Vision House Publisher, 1980), 381. Tung Siu-kwan writes in the article “The Waves of the ‘Local Church’” p. 4: “Parading in the streets of Southern California, [Lee’s] group often printed “God hates Christianity” on their T-shirts; they also burned banners with the word “religion” on them. On the other side, they raised high “Jesus Christ is Lord!” banners and had their big drums imprinted with “Jesus is Lord.” It is clear that they considered all other churches had degenerated into “religion” and only they themselves “walked on the right path.”

⁴⁰ *The Stream Magazine*, vol. 14, no. 4 (November 1976):. 12. Quoted from *The New Cults*, 384.

⁴¹ Gene Ford, *A Reply to the Tract Against Witness Lee and the Local Church* (Anaheim, California: Living Stream Ministry, 1976), 16.

Holy Spirit somehow exist at the same time and yet are each other”). The non-logical variant is identified by Passantino as Patripassianism:

Few Patripassians of the third and fourth centuries said much about the Holy Spirit; one who did, Marcellus of Ancyra, taught the personal identity of the Spirit with the Father and Son, just as [Witness] Lee does.⁴²

However, critiques against the movement have not exclusively concentrated on heterodox theology. In a 1988 pamphlet entitled *Reconsideration of the Vision* which circulated within many of the ‘local churches’ Lee (identified as ‘Mr. X’) was accused of financial irregularities. The anonymous publishers of the pamphlet also criticized Lee for having departed from the Bible on essential doctrines (also having departed from the teachings of Nee), and also for having claimed that

every age is only allowed to have one spiritual leader – with himself [Lee] being that leader for today. [They] also question [Lee’s] behavior in several areas, accusing him of being “puffed up,” of not disciplining his seriously erring “second son” (identified by former church members as Phillip Lee), of improperly insulting coworkers and elders, and of seeking to replace older and more spiritually mature leaders who might call him to accountability with “arrogant” but loyal younger followers.⁴³

Many within the movement were unhappy with Lee due to his “longterm failure to deal with the ‘sinful’ behavior of his son Phillip. It is contended that ‘gross immorality’ and other sins were committed by Phillip over a ten-year period, with Witness Lee’s knowledge, and that Lee and his co-workers tolerated and covered up this behavior.”⁴⁴ The ever increasing dissatisfaction within the movement resulted in a massive exodus of former participants where quite a few ‘local churches’ (especially in Europe) severed their connection with Lee and his organizational work. John So,⁴⁵ who lives in Germany, on one occasion compared Lee with the Japanese army which occupied the Philippines during the Second World War (while Lee – according to So - “invaded the ecclesia in Anaheim,⁴⁶ seized and occupied it, and turned it into an ‘ecclesia of [Witness Lee]’.”) So also com-

⁴² Walter Martin, ed., *The New Cults*, 396.

⁴³ Elliot Miller and William M. Alnor, “Turmoil in the ‘Local Church’.” *Christian Research Journal* (Fall 1988): 5.

⁴⁴ Miller and Alnor, *ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁵ So is Chinese by descent, but was born and grew up in the Philippines.

⁴⁶ Witness Lee and his Living Stream Ministry moved from Los Angeles to Anaheim in 1974.

pared Lee with Jezebel, “the prophetess who killed all of God’s prophets to make herself the only one to speak for God.”⁴⁷

The ‘Local Church’ in Denmark

Witness Lee visited Denmark in 1957 as a speaker at Poul Madsen’s annual convention at Nyborg Strand (on the island of Fyn). Another connection was through the two Ghanaians Thomas Quai and Ransford Ackah, who attempted to promote Lee’s movement after having been introduced to it within the U.S. Also the American missionary Paul Gullans visited Denmark on a number of occasions speaking on God’s ‘one and only church’. One additional connection was a group of believers within Copenhagen who wanted to live out Watchman Nee’s vision of the church as this vision was expressed in the latter’s book *The Normal Christian Church Life* (translated into Danish as *Bibelske menigheder*).⁴⁸

During the early 70s So was invited to hold meetings in Denmark by Kjestine Jepsen, a former missionary to China. So also was introduced to the group in Copenhagen. In 1977 he also got to know a few young families in Jylland who had broken with the Lutheran Inner Mission and had been water baptized among Pentecostal believers. This particular group soon organized as ‘the church’ in Give. Due to their relationship with So they followed his example in severing their relationship to Witness Lee and his organizational work during the late 80s.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Tung Siu-kwan, “The Waves of the ‘Local Church’”, 7. It is interesting to note that So’s wife and Albert Lim (Witness Lee’s son-in-law) are brother and sister. No doubt, it made the situation more complicated because of the personal relationships.

⁴⁸ Eva Johansen writes in a letter to the author, dated January 27 1998: “[I have] personally been involved – primarily because I from 1959 to 1961 – at Witness Lee’s invitation participated in a 7 months’ training program for the local churches in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines et.al. in Taipei and then participated in a gigantic evangelization program in the Far East. Back in Copenhagen I got married to Marius Johansen, whom had been an elder in [Kristent Fælleskab] for several years, but whom together with many others, felt that they should publish a second Danish edition of Watchman Nee’s *The Normal Christian Church Life* (now entitled *Det normale Kristne Menighedsliv*) and give a stronger emphasis on the church needing to be expressed locally. This was the little group in Copenhagen in 1970.”

⁴⁹ Eva Johansen and Bjarne Lindberg, letter to the author, dated December 16 1997.

The 'Local Church' in Norway

Finn Østergaard from Denmark was introduced to the teachings of Witness Lee in Give and relocated to Norway in 1983. At first he lived in Sollihøgda where he gradually gathered people for private house meetings. During the first years he was also active in the streets of Oslo distributing pamphlets by Witness Lee on church life. Østergaard's 'work' in Norway never became numerically significant, and the house group disbanded several years ago. Østergaard feels this is partly attributable to the schism between several of the churches in Germany and Anaheim having had a negative effect on the ongoing work within Scandinavia.⁵⁰

In the city of Oslo, Pilegrimsfolket, with Jan Egil Hafsahl at the head, has shown a certain interest for Lee's church-oriented literature. However, this has not led to any formal connection with the 'Local Church' movement.⁵¹ Neither has the influence of a Norwegian couple, who was introduced to the movement in the U.S., succeeded in promoting the movement after moving back to their home country.

The 'Local Church' in Sweden

In Sweden the movement took hold among certain believers connected to Hans Erik Svensk, a former Baptist from Karlskrona and later active among the Open Brethren. After having relocated to Klippan in Skåne, he was introduced to the movement via Paul Gullans in 1971. Gullans himself had met the movement via his two sons Mark and Steve.

Through Steve Gullans contact was initiated with John So, who had quit his medical studies in Germany and moved to the U.S. in 1967-68 in order to participate in the Witness Lee kind of church life. Friends from Germany visited him in 1970 and then went back to their home country and established 'the church in

⁵⁰ "The Standing of the Church in Anaheim." Taped transcript of a Christian meeting, Aug. 28 1988. One of the participaters, Albert Knoch, said: "But, I must say that as I listened to the fellowship in the localities in Europe, I heard just about the same things. They are asking: 'Are we really the local church, with a general standing, open to every Christian in Oslo, Norway? Or are we a sect?' They, like us, are concerned, because through their practices over the past few years—and they were trying to follow what they considered the up-to-date, present moving of the Lord—they found out that more and more they were becoming a very special kind of 'church', not a local church (ie., in their meetings they read only certain materials, etc.)."

⁵¹ Finn Østergaard, phone conversation, dated November 21 1997.

Freiburg'. So returned to Germany in 1971. In 1973 the church relocated to Frankfurt⁵² and three years later to Stuttgart.⁵³

Hans Erik Svensk held open house meetings once a week. Together with several of the people who regularly attended these meetings he participated in a conference in Stuttgart and was fascinated further. Most of the young people from his house group, however, lost interest when they learned that women had to cover their heads during the meetings.

Svensk's family moved to Stockholm in 1980 where they today meet with some 30 believers. Svensk's son-in-law, Sonny Young, is the most pronounced leader among them. For many years the group had regular contact with 'the saints' in Germany and Denmark, respectively. Contrary to them, the Swedish group has chosen to maintain their connection to Lee's organization in the U.S.⁵⁴



⁵² "Die 'Gemeinde' in Frankfurt besteht noch nicht lang. Ein Teil der jetzigen Mitglieder kommt aus Freiburg, wo sich seit durch 1970 durch den Einfluß eines Chinesen eine kleine Gruppe zusammengefunden hatte. Um an einem zentralen Ort ein weiteres Betätigungsfeld zu haben, zogen die etwa 40 Mitglieder seit Herbst 1973 alle nach Frankfurt." Ingrid Reimer, "Die 'Ortsgemeinde' nach Watchman Nee." *Materialdienst Aus der Evangelischen Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen der EKD* 1975, 153.

⁵³ Ingrid Reimer, "Die Gemeinde (Kirche) in Stuttgart." *Materialdienst Aus der Evangelischen Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen der EKD* 1976, 243.

⁵⁴ Sonny Youngs, phone conversation, dated June 11 1998.

Norsk fellesskapsbevegelse - med fokus på opprinnelse og tidlige år

Geir Lie er lektorutdannet med hovedfag i kristendomskunnskap fra Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet i Oslo.



Mens den opprinnelige karismatiske bevegelse var en fornyelsesbevegelse innen de historiske trossamfunn, har vi siden midt på 1980-tallet sett fremveksten av en rekke karismatiske menighetsdannelser uten formell tilknytning til etablerte pinse-samfunn. I mange år ble 'pentekostal' kristendom i Norge først og fremst identifisert med pinsebevegelsen og De frie evangeliske forsamlinger. I dag inkluderer dette kirkelandskapet også Foursquare, Nardus, United Pentecostal Church og Vineyard, samt en rekke frittstående lokalmenigheter. De fleste av de sistnevnte har en historisk forankring i trosbevegelsen.

De færreste bevegelser oppstår i et historisk og læremessig vakuum, og den tidlige trosbevegelse i Norge har delvis overlappende historikk med en annen 'pentekostal-karismatisk' tradisjon, nemlig en strømning som i større grad enn de øvrige har betont såkalt nytestamentlig menighetsliv. Det er dennes historikk som i det følgende vil bli gjenstand for mine betraktninger. Hans Hodne har i sin hovedfagsavhandling fra 1999 fokusert på Kristent Fellesskaps-bevegelsen,¹ mens Anne Siri Kvia har foretatt et nærstudium av menigheten Kristen Tjeneste i Stavanger.²

Som imidlertid denne artikkelen søker å dokumentere, dreier det seg i utgangspunktet om én bevegelse eller strømning som etter hvert har delt seg i minst to ulike hovedvarianter. Til tross for – til tider – ulike aksentueringer innen de ulike fløyene, har jeg valgt "fellesskapsbevegelsen" som overordnet betegnelse. Dette er ikke en betegnelse som noen gang har vært i internt bruk. "Bevegelse" er her forstått synonymt med "strømning" og forutsetter ingen fasttømret organisasjonsstruktur. Før "fellesskapsbevegelsens" tidlige historikk utfoldes, vil jeg imidlertid presentere den britiske Restorationist-bevegelsen, som den norske strømningen har sitt umiddelbare utspring i.

¹ Hans Hodne, "Restaurasjonsteologi. En undersøkelse av restaurasjonsteologiens hovedinnhold, historiske røtter og fremvekst, med særlig vekt på England og Norge." Oslo: Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet, 1999.

² Anne Siri Kvia, "Tjeneste og fortjeneste: En religionshistorisk studie av menigheten Kristen Tjeneste." Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2005.

Britisk Restorationism

I USA oppstod den karismatiske bevegelsen rundt 1959,³ og ryktene om denne nådde Storbritannia rundt 1961. Tre år senere ble man vitne til en egen britisk karismatisk fornyelsesbevegelse, i stor grad sentrert rundt daværende anglikansk (senere ortodoks) prest Michael Harper og hans Fountain Trust stiftelse.⁴

Den britiske Restorationist-bevegelsen⁵ har imidlertid eldre røtter og er primært en frukt av Arthur Wallis og David Lillies virksomhet på 1950- og 60-tallet. Wallis hadde opprinnelig bakgrunn blant plymouthbrødrene, men var desillusjonert i forhold til menighetens ekklesiologi. "I felt that all the Brethren talk about 'assembly life' was much-ado-about nothing," skrev han ved en senere anledning.⁶ Møtet med G.H. Lang i 1947, som til tross for sin plymouthbrødrebakgrunn ikke bar preg av noe partisinn, ble en vekker. En av Langs pamfletter, *Church Federation*, overbeviste Wallis om at ekklesiologi faktisk var relevant og måtte tas på alvor.

På begynnelsen av 1950-tallet stiftet Wallis bekjentskap med Lillie, som også hadde bakgrunn fra plymouthbrødrene, men som hadde blitt tvunget til å oppgi sitt engasjement i den lokale plymouthforsamlingen på grunn av interessen for pinsevennens åndsdaøpsopplevelse. Lillie opplevde for øvrig sin personlige pinseerfaring i 1949.⁷ Også han var fascinert av Lang, som han første gang hørte allerede i 1937.⁸ Møtet med sistnevnte innledet et livslangt vennskap, og Lillie ble en hengiven leser av dennes bøker: "It was particularly Lang's personal commitment to biblical Christianity and ecclesiology which stimulated my desire to see the recovery of some

³ Geir Lie, "Den karismatiske bevegelsen i USA – et historisk riss." *Refleks* 4-1 (2005) s. 2-11.

⁴ Allan H. Anderson, "The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Britain: An Historical Overview." *Refleks* 3-1 (2004) s. 78-90.

⁵ For nærmere presentasjon av denne, se David Matthew, "Restorationism in British Church Life from 1970." *Refleks* 5-1 (2006) s. 34-49.

⁶ Arthur Wallis, "Springs of Restoration (1)." *Restoration*, juli-aug. 1980, s. 22.

⁷ Peter Dudley Hocken, *Streams of Renewal. The Origins and Early Development of the Charismatic Movement in Great Britain* (Exeter, Devon: Paternoster Press, 1986) s. 30-31.

⁸ David Lillie, *Restoration. Is this still on God's programme?* (Devon: Kyrtonia Press, (n.d.) s. 11.

semblance of authentic New Testament church life in my lifetime.”⁹ Lillie hevder videre:

[Lang] became a kind of spiritual father to me although he wasn't at all favourably disposed to the modern Pentecostal movement, although he accepted doctrinally the teaching that the ministry and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today, but he wasn't prepared to admit or recognize that this was working out practically in Pentecostal circles.¹⁰

Med utgangspunkt i Langs ekklesiologi tolket Lillie sin egen og andres pinseerfaring som nødvendig forutsetning for Guds gjenreisning av sant nytestamentlig menighetsliv. Lillie hadde startet et lite felleskap utenfor Exeter, Devon. Veksten var imidlertid beskjeden, og Lillie var foruroliget av at andre i felleskapet - til tross for deres nød for nytestamentlig menighetsorden - hadde lite syn for “anything beyond the local scene.” Lillie ønsket kontakt med flere som delte det syn for menigheten som hadde blitt tegnet gjennom Langs mange bøker. Kort tid deretter traff han Wallis, Denis Clark og Campbell McAlpine, alle med tidligere plymouthbrødretilknytning.¹¹

Wallis første møte med karismatiske åndsmanifestasjoner skjedde i Lillies gruppe i Exeter. Et dypt vennskap utviklet seg mellom Wallis og Lillie, og de ble enige om å kalle sammen til en tre dagers lederkonferanse i mai 1958. Denne samlet 15 deltakere til temaet ‘An Enquiry into the New Testament concerning the Church of Jesus Christ; its purity, power, pattern and programme, in the context of Today’. Nærmere 40 ledere kom sammen til en ny konferanse i 1961 - denne med tittelen ‘The Divine Purpose in the Institution of the Church’. Ved neste samling året etter var antallet fordoblet.¹²

I 1971 inviterte Wallis til enda en konferanse, denne gang for å drøfte eskjatologiske spørsmål. Han var nemlig overbevist om at “not only was Christ soon returning to earth to reign, but that He wanted to establish the foundations of His Kingdom before He arrived.”¹³ Den første samlingen ble avholdt i februar 1972 og bestod av Wallis, Peter Lyne, Bryn Jones, David Mansell, Graham Perrins og Hugh

⁹ Lillie, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Peter Dudley Hocken, intervju med David Lillie, 31. okt. 1981. Sitert i Hocken, *Streams of Renewal* s. 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, s. 12.

¹² Lillie, *Restoration*, s. 13; Wallis, “Spirings of Restoration (1),” s. 23.

¹³ Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom. The Radical Sects of the House Church Movement* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985) s. 67.

Thompson. Etter Jones 'profeti' "Seven shall be your number, and thrice you shall meet," ble det etter mye dissens besluttet også å trekke inn John Noble. Etter tre samlinger ble den lille kretsen – "the magnificent seven", som de spøkefullt refererte til seg selv som, utvidet til "the fabulous fourteen."¹⁴

In the first meetings of the seven, what began to emerge as they prayed and fasted together was a strong sense of mutual destiny. As they looked around and saw each other and recognized the work they had already achieved, they became convinced - under numerous promptings of personal prophecies - that they were already exercising apostolic and prophetic functions. Their recognition of function became the way leadership emerged.¹⁵

Den gjensidige anerkjennelse av hverandres respektive 'tjenester' var imidlertid ikke eksklusivt basert på subjektive 'profetord' som ble uttalt over sidemannen. Man mente også å ha en forankring i Bibelen, primært i Efeserbrevets kapittel 4 og versene 11-12.

Etter hvert begynte uavhengige 'house churches' å knytte seg opp mot det selvutnevnte lederskapet. Walker skriver:

By 1974, the self-selection [...] of the 'fabulous fourteen' led to the establishment of a charismatically ordained leadership. This leadership was legitimated by an appeal to members to recognize the *de facto* leadership that had already emerged. Bryn Jones, for example, is an apostle, so the argument went, because he acts like an apostle. Furthermore, house church members were told, the Holy Spirit who had separated Barnabas and Saul in the Acts of the Apostles, was the same Spirit who had separated the fourteen to be leaders of the restored kingdom.¹⁶ This truth was confirmed for the leaders by the inner testimony of personal conviction, and the outward seal of prophetic utterance. In a sense, the 'fabulous fourteen' had ordained each other not in any formal ceremony, but by mutual recognition of ministry, prophecy, and the laying on of hands.¹⁷

Norsk fellesskapsbevegelse

Utfoldelsen av historikken i Norge berører en rekke personer som er delvis influert av de samme utenlandske premissleverandørene og som delvis virker sammen og delvis på hver sin kant. Flere av disse vil bli nærmere presentert under egne

¹⁴ De nyrekruttede bestod av George Tarleton, Gerald Coates, Barney Coombs, Maurice Smith, Ian McCulloch, John MacLaughlan og Campbell McAlpine. (Walker s. 69.)

¹⁵ Walker s. 68.

¹⁶ Uttrykket "restored kingdom" er nok Walkers konstruksjon, men på innholds nivå synes beretningen pålitelig gjengitt.

¹⁷ Walker s. 70.

underoverskrifter for så igjen å trekkes inn på et senere tidspunkt i artikkelen i den grad interaksjon med andre norske lederskikkelser er relevant for den videre historieprogresjonen.

Tore Lende og Erling Thu

En sentral skikkelse innenfor det som skulle utvikle seg til norsk fellesskapsbevegelse, er Tore Lende (f. 1945). Til tross for bevisstgjøringen om at han ønsket å leve som en kristen allerede under konfirmasjonsoverhøringen i 1959, karakteriserer han seg selv som en grubler som i flere år slet med 'frelsesvissheten'. Dette til tross - han leste ivrig både i Bibelen og kristne oppbyggelsesbøker. Grunnlegger av Nettverkskirken i Oslo, Tor Undheim, minnes den gjensidig innbyrdes åndelige berikelsen mellom hans far, som var leder for ungdomsforeningen innen Indremisjonen på Undheim, og Lende, hvor de delte med hverandre av nyoppdagede bøker/tidskrifter eller prekenopptak på lydband.¹⁸ Lende selv opplevde seg i ettertid som katalysator for en karismatisk vekkelse i bedehusets ungdomsforening på Undheim. Han fikk tak i litteratur om 'åndsåp' og tok med seg ungdommene på møter i ikke-luthersk regi, blant annet i pinsemenigheten på Sandnes.

Innflytelsen via Adolf Bjerkreims bøker var stor. Indirekte gjennom plymouthbrødrene ble det hamret inn i Lende at det ikke var frelse i vanddåpen. Selv om han 'tilhørte statskirken', ble han raskt mottakelig for den anti-kirkelige forkynnelsen av det frie menighetssyn som preget deler av Vestlandske Indremisjonen. En viktig impuls ble dessuten forkynneren *Anton Eik*, som en periode stod forholdsvis sentralt i De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger. Eiks oppvurdering av Watchman Nees undervisning om 'korset' og 'blodet' influerte også Lende, etter møtet med Eik i 1961.¹⁹

¹⁸ Tor Undheim, intervju, 02.11.94.

¹⁹ Eiks 'kilder' synes av varierende natur. I USA hørte han William M. Branham, og ble påvirket av amerikanerens syn på kristen dåp i Jesu Kristi navn alene og på 'kristen enhet'. I 1967 dro han opp til Skien hvor han sammen med andre ledere besluttet seg for å distribuere en Branhamartikkel ved navn 'Laodikeabudskapet'. Senere tok han kontakt med Per H. Johansen i Skien og bad sistnevnte om å ta over distribusjonen. I samme perioden fikk forøvrig Johansen kontakt med en tremenning av Eik, Levi Larsen, som også hadde blitt influert av Branham i løpet av flere års opphold i USA. Larsen oversatte Branhams taler, som Johansen distribuerte. Rundt 1969 begynte dessuten Johansen å arrangere årlige sommerstevner, og det har etterhvert også blitt stiftet en del menigheter. På landsbasis samler man likefullt ikke mer enn omlag 200 personer. (Per H. Johansen, intervju, 17.03.1996 og Levi Larsen, intervju, 27.05.1996.)

Etter en noe omflakkende tilværelse tok Lende rundt 1966 opp kontakten med Erling Thu (f. 1942), som han hadde kjent siden gymnasdagene. Thus opprinnelige bakgrunn var innen Misjonssambandet, men han kom raskt med blant pinsevennene på Sandnes. Etter et 5 ukers bibelkurs i Oslo i 1962 hadde han umiddelbart begynt å reise som fulltids evangelist i pinsesammenheng. Fra begynnelsen av spredte han Aril Edwardsens nyetablerte publikasjon *Troens Bevis*, og ble av Edvardsen spurt om å komme til Sarons Dal for å hjelpe til i 1964. På nyåret i 1966 flyttet så familien Thu til Kvinesdal hvor han til å begynne med fikk ansvar for innsamling av midler til bibelskolen og litteratursalg. Han besøkte alle som abonnerte på *Troens Bevis* og holdt møter hovedsaklig i pinsemenigheter. Senere ble oppgaven utvidet til også å omfatte støtte til Innfødt Evangelist Misjon.²⁰

I forbindelse med at vennskapet mellom Thu og Lende ble tatt opp igjen rundt 1966, ble Lende gjort oppmerksom på noen aviser av Missionary and Soulwinning Fellowship,²¹ en internasjonal evangeliseringsorganisasjon med utgangspunkt i California, USA, men med lokale sentra ulike steder i verden.²² I perioden april-august 1968 deltok Lende på deres evangeliseringsskole i England. Parallelt med dette hadde han også rullet en tur innom T. Austin-Sparks menighetsfelleskap på Honor Oak Road i London.²³ Gjennom sin tidligere kontakt med Anton Eik var han dessuten fortrolig med Watchman Nees litteratur, som stod sentralt i undervisningen på skolen.²⁴

Freelance-forkynneren *Roger Forster* ble invitert til sommerskolen for å holde bibeltimer, og undervisningen appellerte til Lende. Han reiste hjem til Forster og anmodet ham om å komme til Norge for å forkynne. Forster hadde vært i Norge tidligere, men denne gang passet det ikke. På Lendes oppfordring anbefalte han

²⁰ Thu, intervju, 9-10. april 1994.

²¹ Lende, intervju, 27.09.94.

²² L.C. Leeder, brev, 06.01.1995. Organisasjonen, som også kalles Christians In Action, ble etablert i sept. 1957 av Lee og Lorraine Shelley. (*Christians in Action. Daring to Go! Since 1957*, brosjyre.) 2. mars 1965 ankom misjonærekteparet Elgin og Dorothy Taylor Storbritannia med utgangspunkt i London og en visjon om å "train Christians from many nationalities and then to see their trainees return to their own lands as missionaries." (*Christians in Action*, brosjyre.)

²³ For nærmere presentasjon av Austin-Sparks, se Geir Lie, "T. Austin-Sparks – a brief introduction." *Refleks* 3-1 (2004) s. 48-52.

²⁴ For nærmere presentasjon av Nee, se Geir Lie, "Ekklesiologi på avveie - fra Watchman Nee til Witness Lee." *Refleks* 5-1 (2006) s. 7-34.

tre andre forkynnere som stod for en beslektet undervisning: Lance Lambert,²⁵ Graham Perrins og Peter Lyne. Felles for alle tre var at de ikke var typiske karismatikere, men også hadde en læremessig forankring.²⁶

Heller ikke Lambert, som forøvrig hadde besøkt Norge et titalls ganger allerede, hadde anledning til å oppfylle Lendes forespørsel. Lende skrev da til 'nyåndsdopte' *Peter Lyne* med forespørsel om han kunne komme til Norge. Lende sa seg villig til å tolke, men kunne verken love penger, møter eller folk. Da Lende vendte tilbake til Norge i september, dro han likefullt alene. Kort tid etter stoppet imidlertid Lyne opp for en overskrift i en profan avis: 'Consider Norway'. Overskriften syntes å tale til ham, han tok kontakt med Lende og kom så til Stavanger i 1968. Ingen møter var planlagt på forhånd, men Lende hadde flere venner som delte hans lengsel om kristen fornyelse. I tillegg til noen husmøter, ble det også arrangert møter i det kristne elevlaget ved lærerskolen i Stavanger. Lyne talte om den karismatiske vekkelsen som gikk fram i de historiske kirkesamfunn - møtene var gjerne blant de første karismatiske møter i Norge. Flere reagerte positivt på forkynnelsen og ønsket forbønn.

Etter en del møter i distriktet rundt Stavanger bar det videre til Volda hvor de hadde møte i det kristne elevlaget ved lærerskolen, et møte som imidlertid endte med mye diskusjon og motstand. Den etterfølgende søndagen gikk Lende og Lyne på møte i De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger. Siden Lyne var utenlandsk gjest, ble han bedt om å holde et kvarters innlegg. Folk var henrykte over hva som ble sagt, og Knut Selvaag - som var invitert som gjestepredikant for 2 uker - opplevde at Lyne var sendt av Gud og var villig til å gi sin plass til Lyne. Lende og Lyne ble 2 uker i Volda og hadde 6-8 møter i menigheten.²⁷

Etter de vellykkede møtene ringte menighetens ledelse til De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger i Bergen for å høre om også de var interessert i å få besøk av den unge britiske forkynneren. Møtene ble tolket av en ung mann ved navn Kåre Kristing (f. 1943),²⁸ som senere skulle bli sentral i oppbygningen av norsk fellesskapsbevegelse. Det er derfor naturlig å stanse opp ved ham.

²⁵ For nærmere presentasjon av Lambert, se Geir Lie, "Lance Lambert – a brief introduction." *Refleks* 4-2 (2005) s. 83-87.

²⁶ Lende, intervju, 27.09.1994.

²⁷ Lende, intervju, 27.09.1994.

²⁸ Kristing, intervju, 16.11.1994.

Kåre Kristing

Kristing er født og oppvokst i De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger i Bergen hvor faren var 'eldstebror' i mange år. Kristing er utdannet ingeniør, og året etter første møte med Peter Lyne var han ett år i England hvor han jobbet for Ford Motor Company utenfor London. En helg han besøkte Peter Lyne, som på dette tidspunkt var pastor i Black Horse Baptist Church i Bristol, arrangerte menigheten en møteserie om 'profetiske budskap' i vår tid. I tillegg til Lyne, hadde menigheten besøk av Graham Perrins og Arthur Wallis. I løpet av denne konferansen hørte Kristing for første gang en menighet som sang kollektivt 'i tunger'. Den karismatiske uttrykksformen appellerte. Han ble også "grevet av den frie avslappede holdningen mellom menneskene."²⁹ Kristing ble forøvrig også introdusert for flere av Lynes personlige venner, deriblant David Mansell og John Noble. Siden traff han andre britiske forkynnere som deltok på weekender / seminarer i Norge tilrettelagt av Tore Lende, deriblant Hugh Thompson, Gerald Coates, David Tomlinson, Morris Smith og David Matthews fra Irland.

Kristing ble boende i England fram til slutten av 1970 og vendte tilbake til Bergen og De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger. Lyne fortsatte å besøke menigheten med jevne mellomrom fram til 1973 og fikk god respons på sin forkynnelse. Også John Noble var innom flere ganger i denne perioden.

Kristing fikk låne noen lydbånd av Tore Lende med prekener over Efeserbrevet av amerikaneren Charles P. Schmitt.³⁰ Kristing ble oppslukt av budskapet, med fokus på Guds angivelige planer for menneskene, og i særdeleshet for menigheten. Ved å sammenligne situasjonen i De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger i Bergen med det nye 'lys' Kristing hadde fått over menigheten, ble det etterhvert umulig å fortsette i førstnevnte:

Jeg stod igjen som et 100% menighetsbarn av den 'rette' forkynnelse og arvtaker fra de store åndelige fedre. Jeg var drillet i alle typer menighetsaktiviteter. Jeg kunne vitne, be høyt i forsamlingen, innlede møter. Nå, i løpet av kort tid ble det helt klart for meg at jeg av alle ting ikke vandret i Ånden. Det hadde jeg ikke lært av noen.³¹

Med unntak av to eldre kvinner i menigheten fant ikke Kristing en eneste person som kunne være åndelig modell. Dette skulle imidlertid snart endres. Via Peter Lyne fikk Kristing høre at en misjonær fra Canada hadde slått seg ned litt nord

²⁹ Kristing, vitnesbyrd.

³⁰ For nærmere presentasjon av Schmitt, se Geir Lie, "Charles F. [sic!] Schmitt – a brief introduction." *Refleks* 5-1 (2006) s. 57-59.

³¹ Kristing, *ibid.*

for Bergen. Vedkommende skulle ha et tilsvarende syn på 'menighet' og 'Guds rike' som de selv. Lyne anbefalte Kristing å ta kontakt. Olav Ryland - som mannen hette - ble invitert til å delta i en bønnegruppe Kristing hadde hjemme sammen med flere av ungdommene fra De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger i Bergen. I løpet av kveldssamlingen bar Ryland fram et 'profetisk budskap' som gikk ut på at forsamlinger og pastorer bygger sine egne 'fjell' som de måler opp mot hverandre. Ingen har imidlertid syn for 'Guds fjell' og Hans ønsker. Kristing opplevde umiddelbart at han selv og Ryland var 'gitt til hverandre' på en eller annen måte. Selv opplevde han seg som et 'får uten hyrde' midt i menigheten. Han ble overbevist om at Ryland kunne være hyrde og tilsynsmann for ham. Kristing var allerede på dette tidspunkt begynt på en løsrivningsprosess ut av De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger, en prosess som resulterte i et konkret brudd to år senere. Da et barn i menigheten døde, til tross for at alle 'eldstebrødrene' hadde 'fått et ord fra Herren' om at barnet skulle bli helbredet, var begeret fullt for Kristings del. Han trakk seg fra all menighetsvirksomhet og ville ikke gå et skritt videre før han var sikker på at Gud ledet ham:

Nå ville jeg lære Han å kjenne. Ikke som en bestefar langt vekke som man snakket om - men som en far jeg kunne ha et personlig forhold til. Jeg ville presentere meg for Han som et nytt ubrukt blankt papirark. Jeg ville lære Han å kjenne, uforstyrret av tradisjon.³²

Den videre progresjon innbefatter først en nærmere introduksjon av tidligere Canada misjonær Olav Ryland.

Olav Ryland

Ryland (f. 1929), som i ung alder flyttet til Canada hvor han etter en kristen omvendelse i 1956 forberedte seg til forkynnertjeneste, kom etter to kortere opphold permanent tilbake til Norge i mai 1970. Ryland organiserte to studiegrupper på Frekhaug utenfor Bergen og gjennomgikk Apostlenes Gjerninger med disse. Året etter startet han 'Åpen Bibel' på Frekhaug, ifølge Ryland selv mer et motto enn noen organisatorisk forening. To år senere grunnla han imidlertid Kristent Fellesskap, som ble et uttrykk for det lokale menighetsfellesskapet på Frekhaug med 30 til 40 medlemmer.³³

Ryland virket også som evangelist i ulike sammenhenger og stod rett som det var i flere uker på ett sted på grunn av fornyelse/vekkelse. Gjennom bibelseminarer i

³² Kristing, nedskrevet vitnesbyrd (upublisert materiale).

³³ I 1979 ble menighetsfellesskapet tilsluttet Det norske Misjonsforbund og tok navnet Frekhaug Misjonsmenighet.

Bergen kom han forøvrig også raskt i kontakt med kretsen av troende som identifiserte seg opp mot *Bernhard Dahls* bønnegruppe på Nesttun.³⁴ Gjennom Ryland ble også Kristing introdusert for kretsen rundt Dahl. Ryland selv ble en slags katalysator for mange unge som på en spesiell måte fikk en berøring av hva Kristing karakteriserer “det spesielle Gud gjorde i 70-årene.” Ryland reiste selv til England allerede i 1972 hvor han blant annet besøkte Lance Lamberts menighet utenfor London. Lambert deltok siden på en rekke av Rylands møter og bibelseminarer i Norge.

Noralv Askeland

En av de mange unge som ble sterkt influert av Ryland, er Noralv Askeland (f. 1952), som umiddelbart etter et åndelig vendepunkt i 14-års alderen opplevde kallet til tjeneste aktualisert. Gjennom Rylands undervisning opplevde han å få forståelse av hva som egentlig hadde skjedd da han ble ‘døpt i Den Hellige Ånd’ i 1968, denne opplevelsen forut for møtet med Ryland. I forlengelse av denne ble han tidlig på 1970-tallet også introdusert for Lance Lambert, som regelmessig besøkte Bernhard Dahls bønnegruppe fra 1963 til rundt på 1980-tallet. Dahls gruppe bestod vesentlig av eldre mennesker, med en del unge møtte trofast opp når Lambert besøkte byen. Askeland kjente Dahls sønn Kjell og kom etterhvert inn blant de unge. De unge ble raskt tent for Lamberts undervisning om ‘menigheten’, mens de eldre var mer engstelig for å ta belastningen å etablere ny menighet. Omlag ti av de unge startet rundt 1973-74 en selvstendig bønnegruppe og proklamerte denne som starten på en ny menighet.³⁵ Lambert støttet dem. Alle

³⁴ For nærmere presentasjon av Dahl og kretsen rundt ham, se Geir Lie, “Poul Madsen og Kristent Fællesskab-bevegelsen i Danmark.” *Refleks* 5-1 (2006) s. 35-56.

³⁵ Bernhard Dahls sønn, Arne, hevder imidlertid at ungdommene utviste en noe eksklusiv holdning fra begynnelsen av hvor de også klart uttrykte at de var ‘Guds menighet i Bergen’. Dette skjedde imidlertid i en periode hvor Dahls sønn ikke bodde i Bergen, men kun var hjemme på korte besøk. (I perioden 1966-71 bodde han i Oslo hvor han tok teologisk embetseksamen ved Menighetsfakultetet. Her gikk han regelmessig i Gilbert Hornvedts bønnegruppe, som senere fikk navn Kristent Felleskap.) Han har imidlertid samtalt med flere av de eldre som var med i den opprinnelige bønnegruppen, og mange av disse var blitt både overrasket og skuffet. Flere av de eldre var blitt så pass skrøpelige at de ikke maktet å være med i samme grad som tidligere. Likevel ville flere ha vært med i den nye gruppen, men følte at de ikke ble regnet med og at ungdommene ikke hadde bruk for dem. De eldre snakket aldri ut med ungdommene om sin skuffelse, og ungdommene var gjerne så pass unge at de ikke var istand til på egen hånd å forstå hvordan de eldre opplevde det nye. (Arne Dahl, intervju, 03.04.1995.)

ungdommene hadde røtter til Lambert og Ryland. Dette var i samme perioden som Ryland startet menigheten Kristent Fellesskap på Frekhaug. Det var uklare grenseopp ganger mellom de ulike gruppene. Askeland hadde vært mest involvert i Åpen Bibel hos Ryland før denne etablerte en egen menighet på Frekhaug.³⁶

Gjennom Ryland kom Askeland i kontakt med Watchman Nees bøker. Gjennom Lambert ble han dessuten introdusert for T. Austin-Sparks litteratur. Bøkene preget etterhvert Askelands menighetssyn da det syntes å samsvare med Bibelens læreoppfatninger over samme tema. Askeland opplevde en stadig sterkere lengsel etter å se menigheten 'etter Guds bilde'.³⁷

Allerede i 1964 - mens Ryland gikk første året ved Eston Full Gospel Bible School i Canada, hadde han kommet over Watchman Nees litteratur.³⁸ Ryland ble begeistret over undervisningsbøkene, kanskje i særdeleshet de som omfattet 'menigheten' og menighetsledelse. I 1973 fikk han kontakt med en av Nees tidligere medarbeidere, kineseren Stephen Kaung. Ryland besøkte Kaung i 1975, og i desember 1976 brakte Lambert Kaung til Bergen hvor Santalmisjonens lokaler ble lånt for anledningen. Kåre Kristings bønnegruppe ble invitert til møtene hvor Kaung forkynte om 'det himmelske syn' relatert til apostelen Paulus syn på vei til Damaskus. Bibeltimene ble siden nedskrevet fra kassetts og trykt gjennom Åpen Bibel på Frekhaug. Kaungs ydmykhet, samt visjonen for Guds plan gjennom menigheten gjorde inntrykk. Det samme inntrykket forsterket seg da Askeland besøkte kineseren i Richmond, Virginia i 1980. Askeland minnes at han drøftet med Lambert og Kaung om bønnegruppen burde slå seg sammen med Kristings gruppe. Begge frarådet angivelig dette. Rådet ble imidlertid ikke fulgt, de to bønnegruppene ble slått sammen rundt 1978-79 og talte til å begynne med rundt 45 personer.

Gjennom norskamerikaneren Ed Snekvik,³⁹ som hadde hatt kontakt med Bernhard Dahl, fikk Ryland også høre om den amerikanske forkynneren Gene Edwards.⁴⁰

³⁶ Askeland, intervju, 31.08.1994.

³⁷ Askeland, intervju, 31.08.1994.

³⁸ Bøkene ble ikke offisielt benyttet ved bibelskolen, men noen derfra hadde kommet over dem via en ikke-trinitarisk pinsemenighet i St. Paul, Minnesota.

³⁹ Snekviks foreldre var oppvokst i traktene rundt Kristiansund, men giftet seg i Seattle hvor de ble boende. Snekvik ble aktiv i den lutherske kirken og sendte siden sine 2 sønner og 1 datter til Pacific Lutheran University. Den eldste sønnen ble uteksaminert i 1965 og fikk et åndelig gjennombrudd i denne perioden, dog ikke i en luthersk kontekst, men "off campus by a group from Campus Crusade for Christ." Sønnens omvendelse vekket Snekvik og førte til "my new walk with the Lord." (Snekvik, brev, datert 25.09.1995.)

Snekvik skjønnte at Ryland var opptatt av 'menighet' og sendte fast over ett års tid en rekke bøker og kassetter av Edwards. Ryland var ikke udelt begeistret. Spesielt Edwards isolasjon i forhold til øvrige kristne grupper og fellesskap virket urovekkende.

Kåre Kristing hadde nettopp fått nyss om ukjente Snekviks besøk i Bergen da han våren 1974 dro til California på forretningsreise. Kristing ble nysjerrig og bestemte seg for å oppsøke det menighetsfellesskap i Santa Barbara hvor Snekvik var med. Ed og Alice Snekvik hadde allerede hørt om Øivind Lundh i det karismatiske ungdomsfellesskapet Guds Fred i Oslo, man aldri møtt ham. De trodde det var *han* som kom, og møtte opp på flyplassen i Santa Barbara. Kristing bodde hos dem og var rundt i fellesskapet, tok del i møter og hilste på lederen Gene Edwards. Kristing opplevde Edwards som "ganske spesiell. En sterk personlighet med autoritet."⁴¹ Vel tilbake i Norge tok Kristing kontakt med Lundh, som heller ikke han hadde møtt tidligere. Sistnevnte reiste siden over til Santa Barbara og bodde der med familien i flere år.

Kontakten med England intensiveres

Det er fascinerende å følge Tore Lende i sin beskrivelse av sin kristne vandring. Gjennom nabo Lars Salte, en av lederne på Bedehuset, kom han tidlig over bladet *Hjemmets venn* som blant annet inkluderte artikler fra den amerikanske helbredelsesvekkelsen etter 2. verdenskrig.⁴² Allerede i 1961 begynte Lende å abonnere på tidsskriftene til kjente forkynnere som Gordon Lindsay, T.L. Osborn og A.A. Allen. Dette til tross, han talte ikke i tunger, bad ikke for syke og hadde ikke engang 'frelsesvisshet'. I 1964 overvar han et møte med Aril Edvardsen og gikk også fram til forbønn. Da Edvardsen begynte å be for ham med tanke på 'åndsdåp', avbrøt Lende ham og sa at han ikke var 'frelst' en gang.

Fremdeles i 1965-66, mens han avtjente verneplikten i Bodø, til tross for at han ivrig leste i Bibelen og tilbrakte daglig ½-1 time i bønn, opplevdes kristenlivet 'tørt'. Lende var likevel en pådriver i å få andre til å søke Gud og kalte inn til bønnemøter. Også overfor Erling Thu ble Lende en slags pådriver etter at de gjenopptok kontakten rundt 1966. Lende introduserte ham for flere av de britiske Restorationist-forkynnerne, blant annet Peter Lyne og Graham Perrins. Gjennom

⁴⁰ For ytterligere opplysninger om Edwards, se Geir Lie, "Gene Edwards og hans menighetsforståelse." *Refleks* 5-2 (2006) s. 4-33.

⁴¹ Kristing, brev, datert 03.12.1995.

⁴² For nærmere presentasjon av denne, se Geir Lie, "Helbredelse ved tro: Fra Möttlingen til Tulsa – et historisk overblikk." *Refleks* 1-2 (2002) s. 3-19.

Lende stiftet han også bekjentskap med det amerikanske tidsskriftet *Voice in the wilderness* som i tillegg til karismatisk undervisningsstoff hadde menighetsrelaterte artikler av blant annet Watchman Nee og DeVern F. Fromke. Parallelt med dette ble Thu oppmerksom på argentineren Juan Carlos Ortiz og dennes undervisning om menighetsfellesskap og cellegrupper.

Den menighetsbyggende litteraturen kom i en periode hvor Thu ble stadig mer oppslukt av arbeidet med evangeliseringsteamene og hvor han så behovet for 'ikke-individualistisk' menighetsundervisning. Blant annet på grunn av lite vennskap og fellesskap innenfor de lokale menighetene, ble folk gjerne 'frelst', men ikke 'bevart'. Litteratur av amerikaneren E.W. Kenyon dannet bakgrunn for 'individ-undervisning', men Watchman Nee dekket et annet behov. Thu forsøkte derfor å kombinere det han opplevde var det beste fra begge.

Pinsemenighetenes vekkelsemøter, som stort sett kun samlet troende, fungerte dårlig. Vi må 'ut til synderne', mente Thu. Utsagnet ble misforstått, og ryktene nådde 'alle' om at Thu angivelig mente at 'menighetens tid var forbi'. På en predikantkonferanse tok Thoralf Gilbrant utgangspunkt i et tidligere *Troens Bevis*-nummer som hadde et bilde av David Wulff som med håndspåleggelse innsatte eldste i en nyetablert menighet på Malta, ikke bare etter paulinsk mønster, men i 'apostolisk ånd'. Gilbrant angrep Sarons Dal for deres tro på apostler i vår tid, samt deres ungdomsleder (Thu ledet Operasjon Ungdomsteam), som hevdet at menighetens tid var forbi. Thu bad om ordet og erklærte at han aldri hadde ment eller hevdet dette, og at han heller ikke kjente andre i Sarons Dal som hadde et slikt syn.

Thus forklaring hjalp imidlertid ikke. Ett av spørsmålene fra salen gjaldt den nær forestående felleskristne ungdomskonferansen som både Rune Brännström, Jonny Noer, Johannes Facius, Thu og Tore Lende skulle delta på. Lende hadde en husgruppe (bestående stort sett av karismatiske 'statskirkefolk') på Bryne, men pinseforstanderen på stedet reiste seg og hevdet at Lende splittet *pinsemenigheten*. Han hadde til og med hørt at man *danset* i Lendes gruppe! På spørsmål om de 'danset i Ånden', hadde Lende svart nei. Han mente åpenbart at de kun danset 'for Herren', og ikke 'i transe'.

Det kan synes som om Lende kun ble tatt opp på pinsevennenes predikantkonferanse for å så tvil om Thus menighetssyn, og det ble reist spørsmål om hvordan han kunne samarbeide med Lende gjennom å delta på samme konferanse. Thu svarte at konferansen i Oslo ville være felleskristelig, og at han selv ikke følte ansvar for Lendes eventuelle menighetssyn, men at Lende for øvrig var en 'god, kristen bror'. Svaret vakte sterke reaksjoner både mot Thu og Sarons Dal. Ett av resultatene ble at 10-15 av forkynnerne som på forhånd var positive til Sarons Dal, underskrev et brev til Edvardsen hvor man ikke lenger ville støtte virksomheten om Thu fikk tillatelse til å fortsette som tidligere.

Edwardsen var nølende til hvordan han skulle gripe saken an og viste Thu brevet. Da Edwardsen ikke hadde vært tilstede på predikantkonferansen, redegjorde Thu for hva som faktisk hadde skjedd, samtidig med at han kommuniserte at Edvardsen selv måtte ta en avgjørelse på hvordan den nye situasjonen skulle håndteres. For Edwardsens del var Thus menighetssyn mindre vesentlig, det som betydde noe var hva folk trodde Thu stod for. Edvardsen insisterte på at Thu skulle bryte kontakten med Lende, noe Thu ikke var villig til. Edvardsen aksepterte tilslutt Thus beslutning på den betingelsen at Thu ikke hadde noe *formelt samarbeid* med Lende. Konferansen i Oslo ble avlyst. Thu måtte dessuten slutte som leder av Operasjon Ungdomsteam da han ikke lenger skulle ha noen offentlig funksjon i Sarons Dal før tilliten hos pinseforkynnerne var gjenopprettet. Han fikk i stedet tilbud om en stilling på kontoret og godtok dette.

Neste halvår var preget av mye personaluro. Man hadde alltid stått med Edvardsen når det stormet rundt ham, mange mente det ville ha vært riktig å støtte Thu i denne situasjonen. En annen sak, som gjerne var enda mer vesentlig, var at Edvardsen kanskje ikke hadde sin styrke på det personlige mellom-menneskelige plan, og mange i personalet følte seg dårlig behandlet. I denne perioden sluttet 14 av Edwardsens ansatte, derav nesten alle avdelingslederne. Også Thu opplevde halvåret problematisk og sluttet på sommeren 1975.

Mens Thu jobbet i Sarons Dal, hadde Lende fått kontakt med de britiske Restorationist-forkynnerne Bryn Jones og David Mansell. Høsten 1975 ble det arrangert en pastorkonferanse i Josefatnet i Troms hvor disse deltok;⁴³ Lende inviterte Thu og betalte billetten hans. Både undervisningen og den praktiske omsorgen gjorde inntrykk. Thu ble så invitert til England. Også denne gangen betalte Lende billetten. I løpet av omlag 14 dager tilbrakte Thu mye tid sammen med Jones, som var til stor hjelp. Gjennom Jones og de menighetssammenhenger denne var tilknyttet, opplevde Thu å se realisert i praksis noen av de kristne idealene som han tidligere bare hadde drømt om og som for ham kun var teori.

I januar 1978 ble Thu spurt om å være hjelpeforstander i pinsemenigheten Zion, Stavanger hvor Tom Erlandsen virket som pastor. Siden 1976 hadde Thu dratt regelmessig på kristne sommerstevner i England og hadde utviklet et stadig tettere forhold til Bryn Jones, som dessuten hadde besøkt ham i Norge før Thu begyn-

⁴³ Lende hadde tatt kontakt med Det norske Misjonsforbund mens han bodde i Bodø. I forkant av pastorkonferansen i Josefatnet oppsøkte de britiske forkynnerne daværende landssekretær Ingulf Diesen på hans hjemmekontor hvor de viste fram noe litteratur og samtidig bad om anbefaling for sitt første besøk til bl.a. Narvik og Tromsø. (Ingulf Diesen, brev til artikkelforfatteren, datert 06.01.1995.)

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te som hjelpeforstander. Erlandsen hadde også vært i England sammen med Thu og opplevde at “mye var bra,” og refererte da til den gjensidige omsorgen de enkeltkristne utøvde overfor hverandre. På høsten 1978 inviterte Erlandsen Bryn Jones bror, Keri, og David Matthew til Zion. Menigheten var positivt innstilt til deres budskap om vennskap og praktisk menighetsfelleskap. Erlandsen og Thu prøvde å følge opp undervisningen, og det ble utarbeidet en plan for fornyelse av menigheten. Man ville skape et levende fellesskap gjennom grupper i stedet for kun å møtes på offentlige møter. Også Thu forkynte viktigheten av vennskap i menigheten, men Thus og Erlandsens endringsprosess ble likefullt kun kommunisert til menighetens eldsteråd.

Mens Thu jobbet i Zion tok han et initiativ overfor Erlandsen og Leif S. Jacobsen om å samle karismatiske ledere som var positive til ‘fornyelse’. Den første ‘Oase-samlingen’ ble holdt på Vasstuland (nær Geilo) og samlet 10-15 forkynnere. Thu opplever i ettertid kun å ha hatt til hensikt at man skulle ha fellesskap, be sammen og være til gjensidig hjelp og styrke for hverandre. En gang Thu hadde besøk av Gwyn Daniel og Hugh Thompson, tok han dem med på en slik samling. Begge disse fikk ordet og forkynte forpliktende vennskap. Gjennom disse samlingene ble Thu mer kjent med Sverre Granlund, Tony Jessen og Vilhelm Langemyr.

Da Thu sluttet i Zion sommeren 1980,⁴⁴ ble det naturlig å dra til Farsund hvor Jessen hadde vært pastor i Misjonsforbundet siden 1977. På dette tidspunktet hadde både Thu, Jessen, Langemyr og Granlund (som allerede hadde flyttet til Oppdal hvor han var pastor i baptistmenigheten) et formalisert forhold til Keri

⁴⁴ Under et 1 måneders kurs – International Training Programme – hvor Thu deltok sammen med Sverre Granlund, ble Thu i enda større grad enn tidligere overbevist om at han ønsket å stå for “den totale visjon om Guds rike og menighetsliv / menighetssyn. Samtidig hadde han tvil om hvorvidt dette ville lykkes i Zion, Stavanger.” (Erling Thu, intervju, datert 09.10.1994.)

Jones.⁴⁵ Thu hadde dessuten kontakt med flere yngre pastorer innen Misjonsforbundet og fulgte opp disse gjennom undervisning / opplæring.⁴⁶

Delvis inspirert av Nees ekklesiologi hadde Jessen undervist om “Jesu Kristi herredømme uttrykt gjennom tjenestene i menigheten.”⁴⁷ I forlengelse av dette ble det uttrykt et behov for et ‘styre’ i menigheten som uttrykte Jesu ‘herredømme’. Mange av Farsundmenighetens medlemmer var også godt kjent med Nees litteratur, så det var ikke eksklusivt Jessens forkynnelse som satte i gang en prosess. Under menighetens årsmøte i januar 1978 reiste en av menighetens medlemmer seg da de skulle gå til valg av styret og proklamerte at man ikke nå, som tidligere, skulle ‘velge’ styre, men at Gud ønsket ‘eldste’ til å lede i menigheten. Han pekte ut tre personer i tillegg til Jessen. Det ble mange sterke reaksjoner på at Jessen ikke uten videre avviste dette og i stedet holdt seg til dagsordenen. Menigheten besluttet likevel å utsette valg av ‘eldsteråd’, og det gamle ‘eldsterådet’ ble sittende inntil videre.

På grunn av den fastlåste situasjonen, ble misjonsforstander Ingulf Diesen involvert (i og med at distriktsforstander Hans Kristian Aas var sykemeldt). Diesen rådet menigheten til ikke å gjøre noe dramatisk, men å la endringene skje i samsvare med en demokratisk prosess i menigheten. På våren ble to av de tre utpekte lederne demokratisk valgt og innsatt som menighetseldste (den tredje ville ikke) med Misjonsforbundets velsignelse. Diesen var selv med og innsatte disse. I tillegg ble det valgt et ‘tjenesteråd’ som skulle ta hånd om menighetens praktisk-administrative ansvar. Samtidig med denne prosessen jobbet Det norske Misjonsforbund sentralt med egne statutter og Forbundsstyret oppfordret i den forbindel-

⁴⁵ I et brev til Kjell Haltorp, datert 30.04.1980, skriver Thu at han, Granlund, Jessen og Vilhelm Langemyr har opplevd at “Herren har ført oss saman i eit paktsforhold til kvarandre. [...]Vi fire kjem til å møtast ofte i tida framover og vil du vera med i dette paktsforholdet er du hjearteleg [sic!] velkomen.” Bakgrunnen for Thus invitasjon var tidligere sonderende samtaler mellom de to. Haltorp gikk likefullt aldri inn i noe formalisert paktsforhold til de øvrige. Til tross for en overveiende positiv tone, hvor han fremhever Thus redelighet, opplever han sistnevnte som “for sterk,” noe som sannsynliggjør faren for “et for sterkt menneskelig bindingsforhold [sic!].” (Kjell Haltorp, brev til Erling Thu, datert 09.12.1980.) Brevene er gjengitt med tillatelse fra begge parter.

⁴⁶ Disse kontaktene inkluderte bl.a. Dag Kristoffersen (pastor i misjonsmenigheten i Siljan), Per Lunde (pastor i misjonsmenigheten på Kongsberg), Jon Ultvedt (pastor for ‘majoritetmenigheten’ etter en splittelse i De Frie Evangeliske Forsamlinger i Haugesund), samt pinsemenigheten i Lillesand og et uformelt menighetsfelleskap i Snertingdal.

⁴⁷ Tony Jessen, intervju datert 04.11.1994.

se menigheten i Farsund til å komme med forslag til eventuelle endringer av statuttene.

Idet Thu flyttet til Farsund i 1980, tok det ikke lang tid før han ble inkludert i menighetens 'eldsteråd'. Offisielt ble han innsatt av Kjell Haltorp og Sverre Granlund, sammen med det allerede eksisterende 'eldsterådet' på tre personer. Normalt sett skulle distriktsforstanderen ha deltatt ved en slik anledning. Thu var imidlertid ikke godkjent som forkynner av Det norske Misjonsforbund, og på høsten dro Jessen og Thu inn til hovedkontoret i Oslo for å få ordnet med forkynnergodkjenning. Denne ble imidlertid ikke gitt – delvis skyldtes nok dette skepsis til at Thu i denne perioden ble lønnet fra Storbritannia, og dels ryktene fra pinsebevegelsens predikantkonferanse hvor Thus kontakt med Tore Lende var blitt debattert.

I forkant av påsken 1981 kom det til et internt skisma i Farsundmenigheten, og en av de ledende eldste uttrykte mistillit til Thu. Han fikk med seg en av de øvrige i 'eldsterådet'. Før 'eldsterådet' var blitt innsatt, hadde man imidlertid blitt enige om å si fra til hverandre om noen ikke fungerte i oppgaven. Jessen oppfordret nå den 'ledende eldste' om å trekke seg, all den stund han det siste året hadde vært overlesset i mye arbeid utenfor menigheten og derfor ikke hadde 'funget'. Denne oppfattet imidlertid oppfordringen som en avsettelse og mistenkte at Keri Jones stod bak. Også den andre 'eldstebroren' stilte nå sin plass til disposisjon, selv om han ikke var blitt bedt om det. Begge disse tok nå kontakt med Diesen, og det ble besluttet å holde et menighetsmøte hvor menigheten skulle avgjøre hvem de hadde mest tillit til. Diesen deltok på menighetsmøtet, og det ble her lagt press på Jessen om at han måtte bryte forbindelsen med Thu og Storbritannia. Jessen opplevde en reell lojalitetskonflikt men valgte å stå sammen med Thu. Mens Jessen valgte å forlate menigheten, fikk Thu utmeldingsattest uten å ha bedt om det – med andre ord en regulær utstøtelse. I ettertid skulle Jessen ha ønsket en lykkeligere utgang av misjonsmenigheten. Problemet, slik han ser det, var at det skjedde en gradvis bevisstgjøring i ham vedrørende den praktiske utformingen av 'Guds rike' i menighetens liv, og til å begynne med hadde det ikke streifet ham at det skulle kunne være umulig å leve ut 'Guds rike' innen et etablert kirkesamfunn som Det norske Misjonsforbund. Jessen hadde også invitert Keri Jones til menigheten delvis utfra en feilaktig forståelse av hvor menigheten i Farsund stod vis-à-vis Det norske Misjonsforbund sentralt. Han hadde fått inntrykk av at de hadde hatt et mye løsere forhold til sitt eget kirkesamfunn enn hva som faktisk var tilfelle.

Sammen etablerte de en selvstendig menighet, Kristent Fellesskap, Farsund. Man hadde et innbyrdes tett fellesskap hvor man hjalp hverandre praktisk, for eksempel med dugnadsarbeid. Ingen var definert som den ledende, idet hovedprinsippet var at man skulle 'tjene', det vil her si ta initiativ, etter det 'Gud hadde gjort en til.' Og en leder var leder fordi han ledet. Etter hvert ble det klart for dem at det

var Thu som i praktisk ledet, det vil si var lederen. Han fortsatte derfor på fulltid, mens Jessen tok arbeid utenfor menigheten. Menigheten opplevde imidlertid massiv motstand fra det kristne miljøet i kommunen og la ned virksomheten på høsten 1986 da man så lite frukt av flere års arbeid.⁴⁸

Tore Lende versus Kristen Tjeneste

Vi vender igjen tilbake til Lende, norsk fellesskapsbevegelses katalysator. I løpet av 1972 flyttet han fra Flekkefjord til Bryne. Han talte på det kristne elevlaget der og noen få ble 'åndsdøpte'. Gjennom Peter Lyne ble det så etablert kontakt med amerikaneren Charles McHatton, som bodde hos Lende i to uker, og hvor det ble avholdt husmøter hver eneste kveld. Om lag femti ungdommer på Bryne ble 'åndsdøpte', og mange vitnet om personlige helbredelser.

I løpet av høsten 1973 hadde Lendes husgruppe vokst til om lag tjue 'overgitte' personer. Man hadde igjen besøk fra England, og den lille gruppen ble spurt om de ville underordne seg ham, hvilket alle, minus én, svarte bekræftende på. Hugh Thompson innsatte så Lende til 'eldste'.

I løpet av 1971-72 hadde det, viste det seg, pågått en utvikling i England som Lende ikke var klar over. Underordning ('submission') ble nå et sentralt begrep: 'Hvis du underordner deg meg, står jeg bak deg med min autoritet!' Tidligere hadde Lende på eget forgodtbefinnende spurt de ulike britiske forkynnerne om de kunne komme over til Norge for å forkynne. Muligens i løpet av sommeren 1973 ble han så kalt over til England. Bakgrunnen synes å være at flere av forkynnerne der så på seg selv som 'apostler'. Både Lyne, Thompson og Perrins var frustrerte - Lende kunne ikke bare kontakte dem hver for seg etter eget forgodtbefinnende, men måtte forholde seg til én av dem. Lende fikk inntrykk av at Perrins følte at Norge tilhørte ham og at han skulle være en slags 'åndelig far' for ham - en relasjon Lende på ingen måte var fortrolig med. Han opplevde det nye møtet med de britiske forkynnerne som høyst smertefullt. Han hadde imidlertid opplevd så mye godt fra England at han ville opprettholde kontakten med 'brødrene'. Perrins, Lyne og Thompson besluttet derfor seg imellom at Thompson skulle være Lendes 'apostel'. Lende selv regnet alle tre som sine beste venner og syntes det var kunstig å skulle forholde seg til kun én av disse. Han skjønte heller ikke teologien bak, men var føyeelig og godtok den nye praksisen. Dette innebar at Thompson ved uenighet skulle ha det avgjørende ordet.

⁴⁸ Alf van der Hagen, "Kroken på døra for Kristent Fellesskap." *Vårt Land* 24. jan. 1987; Aslaug Bisseberg, "Kristent Fellesskap bryter opp." *Aftenposten* 11. feb. 1987.

Etter hvert fikk Thompson anføtelser om hvorvidt han virkelig *var* 'apostel'. Han hadde også problemer med Lendes 'sterke personlighet' og karakteriserte Lende som 'uregjerlig'. Det ble besluttet at Lende trengte en 'sterk apostel' og John Noble ble utnevnt – uten at Lende selv ble rådspurt. Noble og Lende reiste imidlertid mye sammen i forkynnervirksomhet og ble gode venner. Problemene tårnet seg likevel opp rundt 1978. Da ble Lende avsatt som 'eldste' i menigheten på Bryne. Grunnlaget var generelt sett at han ikke ville underordne seg Noble. Rent konkret hevdet dessuten Noble at Lende hadde lovt å avslutte sin salgsvirksomhet uten å overholde løftet. Lende påstår selv at han aldri lovet dette. Når de britiske forkynnerne kom til Norge, var Lende fri til å la salgsvirksomheten ligge og i stedet reise sammen med dem. Skulle han legge ned virksomheten, ville han dog bli påført økonomiske tap. Om de britiske 'brødrene' forlangte at han skulle slippe alt han hadde i hendene hver gang de kom, måtte de være villige til å ta det økonomiske ansvaret, parerte Lende. Utfra Nobles paternalistiske synsvinkel var det utvilsomt Lendes ve og vel som opptok ham. Lende passet nemlig ikke til å drive forretning – det ville hindre hans 'åndelige tjeneste'. Utfra Lendes ståsted var ikke situasjonen like enkel: Han kunne ikke bare avslutte forretningen uten videre uten å bli påført et økonomisk tap som han der og da ikke forstod hvordan skulle løses. Det store problemet ble derfor Lendes 'ulydighet' mot et apostolisk råd. Teorien var at når du bad om et råd, var du forpliktet til å følge det rådet – spesielt om det var din 'apostel' som gav det.

Ulike versjoner verserer hva angår initieringen av menigheten Kristen Tjeneste. Trygve Brekke hevder å ha vært inspirert av Lende og å ha startet opp en egen husgruppe i Stavanger etter at han flyttet dit i 1975. Brekke hevder videre at Lendes husfellesskap på Bryne gikk i oppløsning like etterpå. I etterkant av dette, hevder han, flyttet flere fra det torpederte husfellesskapet til Stavanger hvor de nå gikk inn i Brekkes husgruppe. Denne fikk i 1978 navnet Kristen Tjeneste og ble ti år senere formalisert som menighet.⁴⁹ Lende, derimot, mener at husfellesskapet aldri ble nedlagt, men at man like fullt opplevde seg som i et slags vakuum etter hans egen avsettelse som 'eldste'. Brekke kom inn i sammenhengen og ble flere år senere, av Kåre Kristing fra Bergen, innsatt som ny 'eldste'.⁵⁰

Kristne Oslo Vest og Kristne i Gjøvik

Også i Oslo fikk man tidlig kontakt med britiske Restorationist-miljøer. Tor og Liv Thorhild Undheim, grunnleggere av Nettverkskirken (tidligere Kristne Oslo

⁴⁹ Trygve Brekke, intervju, datert 30.01.1998.

⁵⁰ Tore Lende, intervju, datert, 27.09.1994.

Vest), flyttet i 1971 til Oslo for å ta fatt på sykepleierutdannelse ved Diakonhjemmet. Året etter tok Åsulf Kvammen, som hadde vært i forbindelse med Tore Lende, kontakt med dem med forespørsel om de sammen skulle starte en bibelgruppe. Gruppen vokste etter hvert til et lite fellesskap.

Gjennom kontakten med Lende ble Kvammen introdusert for flere av de britiske Restorationist-forkynnerne, deriblant John Noble. Flere av disse ble invitert til Oslo hvor Kvammen, sammen med Hans Kristian Strand, til å begynne med var pådriverne. John Noble besøkte Oslo på høsten 1974 og bodde en uke hos familien Undheim. Selv om fellesskapet allerede bar preg av at kristenliv innebærer noe langt mer enn møtevirksomhet, men hvor man spiste middag sammen og pleiet det sosiale fellesskapet, ble alt dette forsterket gjennom Nobles besøk.

Til å begynne med hadde man lite innbyrdes kontakt med andre norske menigheter som de britiske forkynnerne jobbet inn i. Dette endret seg imidlertid etter at Kvammen forlot Oslo i 1975 etter å ha gjort seg ferdig med veterinærutdannelsen og slo seg sammen med Lende. I 1980 flyttet så Hans Kristian Strand, sammen med 10-15 andre personer fra fellesskapet, opp til en nyetablert gruppe på Gjøvik. Dermed hadde man også en naturlig tilknytning til disse.⁵¹

Fra 1980 til 1985 opplevde man en rimelig stor grad av innbyrdes tilhørighet mellom de norske menighetene som stod i forbindelse med kretsen rundt John Noble. Man begynte å arrangere konferanser og besøke hverandres menigheter og samlet blant annet i underkant av 200 personer i Valle i Setesdal. Konferansene var nok med å forsterke identiteten av tilhørighet de norske menighetene seg imellom (og avgrense dem i forhold til den øvrige norske frikirkestand).

⁵¹ Høsten 1979 kom Olav Slåtten, Anders Aanje og Gunnar Dehli (senere også Lars Kapelrud) sammen på Gjøvik for å utgjøre et fellesskap som de rundt 1986 kalte Kristne i Gjøvik. De hadde hatt kontakt med Oslo-fellesskapet gjennom flere år og var nok en del influert derfra, men også fra Maria-søstrene. Gruppen rundt Hans Kristian Strand ble innlemmet i det allerede eksisterende fellesskapet. Via Lars Bjerke (leder av menigheten Kristne i Askim) ble det etablert kontakt mellom disse og Godtfred Erland i Trondheim rundt 1985-86. Gradvis ble denne kontakten styrket gjennom diverse gjensidige besøk. Begge parter opplevde dette positivt. Da Hans Kristian Strand gikk av som en av lederne i Kristne i Gjøvik i oktober 1989, var én av grunnene at Erland hadde veldig sterke og klare holdninger til hva han syntes 'England' og Noble representerte av illegitim kontroll i menigheten. I kjølvannet av dette sluttet 10-15 mennesker i menigheten. Den andre halvparten, pluss noen nye mennesker, fortsatte et par år før de nedla Kristne i Gjøvik og istedet etablerte Jovakirken med Olav Slåtten som pastor. (Hans Kristian Strand, intervju, datert 15.12.1994; Olav Slåtten, intervju, datert 10.02.1995.) Hans Kristian Strand er idag med i et nytt husfellesskap på Gjøvik.

Rundt 1990-91 opplevde Undheim at det var mindre å 'hente' fra England. Han ville, naturlig nok, bevare vennskapet med de britiske forkynnerne, men opplevde samtidig behovet for å stå på egne ben. Som menighet følte de behov for å knytte seg mer opp til andre *norske* menigheter og menighetsledere. Før hadde det vært rimelig å invitere en del av de britiske forkynnerne noen ganger i året. Nå ble det mer slik at Undheim inviterte over i den grad han selv opplevde at / om menigheten hadde behov for deres 'tjeneste'.

I denne perioden ble det på en ny måte klart at man ikke bare utgjorde et forpliktende fellesskap, men at man var en selvstendig lokal menighet i Oslo. Det ble naturlig å formalisere dette gjennom blant annet utmelding av Den norske Kirke, annonsering av møtene hvor menigheten tok navnet Kristne Oslo Vest (senere Nettverkskirken). Undheim begynte nå å kalle seg pastor og søkte bevisst kontakt med andre kristne menighetsledere i andre norske sammenhenger. Han er fremdeles menighetens pastor sammen med Gunnar Dehli som har en sidestilt funksjon.

Lars Bjerke og Kristne i Askim

Bjerke har tidligere bakgrunn fra det luthersk-karismatiske Guds Fred-fellesskapet tidlig på 1970-tallet. Her ble han første gang introdusert for norske oversettelser av Watchman Nees bøker, utgitt på Ansgar og Logos forlag. Gjennom kontakt med Johnny Noer og Johannes Facius, som drev Soli Deo Gloria (et kristent arbeid for rusgiftbrukere) i København, ble Bjerke igjen gjort oppmerksom på Nee og hans litteratur.

Sammen med kona sluttet Bjerke i Guds Fred-fellesskapet i 1973. Etter ett års opphold i Lillestrøm gikk ferden videre til Askim hvor de drev utadrettet evangelisering. Flere fra Lillestrøm flyttet med, og etter hvert hadde man om lag 6-7 personer som virket på heltid, lønnet gjennom frivillige gaver. De gikk til anskaffelse av et gammelt småbruk, Ihlen Gård, hvor det ble invitert til weekendsamlinger. Arbeidet var organisert som stiftelse – Herren er nær-fellesskapet, men foregikk i 'statskirkens' regi, idet blant annet menighetsrådet var representert i styret.

Herren er nær-fellesskapet ble imidlertid avviklet, og Ihlen Gård overdratt menighetsrådet i samsvar med stiftelsens statutter etter at ekteparet Bjerke fikk teologiske betenkeligheter med luthersk dåp og menighetsforståelse. De hadde tidligere fått besøk (og blitt påvirket) av Øivind Lund (som de kjente fra Guds Fred-perioden), som hadde hatt et kortere opphold i USA bak seg, men nå skulle over for en betydelig lenger periode. Lundh fortalte om amerikaneren Gene Edwards og dennes menighetsfellesskap i Isla Vista utenfor Los Angeles. Edwards bok *Our Mission* gjorde et uutslettelig inntrykk, og familien Bjerke tilbrakte selv 3

måneder i Edwards menighetsfelleskap i 1977. Senere utgav Bjerke *Our Mission* i norsk språkdrakt på sitt eget Tusenfryd-forlag.

I 1977 kjøpte Bjerke en grendeskole på Skiptvedt som ble pusset opp og innredet til bokollektiv for det gryende husfelleskapet som hadde vokst fram rundt ekteparet. Siden flyttet man til Askim sentrum og tok navnet Kristne i Askim. De hadde tidligere (gjennom Hans Kristian Strand og Herleik Nielsen i Oslo-felleskapet) blitt introdusert for John Noble, som besøkte Ihlen gård forut for avviklingen. Dette igjen førte til at det ble knyttet kontakter med øvrige norske fellesskapsgrupper som Noble aktivt jobbet inn i. I en 4-5 års periode arrangerte Bjerke, sammen med blant annet Olav Slåtten, Hans Kristian Strand, Tor Undheim, Åsulf Kvammen og Tore Lende, en rekke felleskonferanser. Kristne i Askim opplevde seg like fullt som outsider vis-a-vis de øvrige norske menighetene Noble jobbet inn i, og kontakten avtok. Menigheten ble lagt ned i 1991.⁵²

Kristent Fellesskap-bevegelsen

Kristent Fellesskap, Bergen

Kristent Fellesskap-bevegelsen, med utgangspunkt i lokalmenigheten i Bergen, har en kompleks historikk, idet menighetens ledere og ideologiske premisslevereandører har trukket veksler på de forskjelligste strømninger og tradisjoner. Sammenslåingen av Askelands og Kristings respektive bønnegrupper er allerede nevnt. I perioden 1982-84 virket Askeland halv tid i menigheten (man hadde så smått begynt å titulere virksomheten 'menighet') som fikk navnet Kristent Fellesskap rundt 1982, etter inspirasjon fra Lance Lamberts Christian Fellowship i London.

I 1981 ble Erling Thu invitert til Bergen, ikke for å forkynne, men for å svare på spørsmål vedrørende seg selv og den strømning han definerte seg innenfor. Askeland opplevde en umiddelbart hjertekontakt med Thu som han mente Gud selv hadde lagt til rette.

Askeland og Kristing var i utgangspunktet likestilte, selv om det hovedsakelig hadde vært Askeland som forkynnte. Thu, derimot, hadde ingen tro på en slik lederskapsmodell og mente at én måtte være leder blant lederne. Dette fremkalte en intern prosess. Selv om det aldri ble uttrykt i menigheten som sådan, så nok Kristing på seg selv, ifølge Askeland, som den mest naturlige lederen. Askeland hadde i utgangspunktet ikke noe problem med det, men følte behov for en avkla-

⁵² Lars Bjerke, intervju, 24.03.1998.

ring med hensyn til hvem Kristing selv ville høre på. Ifølge Askeland kunne man ikke utøve autoritet dersom man ikke først hadde lært å 'stå under autoritet'.⁵³

Etter møtet med Thu i 1981 ble menigheten introdusert for britiske Tony Ling året etter. Ling avla flere besøk, og Askeland kjente en gradvis større lengsel etter at menigheten i større grad skulle la seg betjene av den 'apostoliske tjeneste' som Ling angivelig var knyttet opp mot. Mens Kristing forventet at 'embetsgavene' i menigheten skulle vokse opp lokalt i Bergen, på mange måter løsrevet fra hva som skjedde andre steder, mente Askeland at det var nødvendig ikke bare å opprettholde kontakten med de britiske Restorationist-lederne, menighetens eventuelt egne apostler burde også anerkjennes av 'brødrene' fra Storbritannia.

På Askelands spørsmål om hvem Kristing selv ville 'stå under' om han ønsket å være leder for menigheten i Bergen, svarte Kristing (ifølge Askeland) at Noble nok var for svak for ham. Dette sammenfalt mer eller mindre i tid med Askelands invitasjon om å delta på en samling av ulike 'apostoliske team' (Inter Team Meeting) i Oxford i 1983. Dette ble Askelands første møte med Keri Jones. Jones besøkte Bergen første gang året etter. Kristing var i utgangspunktet positivt innstilt til eventuelt å stå under waliserens tilsyn. Samtidig, mener Askeland, hadde nok Kristing tatt mål av seg å være mannen som skulle samle de ulike norske fellesskapsmenighetene man hadde uformell kontakt med (som Noble arbeidet inn i). Disse var imidlertid reservert overfor Jones, og Kristing innså – fremdeles ifølge Askeland – at det kunne bli vanskelig å fungere som koordinator for de ulike menighetene om Jones ble 'apostel' for menigheten i Bergen. Askeland hevder videre at et vel så stort problem for Kristing var at Thu var Jones kontaktperson i Norge, idet Kristing angivelig så på seg selv som kalt til å lede arbeidet i Norge. I september 1984 innkalte Kristing til et ekstraordinært møte med blant annet Jones, Thu, Askeland og noen flere og hvor han uten forvarsel listet opp en rekke punkter som burde diskvalifisere Thu fra ledervervet. Kritikken mot Thu ble umiddelbart avvist av Jones. Få dager deretter besluttet Kristing seg for å

⁵³ Som allerede nevnt, hadde Kristing på et langt tidligere tidspunkt stiftet bekjentskap med flere av de britiske Restorationist-lederne. Rundt 1980 kom forøvrig både John Noble og Hugh Thompson til Bergen for å besøke Kristing. Samme år (og noen år framover) ble det arrangert uformelle ledersamlinger hvor bl.a. Askeland og Kristing, sammen med norske ledere i menigheter Noble hadde et særskilt ansvar overfor, deltok. Hensikten med samlingene var imidlertid primært å ha fellesskap, og selv om man nok drøftet hva man mente 'Gud ønsket å gjøre' i Norge som nasjon, hadde samlingene ingen organisatorisk bindende myndighet. Ledersamlingene opphørte forøvrig etter bruddet mellom Askeland og Kristing.

bryte forbindelsen med Jones. Han mente samtidig at Askeland og menigheten for øvrig skulle følge hans eksempel.

Askeland kunne ikke støtte Kristing i dette. Jones selv ønsket ikke å gå inn i konflikten, idet han var invitert til menigheten på et tidspunkt hvor denne hadde to likestilte ledere. Menigheten måtte derfor selv finne ut hva den ønsket og ta stilling til den interne konflikten. En måneds tid gikk med til interne drøftinger mellom Kristing og Askeland før førstnevnte plutselig stod fram på et søndagsmøte for å meddele menigheten at han og familien herved forlot menigheten. Askeland opplevde budskapet forvirrende – på den ene siden anbefalte han menigheten å holde seg til Askeland, på den andre siden gjorde han det klart at menighetens fremtid var spolert. Resultatet ble at 5-6 personer fulgte Kristing ut av menigheten mens de resterende (om lag 40 personer) forble med Askeland. Nyttårsaftnen 1984 gikk Kristing rundt og la brev i postkassen til 10-15 av personene i menigheten. I brevet advarte han mot å gå videre med Askeland. Etter 2-3 måneder hadde de alle hatt nok tid til å evaluere situasjonen og måtte skjønne at ting bar galt av sted.

Askeland tok nå ny kontakt med Jones og gjorde det klart at han ønsket både hjelp og tilsyn. Ville Jones ta et apostolisk ansvar for menigheten i Bergen? Jones svarte bekreftende på dette.

Det påfølgende året opplevde fellesskapet en fordobling av medlemstallet. Dette ble sett på som en stadfestelse på at det var rett å stå under ‘apostolisk tilsyn’. Siden har det vært jevn vekst som fremdeles pågår. Til å begynne med var det en viss skepsis til Kristent Fellesskap fra de øvrige menighetene i Bergen, men Askeland ble like fullt invitert til å bli med i byens Predikantring. Etter hvert har det utviklet seg til et nært forhold til Reidar Paulsen, daværende pastor i Bergen Frikirke, senere grunnlegger av og pastor i Kristkirken.

I 1990 ble Bergen Bibelskole startet. Helt fra starten fikk man elever også utenfor Kristent Fellesskaps-menighetene, selv om nok de fleste var rektuttert fra egne rekker. Mange av elevene er i dag menighetsledere.

Erling Thu flyttet til Bergen i 1992 for å delta i mer undervisning på bibelskolen og for å kunne arbeide tettere sammen med Askeland. Thu ble også innsatt som ‘eldste’ i menigheten. I 1995 ble Askeland og Thu anerkjent som henholdsvis ‘apostel’ og ‘profet’ av det ‘apostoliske teamet’ de var tilknyttet i England. De ble bedt for og ‘profetert over’ på Bibeluken med 5000 deltakere i Built Wells i Wales samme år.

I 1996 flyttet menigheten inn i eget lokale i Møllendalsbakken 6. Her fortsatte veksten. Dette var midt i den såkalte ‘Toronto-epoken’. Menigheten nøt nå stor respekt blant de øvrige menighetene i byen og ble etter hvert en av pådriverne for kristen enhet i byen.

I 2003 ble tre flokker plantet ut som selvstendige menigheter på Sotra, Nordhordland og Osterøy. På Sotra gikk gruppen Kristne på Sotra, som var startet av Oddmund Ro, sammen med flere 'cellegrupper' med tilknytning til menigheten i Bergen sammen om å starte Kristent Fellesskap på Sotra med Norleif Askeland som 'ledende eldste'. Menigheten har 'cellegrupper' i de tre kommunene Fjell, Sund og Øygarden. I Nordhordland hadde det fra lang tid tilbake vært en liten 'cellegruppe' som hadde vokst til flere grupper. Morten og Sissel Gundersen flyttet til Norhordland for å lede den nystartede menigheten. Menigheten er i numerisk vekst. På Osterøy, derimot, har menighetsplantingen ikke ført til umiddelbar fremgang.

I 2004 overgav Noralv Askeland menighetsledelsen til Morten Askeland og Per Arne Gjerde som ble innsatt som 'eldste' ved siden av Per Kristing og Erling Thu. Askeland påbegynte nå et arbeid å Filippinene, men er delvis bosatt også i Skien. Mellom 400 og 500 mennesker kommer regelmessig til gudstjenestene i Bergen mens mellom 500 og 600 er med i 'cellegruppene' som nå er spredt ut over hele byen. For tiden pågår et arbeid for å gjøre seg mer gjeldende i bydelene og for å plante nye forsamlinger.

Kristent Fellesskap, Sortland

Menigheten ble etablert av Samuel Estdahl (f. 1953) og Knut Osland (f. 1959). Estdahl var i utgangspunktet korpsleder for Frelsesarméen i Melbu, Vesterrålen. Under denne perioden (1981) valgte han å fordype seg i en del av de menighetsrelaterte bøkene av Watchman Nee som han hadde kjøpt på et tidligere tidspunkt. Kineserens undervisning om 'menighet', at 'Kristi menighet' bestod av alle troende på ett sted, appellerte og bidro til økt bevisstgjøring rundt nettopp dette. Når man kom til et lite sted som Melbu hvor det ikke var flere troende totalt sett enn at de kunne samles i hans egen stue, opplevdes det paradoksalt å skulle ivareta interessene til en bestemt retning (Frelsesarméen) når 3-4 ytterligere retninger var representert på samme sted og ingen av dem egentlig lyktes i å nå ut til folket. Om man hadde slått seg sammen og virkelig vært dette 'Kristi legeme' som Nee så sterkt fremholdt, kunne man ha utrettet så mye mer.

Osland var i utgangspunktet engasjert av Det norske Misjonsforbund som barne- og ungdomsarbeider i Nykvåg. Etter et opphold på Herøya, hvor han ble introdusert for menighetsrelatert litteratur utgitt på Lars Bjerkes Tusenfryd forlag, ble det nå viktig å tjene Gud utenfor kirkesamfunnsstrukturene. Han flyttet igjen nordover (1981), nå til Bø i Vesterrålen hvor han tok hovedansvaret i et fellesskristent bønnefellesskap. Det ble snart etablert kontakt mellom Osland og Estdahl, som begge opplevde 'kall' om å flytte til Sortland. De etablerte et husfellesskap og samlet snart et fåtall tilhengere. En av disse, Finn Moe, hadde kontakt med mange av elevene i den videregående skolen og arrangerte i januar 1983

en ungdomsweekend med Osland og Estdahl som hovedtalere. Mange av ungdommene fra Ten Sing-miljøet møtte opp, og i løpet av et par ukers tid hadde de også funnet veien til husmøtene hjemme hos Estdahl, hvor mellom 30 og 40 ungdommer fylte stua på tirsdagskveldene. Mange av disse utgjør fremdeles stammen i menigheten Kristent Fellesskap, Sortland.

Fellesskapet ble til å begynne med kalt Kristne i Vesterrålen. Dette førte snart til en konflikt med Den norske Kirke på stedet. I forbindelse med at Kirken på Sortland hadde bispevisitas, ble Osland og Estdahl oppringt av sognepresten som gjorde oppmerksom på at de begge ville bli referert til ved navn under visitasrapporten på førstkommende søndags høymesse. De møtte begge opp og hørte biskopen advare menigheten som sådan, og i særdeleshet de unges foreldre, mot å ha noe med dem å gjøre idet de blant annet forvaltet dåp og nattverd uten å være formalisert som menighet. Biskopens tordentale forsterket imidlertid ungdommenes lojalitet til det uformelle menighetsfellesskapet.

Erling Thu hadde kommet over det lille tidsskriftet *Levende steiner*, som Osland og Estdahl utgav. Han kontaktet dem og kom på besøk i januar 1984. Et nytt besøk på høsten samme år resulterte i at Osland og Estdahl formelt bad ham om hjelp til å 'bygge menighet' på Sortland. Kristent Fellesskap, Sortland hevdes å ha blitt initiert i august 1984, idet Osland og Estdahl stilte det tidligere husfellesskapets 'medlemmer' på valg vedrørende hvorvidt de ville anerkjenne deres spesifikke hyrdefunksjon.⁵⁴

Kristne på veggen, Stavanger

Menigheten, som i dag er ikke-eksisterende, ble pionert av Robert Erlandsen (f. 1955), sønn av Tom Erlandsen, som var pastor i Zion Stavanger og delvis åpnet menigheten for påvirkning via britiske Restorationist-ledere. På høsten 1979 hadde menigheten besøk av Keri Jones og David Matthew. Den menighetsrelaterte undervisningen vakte begeistring, og det ble skapt forventninger med hensyn til den videre praktiske oppfølgingen fra menighetens side.

⁵⁴ Sommeren 1989 valgte Estdahl å tre ut av Kristent Fellesskap (han hadde da flyttet fra Sortland til Bergen og senere til Stavanger for å være med i Kristent Fellesskap). Siden 1986 hadde han vært bosatt i Stavanger, og han begynte snart å gå på møter i Karisma Senter. I årsskiftet 1991-92 flyttet han til Tromsø for å pionere et selvstendig menighetsarbeid. Tromsø Bibelsenter ble formelt stiftet 12. juni 1994. Menigheten har siden endret navn til Jesuskirka. Filialmenigheter er også etablert i Harstad og på Sortland.

Under sommerstevnet i Sarons Dal i 1980 bad Robert Erlandsen om å bli underordnet Kjell Haltorp, Vilhelm Langemyr, Tony Jessen, Sverre Granlund og Erling Thu som 'kollegium'. Erlandsen hadde tidligere fått Thu til å skrive anbefalingsbrev for ham som evangelist innen pinsebevegelsen. 'Kollegiet' anbefalte heller at han tok ett år ved bibelskolen ICLP (International Christian Leadership Programme), hvor han begynte høsten 1980. Skoleåret ble imidlertid kortvarig, delvis skyldtes dette frustrasjon over at 'kollegiet' var gått i oppløsning .

1. mars 1981 flyttet Erlandsen til Verdal hvor han ble pastor i pinsemenigheten. Erlandsen håpet å være i stand til å fornye menigheten etter det mønster han hadde lært av de britiske forkynnerne, men kom etter hvert til at han ikke hadde 'tro for' dette. Han kontaktet Thu (som i mellomtiden hadde flyttet til Farsund) og spurte om å få flytte ned og være sammen med Thu som venn, men uten å måtte love på forhånd at han ville underordne seg ham. Thu ønsket ham hjertelig velkommen uten å stille vilkår. Etter 3 år flyttet Erlandsen, sammen med et annet ektepar, til Stavanger hvor Kristne på veggen ble etablert i Kvernevig. Liten numerisk vekst gjorde at menigheten ble lagt ned i 1991, og medlemmene ble oppfordret til enten å gå inn i en allerede eksisterende menighet i Stavangerområdet eller å flytte. Erlandsen selv flyttet til Bergen hvor han gikk inn i Kristent Fellesskap der.⁵⁵

Kristent Fellesskap, Skien

Menighetens tilblivelse har sin umiddelbare forløper i en karismatisk vekkelse blant ungdommene i Skien Metodistkirke. Menigheten hadde blant annet hatt besøk av Hans-Jacob Frøen og Steinar Remetun, og noen av ungdommene begynte i etterkant av besøket å reise innen Frøens Agape-organisasjon. En av ungdommene introduserte ungdomsflokken for øvrig for temamessig bibelundervisning av de amerikanske forkynnerne Derek Prince, 'Bob' Mumford og 'Ern' Baxter.⁵⁶ Flere leste et hefte av Prince om demonologi, denne ble etterfulgt av Don Bashams bok *Fri os fra det onde*.⁵⁷

I kjølvannet av ungdommenes karismatiske erfaringer kom spørsmålet om 'troende dåp' opp, og flere valgte å la seg 'gjendøpe'. Selv om pastor Harald Wessel

⁵⁵ Robert Erlandsen, intervju datert 03.11.1994.

⁵⁶ For nærmere presentasjon av de amerikanske forkynnerne, se Geir Lie, "Shepherding-bevegelsen – en kortfattet historikk." *Baptist* 2/2001 s. 33-43.

⁵⁷ For nærmere presentasjon av karismatisk demonstro og –praksis, se Geir Lie, "Karismatikens demoner." *Samtiden* 1/2005 s. 18-23.

Nørberg, etter betenkningstid, sa seg villig til å etterkomme ungdommenes ønske, skapte dette spenninger mellom de unge og menigheten for øvrig. I 1978 ble Nørberg, mot sin vilje, forflyttet til Hamar Metodistkirke, og den nye forstanderen skulle være brobygger mellom de to fraksjonene.

Ungdommenes fascinasjon for fenomenet 'åndsutfrielse' fortsatte imidlertid, men uten at menigheten som sådan var informert. Ungdommene fikk etter hvert kontakt med ekstreme grupperinger som gjerne tallfestet antall åndsmakter som hadde tatt bolig i et menneske til 3-400. Også blant metodistungdommene begynte noen nå å bli bekymret, og en av disse informerte den nye metodistforstanderen om hva som foregikk. Et par av ungdommene hadde endog laget et eget lærekompendium hvor man med utgangspunkt i en allegorisk forståelse av Israelfolkets gradvise erobring av Kanaans løftesland forkynte den troendes motstandskamp og (selv-)befrielse fra destruktive åndsmakters illegitime domene i ens eget legeme og/eller sjelsliv. Det kulminerte i et stort menighetsmøte hvor biskopen var tilstede og hvor fenomenet åndsutfrielse ble stemplet som 'alvorlig vranglære'. Alle som var involvert i dette, fikk midlertidig tale- og vitneforbud. Sanksjonene til tross, de færreste blant ungdommene var overbevist om at de hadde vært på ville veier. (I ettertid synes alle å ha tatt avstand fra det meste av demonologilæren.) I et forsøk på å roe gemyttene ned, ble to sentrale personer i ungdomsflokken bedt om å melde seg ut av Metodistkirken. Selv hadde de imidlertid begynt å miste troen på de bestående menigheter. Gjennom lesning især av Apostlenes Gjerninger hadde de blitt opptatt av menighetsstruktur og stilte nå spørsmålet: hvor har apostlene og profetene blitt av? De lengtet etter 'nytestamentlig menighetsliv'. I forlengelse av eksklusjonen meldte 25-30 av de øvrige ungdommene seg ut av menigheten. Selv om en rekke ungdommer ble igjen, utgjorde de 25-30 unge en vesentlig del av kjernen i den opprinnelige ungdomsflokken.

Kort tid etterpå meldte også Per Erik Olsen seg ut av menigheten. I kraft av sin alder og erfaring inntok han en slags lederrolle, og da også han etter hvert fikk 'syn' for en alternativ menighetsstruktur, var ikke veien lang til opprettelsen av en uformell husgruppe bestående av de ex-metodistiske ungdommene.

Den karismatiske fornyelsen hadde fått et visst innpass i en rekke metodistmenigheter, og ungdommene fikk snart brev fra Åge Pettersen, som de kjente fra metodistkirken på Kongsberg. Han skrev nå fra Trysil hvor han etter avlagt teologistudium ved Ansgarskolen hadde gått inn som misjonsforbundspastor. Flere brev fulgte fra Pettersen, og plutselig ett fra Farsund hvor han nå var knyttet opp mot Erling Thu og Tony Jessen. Pettersen inviterte til en særskilt mannskonferanse i Stavanger hvor kristne fra blant annet Bergen, Karmøy, Stavanger, Harstad og Sortland skulle delta. I tillegg til undervisning om mannens ansvar i hjem og familie, ble flere fascinert av både samholdet mellom de ulike deltakerne og den frihet, begeistring og hengivenhet som ble reflektert i deres lovprisning og

tilbedelse hvor det ble vekslet mellom dans av full kraft, jubel, seierssang og glede på den ene siden og stille ærefrykt og overgivelse til Gud på den annen side.

Husfelleskapet i Skien hadde allerede begynt å kalle seg Kristent Fellesskap. Man var allerede opptatt av viktigheten av det å 'stå sammen', 'kollektivt lederskap' var gjerne noe som lå i tiden. Impulser i samme retning fikk man blant annet gjennom norske oversettelser av Gene Edwards menighetsrelaterede litteratur.

Gjennom møtet med kretsen rundt Erling Thu og Noralv Askeland ble man dessuten introdusert for konseptet 'stå under autoritet'. Samme sommer dro omtrent hele Skiensfelleskapet til Risøya hvor de deltok på sommerkonferanse sammen med ikke bare kretsen rundt Thu/Askeland, men også en rekke beslektede husmenighetsfelleskap som hadde et noe løsere tilkynningsforhold til blant annet John Noble i England. Ingen i Skiensfelleskapet evnet å se at det lå et norsk skisma i luften.

Etter sommerkonferansen ble kontakten med Thu intensivert. Han besøkte Skienfelleskapet med en viss regelmessighet og underviste systematisk i 'Restorativ-læren'. Undervisningen om 'pakt', hvilket grovt sett impliserte full overgivelse til både menighet og lederskap, hørtes riktig ut. Selvsagt ble det poengtert at den enkelte var ansvarlig for å søke Gud for 'sanksjon' for det lederne formidlet, men i praksis ble det vanskelig å 'høre' et svar fra Gud som avvek fra hva lederne allerede hadde proklamert. For mange ble det nesten ikke nødvendig å søke Guds retning over livet sitt all den stund lederne, opplevde man, hadde svar på rede hånd hva angikk barneoppdragelse, jobb, utdanning, flytting, kjæreste-forhold osv. Flere som tilhørte Kristent Fellsskapsmenigheter utenfor Skien ble spurt om å flytte fra en landsdel til en annen, og mange opplevde dette vanskelig – især i ettertid.

Flere intervjuobjekter hevder i ettertid at lederne fikk for stor makt over enkelt-personer. Man var verdsatt så lenge man ikke stilte spørsmål ved den lære som ble forfektet, samt ved den umyndiggjøring av 'menige troende' som man ble vitne til fra lederhold. Den omsorg og varme som til å begynne med hadde preget Skiensfelleskapet, ble snart byttet ut med en nærmest 'profetisk konfrontasjon' hvor folk opplevde å måtte stå til regnskap for at man ikke stilte nok opp på 'frivillige' dugnader, bakte nok kaker til menighetslederne og/eller menighetens ulike arrangement, ikke vitnet nok for uomvendte eller deltok aktivt nok i møtene med bønn, vitnesbyrd, bruk av nådegaver osv. Flere av lederne konfronterte med at man ikke kunne påvise tilfredsstillende åndelig vekst og utvikling, eksempelvis vedrørende det å tjene hverandre (tjene lederskapet!), og flere følte en usunn tilkortkommenhet som en følge av dette. Skiensfelleskapet, som hadde vokst til 100-130 troende og var den hurtigstvoksende menigheten i distriktet, opplevde nå en rask avskalling.

I forbindelse med at Kristent Fellesskap, Farsund ble avvirket, flyttet blant andre familien Thu til Skien for å gå inn i fellesskapet (1986-92), fra 1989 til 1990 virket han som menighetens pastor. Andre igjen flyttet til Bergen, Stavanger eller Karmøy, hvor de fleste hadde en naturlig tilknytning. Utgangspunktet var at den enkelte skulle søke Gud for å få klarhet i hva som var Hans vilje i forbindelse med at menigheten var blitt lagt ned, men det kan synes som om det lå i kortene at Guds svar til den enkelte ekskluderte menighetsalternativ som manglet en formell tilknytning til Bryn og Keri Jones i Storbritannia. Om flere hevdes det at de fikk direkte 'profetier' om at de skulle bryte opp fra stedet, og valgene var da nærmest gitt i utgangspunktet.⁵⁸

Kristent Nettverk

Etter initiativ fra Thu og Askeland ble Bergen Bibelskole startet i 1990. Thu flyttet til Bergen i 1992. Delvis inspirert av Watchman Nees ekklesiologi, hvor det skjernes mellom 'menigheten' og 'arbeidet', har Thu og Askeland etablert Kristent Nettverk, et tjenestefellesskap av forkynnere som jobber sammen som et 'apostolisk team' inn i lokalmenigheter som ser hen til dem som 'apostler', 'profeter', 'evangelister' og/eller 'hyrder og lærere'. Kristent Nettverk er involvert i en rekke land og driver menighetsplanting, ledertrening, bibelskoler og nødhjelpsarbeid. Det er visse overlappinger mellom Kristent Nettverk og Ministries Without Borders, sistnevnte ledet av Askeland og Keri Jones. Kristent Nettverk/Ministries Without Borders jobber inn i følgende norske menigheter: Bergen, Bømlo, Harstad, Hokksund, Karmøy, Lyngdal, Nordhordland, Oslo, Osterøy, Skien, Sotra, Stokke, Tromsø, Trondheim og Vesterrålen.



⁵⁸ Det var for øvrig ikke bare Farsundmenigheten som ble nedlagt. Også Kristent Fellesskap-menighetene i Harstad, Molde, Karmøy og Stavanger led samme skjebne – dette på tross av, hevder flere, klare, gjentatte 'profetiske budskap' om at menighetene som sådan skulle vokse, gå fram og bli en plogspiss for gjenopprettelsen av Guds menighet i Norge. Både på Karmøy og i Harstad er imidlertid arbeidet senere gjenopptatt av mennesker som var med i forkant av nedleggelsen. Og i Farsund flyttet så godt som hele fellesskapet fra byen. Også i de øvrige byene synes det som om veldig mange fra fellesskapene som ble lagt ned flyttet til andre fellesskap innenfor nettverket fordi de fremdeles stilte seg bak menighetsvisjonen og ønsket videre kontakt og samarbeid. En del mennesker opplevde likevel at ingen konkret eller offentlig utøvelse av selvkritikk skjedde. Det som imidlertid ble hevdet offentlig, mener de, var at de som forlot fellesskapsnettverket, hadde mistet 'visjonen' og hadde 'feil holdninger'.

The Prophetic Movement in Historical Context

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The modern prophetic movement from the 1980s to the present often has been an amorphous movement, not easily defined, described, or pinned down. It frequently intersects and intertwines with the New Apostolic Movement, and like the latter, it has stirred much interest and controversy. Thus this paper is a sequel to my last article in *Refleks* (5-1-2006), "The New Apostolic Movement in Historical Context."¹ In order to study the modern prophetic movement in historical context, it is appropriate to begin with a survey of prophetic movements throughout church history.²

Early Church History through the Middle Ages

The question arises as to whether the gift of prophecy and the role of a prophet continued beyond the apostolic church age. While cessationists, those who believe the supernatural ceased after the apostolic age, would maintain that a genuine gift of prophecy no longer exists, a study of church history shows that the gift

¹ Paul L. King, "The New Apostolic Movement in Historical Context," *Refleks* 1/2006, 60-73.

² For studies on the gift of prophecy and prophets in the New Testament era, see Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); Thomas W. Gillespie, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988). For a brief survey of prophecy throughout church history, see Vinson Synan, "2000 Years of Prophecy," *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 25-28.

of prophecy has indeed continued periodically throughout the church age, and prophetic movements arose from time to time.³

The *Didache*, or the *Teaching of the Twelve*, an early second century document, demonstrates that prophets continued seamlessly beyond the first century and prescribes identification of true and false prophets: “But concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do. Let every apostle that cometh to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goeth away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodgeth; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet.”⁴ Justin Martyr in the mid second century averred, “For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time.”⁵ Likewise, Irenaeus in the late second century affirms the continuation of prophecy.⁶ Montanism, a late second and early third century pro-

³ For cessationist claims, see B.B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (Edinburgh [Scotland]; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972); John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). For a defense against cessationist claims, see Jon Mark Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), access online at <http://home.regent.edu/ruthven/cessbook.html>. For discussions on both sides, see Wayne A. Grudem, ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

⁴ “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” 11:3-6, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF), ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 7:380.

⁵ Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho, Cha. 82, *ANF*, 1:240.

⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.32; 5:6; *Against Celsus* 3:24, *ANF*, 1:409, J.

phetic movement emphasizing ecstatic prophecy, became regarded as a heresy by the church, though there has been debate in recent times as to its heretical nature.⁷

Prophetic revelations and visions are recorded in the works of Ignatius, Shepherd of Hermas, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, and many of the early martyrs.⁸ Gregory of Neocaesarea, known as “The Wonderworker,” experienced visions and predictive prophecies.⁹ Cyril writes that the gift of prophecy and ability to cast out demons can be received in baptism.¹⁰ Sozomen, in his church history, records numerous incidents of prophetic revelations among the monks.¹¹ Several of the early monastics received prophetic utterances, visions, and revelations such as Antony,¹² and Benedict and his disciples.¹³ Athanasius was known for receiving supernatural prophetic insight.¹⁴ At the same time, prophetic gifts were on the

⁷ For a discussion of prophecy in Montanism, see C.M. Robeck, Jr., “Prophecy, Gift of,” *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (NIDPCM), ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 1008. See also J. Ramsey Michaels “An Eighteenth Century Debate over Montanism,” paper delivered at the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Nov. 13, 1992. For a defense of Montanism, see Eddie L. Hyatt, *Montanism: Pagan Frenzy? Or Pentecostal Fervor?* (Dallas, TX: Hyatt International Ministries, 1998), Ronald A. N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) 39-40. For a critique, see K. Neill Foster, *Sorting Out the Supernatural* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2001), 22, 35-36, 81, 103-104, 123-124.

⁸ Robeck, “Prophecy,” 1007-1009; Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*.

⁹ Basil, *Treatise on the Holy Spirit*, 29:74, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF), ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 2nd. Series, 8:46-47.

¹⁰ Cyril, *Catthetical Lectures*, Lecture 17: 35-36, *NPNF*, 2nd Series, 7:132-133.

¹¹ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen*, Book 6, Chap. 28, Book 7, Chap. 22, *NPNF*, 2nd Series, 2:365, 392.

¹² Sozomen, Book 1, Chap. 13, Book 6, Chap. 5, *NDNF*, 2nd Series, 2: 249, 349; Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 52, 62, 65, 66, 82, *ANF*, 4:210-218.

¹³ Gregory the Great, *Life and Miracles of St. Benedict, Dialogues*, Book 2, Chap. 11-22 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, n.d.), 30-51; Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Ministry* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2002), 39, 46.

¹⁴ Sozomen, Book 4, Chap. 10, *NPNF*, 2nd Series, 2:306.

decline, and visions and dreams were considered by some, according to Cyprian, as foolish and ridiculous.¹⁵

Numerous Medieval mystics such as Julian of Norwich, Francis of Assisi, Hildegard, Abbess Elizabeth of Schoau, Gertrude and other nuns of the Convent of Helfde, Bernard of Clairvaux, Suso, Catherine of Siena, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Genoa, the German Friends of God, and many others were known for their prophetic visions and revelations.¹⁶ Movements like the Waldenses experienced supernatural phenomena including visions and prophecies.¹⁷

Prophecy in Reformation Times and Following

Vinson Synan notes of the Reformation time: "In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote 'The Lord now and again revives them [apostles, prophets and evangelists] as the need of the times demands.' These offices, however, have no place in 'duly constituted churches,' he added."¹⁸ Luther was considered by some of his followers to be a prophet. One of his early biographers cited several prophecies by Luther that were fulfilled.¹⁹ The Zwickau prophets during Martin Luther's time led by Thomas M nzer, claimed "direct divine inspiration, prophesied the early end of the world and denounced water baptism."²⁰ They were accused of "claiming special revelations of the spirit over and above the Scripture,"²¹ thus considered by Luther as false prophets.²² Also other groups of Ana-

¹⁵ Cyprian, *Epistles of Cyprian*, 68:10, ANF, 5:375.

¹⁶ Evelyn Underhill, *Mystics of the Church* (Cambridge, England: James Clarke and Co., 1925, 1975), 74-167.

¹⁷ J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 1026.

¹⁸ Vinson Synan, "Apostolic Practice," *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in the 21st Century*, Edgar R. Lee, ed., (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2005), 17.

¹⁹ Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 74.

²⁰ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Reformation to the Present*, Volume II: A.D. 1500-A.D. 1975 (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1975), 720.

²¹ John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1961), xxiv.

²² Robeck, "Prophecy," 1010.

baptists led by Melchoir Hoffman, John Matthijs and others began to claim end-time prophecies and visions, which did not come true.²³

Perhaps the best known and most controversial prophet was sixteenth century physician and French Jewish-Catholic mystic Nostradamus, whose predictive prophecies Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan describes as “arcane and exotic.”²⁴ He made use of astrology and horoscopy, but was on good terms with the Catholic church of his day. Another controversial English prophet was Mother Shipton, who in the sixteenth century according to legends was claimed to have prophesied in poetic language carriages without horses, and other significant inventions such as airplanes, submarines, telegraph, telephone, and steamships, as well as other discoveries. At the same time, she predicted the end of the world in 1881. Some in Christian circles have accepted her prophetic gifting, while others viewed her as a false prophet, and even as a witch with occultic background, while others claim the whole prophecy was a hoax, manufactured later.²⁵

In the late seventeenth century Isabeau Vincent, a ten year old Protestant girl in the Cevannes mountains of France gave a prophetic utterance in her poor colloquial patois, calling for repentance. Her primitive speech turned into forms of *xenolalia*, speaking in perfect French and Latin. Then more than three hundred children (along with some adults) throughout the Cevannes Mountains began to prophesy, becoming known as “the little prophets of Cevannes.” The French Huguenot prophetic movement continued for more than ten years.²⁶ John Lacy, one of the leaders of the French prophets, wrote his defense of Montanism and the continuation of prophetic revelation in his 1713 book *The General Delusion of Christians Touching the Ways of God’s Revealing Himself to and by the Prophets*.²⁷

²³ Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, 80-83.

²⁴ Vinson Synan, “2000 Years of Prophecy,” *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 25; see also <http://www.nostradamus-repository.org/myths1.html>.

²⁵ See http://www.mothershiptoncave.com/mother_shipton.htm; <http://www.Museumofhoaxes.com/shipton.html>; www.newage.com.au/library/shipton.html; Walter Turnball, “Mother Shipton’s Prophecy,” *AW*, Feb. 5, 1927, 90-91.

²⁶ Morton T. Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking: An Experiment in Spiritual Experience* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 52-54.

²⁷ Hyatt, *Montanism*, 1.

Prophecy occurred among Quakers who believed in listening for the inner voice of the Spirit.²⁸ George Fox, founder of the Quaker movement, experienced prophetic visions and revelations, supernatural knowledge and discernment of spirits.²⁹ According to Quaker historian Walter Williams in his book *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism*, Deborah Darby (late 1700s) and Benjamin Seebohm (mid 1800s) were known for their gifts of prophecy and discernment.³⁰ Others manifesting the gift of prophecy included Richard Jordan (early 1800s) and William Savery (late 1700s).³¹ John Woolman was carried in the Spirit in a vision or trance-like state and had dreams, visions and prophecies.³²

The eighteenth century Moravian revival also included prophetic utterances.³³ At the same time, Moravian leader Count Zinzendorf, though open to supernatural movings of the Holy Spirit, witnessed a man falling into an “inspired fit, jerking and convulsing, and prophesying. Zinzendorf did not hesitate to reject the inspiration.”³⁴ John Wesley writes in his journal of numerous prophetic revelations, supernatural knowledge, dreams and visions occurring in his day.³⁵ After reading Lacy’s book on prophets, Wesley wrote in his journal that he was convinced the Montanists “were real Scriptural Christians.”³⁶ Even so, Wesley did not accept

²⁸ Dean Freiday, ed., *Barclay’s Apology in Modern English* (Newburg, OR: Barclay Press, 1967), xxi, 16, 212, 251.

²⁹ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox* (Great Britain: Aldine Press, 1962), 9, 11-13, 24, 27, 39, 46-47, 50, 57, 59-60, 70, 81, 153, 175, 178, 235, 245, 249, 258, 269; *Faith and Practice of the London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends*, Section 180, 288.

³⁰ Walter Williams, *The Rich Heritage of Quakerism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 148-149, 195.

³¹ Williams, 145, 154.

³² *Faith and Practice of the London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends*, Sec. 50; Edwin H. Cady, *John Woolman* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 49-50, 82, 90, 96.

³³ Hyatt, 2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity, 96.

³⁴ Thomas Upham, *The Life of Faith* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984 reprint Boston: Waite, Pierce, 1845), 85.

³⁵ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), 71, 207, 213, 215, 222, 239, 293, 332-333, 389.

³⁶ John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. Nehemiah Curnack (London: Epworth, 1938), Aug. 15, 1750, 3:490.

all claims to supernatural manifestations or inspirations, advising, "Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or revelations to be from God. They may be from Him. They may be from Nature. They may be from the devil. Therefore believe not every spirit, but 'try the spirits whether they be from God.'"³⁷

19th Century Prophetic Movements

The Kentucky-Tennessee revivals of 1800 and following in Cane Ridge and other locations had manifestations of prophecies and visions. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church, formed out of these revivals, continued to experience prophecies.³⁸ Finney upon occasion demonstrated prophetic gifting through predictions, visions, and supernatural words of knowledge.³⁹ The most significant prophetic movement occurred among the Irvingites in the 1830s and emerged through the teachings of Edward Irving, who believed in the restoration of the gifts, ministries and offices of the New Testament Church and founded the Catholic Apostolic Church.⁴⁰

Methodist evangelist Peter Cartwright experienced dreams and supernatural knowledge. Yet at the same time he warned against false prophecies and manifestations, especially among the Mormons, Millerites, and Shakers.⁴¹ The Shaker communities in North America, influenced by the Quakers and the French prophets, also featured prophetic revelations and visions, but also contained unorthodox practices.⁴² Prophecy also occurred in other unorthodox movements such as Mormonism, which claimed the Book of Mormon as a prophetic revelation from God to Joseph Smith.⁴³

³⁷ Martin Wells Knapp, *Impressions* (Cincinnati: Revivalist Publishing House, 1892), 34.

³⁸ *The Cumberland Presbyterian*, Feb. 10, 1876, 3; July 1, 1897, 1674.

³⁹ Charles G. Finney, *The Autobiography of Charles G. Finney* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1977), 32, 37, 83, 120, 128, 138, 221.

⁴⁰ D. W. Dorries, "Catholic Apostolic Church," *NIDPCM*, 459.

⁴¹ Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright* (New York, NY, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1956), 45-47, 76-77, 88-89, 104-105, 130-131, 143-144.

⁴² E.L. Blumhofer, "Shakers," *NIDPCM*, 1058-1059; Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking*, 57-58.

⁴³ Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking*, 58.

Prophecy occurred in the Adventist movement and in the late 1800s “Gift Adventists” in New England. Phoebe Palmer and other holiness writers of the 19th century defined one element of prophecy as inspired or anointed preaching. Palmer emphasized, “Your handmaidens shall prophesy” as authentication for women’s preaching ministry.⁴⁴ Charles Spurgeon was prophesied over at the age of ten that he would become a great preacher, and later manifested prophetic words of knowledge through his preaching, as well as dreams and visions.⁴⁵ Prophecy occurred periodically in the early Christian and Missionary Alliance in the late 1800s.⁴⁶ The concept of prophecy ranging on a scale from fallible impressions to spontaneously inspired testimony to prophetic prayers to “direct convictions” was a part of evangelical holiness theology for at least several decades during the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Predictive prophecy earned a bad name in 1890 when several Christian leaders, including Maria Woodworth (Etter) and C&MA conference speaker Elizabeth Sisson, endorsed and affirmed a prophecy that had been circulating that an earthquake and tidal wave would strike the West Coast, a prophecy that proved to be false (although some claimed that the 1906 earthquake 16 years later was the fulfillment).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Palmer define prophecy as anything prompted by the Holy Spirit that leads to edification, exhortation and comfort. Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 192.

⁴⁵ Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1992), 91, 167, 173, 181, 184, 235-236, 271, 281, 284.

⁴⁶ Paul L. King, *Genuine Gold: The Cautiously Charismatic Story of the Early Christian and Missionary Alliance* (Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2006), 32-33, 42, 49-50.

⁴⁷ A.B. Simpson, *The Gentle Love of the Holy Spirit* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1983), 48; Martin Wells Knapp, *Impressions* (Cincinnati, OH: God’s Revivalist, 1899), 109, see also pp. 56-57; George D. Watson, *Holiness Manual* (Boston: McDonald, Gall, and Co., 1882), 97; Carrie Judd Montgomery, *Under His Wings* (Oakland, CA: Triumphs of Faith, 1921), 159-161; A.T. Pierson, *George Müller of Bristol* (New York: NY, Fleming H. Revell, 1899), 140, 272, 303. Charles Spurgeon asserted, “The man of obedient heart prays like a prophet, and his prayers are prophecies.” Charles Spurgeon, *The Power of Prayer in a Believer’s Life* (Lynnwood, WA: Emerald Books, 1993), 116. Murray taught that prophesying to the bones (Ezekiel 37:4, 5) is preaching and prophesying to the Spirit (Ezekiel 37:9) is prayer. Andrew Murray, *The Prayer Life* (Basingstoke, Hunts, England: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1968), 90.

⁴⁸ Wayne E. Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Wooworth-Etter* (Metuchen N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1986), 99-109; King, *Genuine Gold*, 33.

20th Century Revival Movements

Prophecy and visions were features of the Welsh Revival of 1904 and the revival at Pandita Ramabai's Mukti Mission in India in 1905. With the Azusa Street Pentecostal revival in Los Angeles a worldwide resurgence of charismatic and prophetic movements arose. This spawned both genuine and dubious prophetic utterances. Woodworth-Etter, learning from her disastrous support for false prophecy in the 1890s, continued to support prophetic utterances, but she also cautioned, "Don't take up with every vision that comes along," giving examples of spurious revelation.⁴⁹ There were others who believed in the supernatural and the reality of prophetic utterance, such as A.B. Simpson and the Christian and Missionary Alliance, but were also concerned with over-dependency upon such utterances or looking to prophecy as fortune-telling, cautioning:

One of the most alarming tendencies of this movement has recently developed in several places in the form of a prophetic authority which certain persons are claiming over the consciences of others and men and women are seeking counsel and guidance from them in the practical matters of private duty, instead of looking directly to the Anointing which they have received of him and obeying God rather than men. It is said that in some instances Christian men and women go to these new prophets almost as the world goes to the clairvoyant and fortuneteller, and follow their advice with a slavish superstition that may easily run into all the dangers of the Romish confessional or the delusions of spiritualism.⁵⁰

Pentecostal historian Edith Blumhofer acknowledged, "Alliance spokespersons had an almost uncanny way of discerning potential difficulties that enthusiastic Apostolic Faith adherents seemed prone to overlook. Within several years, some Pentecostals would echo Alliance appeals for prudence and balance. For the moment, however, the cautions seemed to go largely unheeded."⁵¹ Such lack of discernment often frightened people away from prophetic movements, but groups like the Assemblies of God tried to rein in the extremes.

In the late 1940s a new Latter Rain Movement sprung up out of a revival at Sharon Bible College, North Battlefield, Saskatchewan, Canada, with emphasis

⁴⁹ Maria Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles* (Indianapolis, IN: M. B. W. Etter, 1922), 503, 506.

⁵⁰ A. B. Simpson, "Annual Report of the President and General Superintendent of the Christian and Missionary Alliance," *Annual Report of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (1907-08), 12-13.

⁵¹ Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism*, Volume 1—To 1941 (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 185.

on restoring apostles and prophets. They stressed the importance of the role of laying on of hands for imparting spiritual gifts and personal prophetic words.⁵² Seeing similarities to problems of earlier prophetic movements and lack of discernment and accountability, the Assemblies of God branded the movement as heretical. Nonetheless, this movement was pivotal in laying a foundation for the recent prophetic movement.⁵³

With the emergence of the charismatic movement in the 1960s came renewal of belief in restoration of all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit. Along with speaking in tongues and healing, prophecy and related revelational gifts (word of knowledge, word of wisdom, visions and dreams) were prominent. Renewed teaching on the Ascension gifts and five-fold ministries (Eph. 4:11) arose, in part, through leaders who had Latter Rain connections such as James Beall, John Poole, and Ern Baxter. In the early 1970s Kenneth Hagin wrote booklets on *The Gift of Prophecy* and *The Ministry of a Prophet*, and regarded himself as called by God to be a prophet.⁵⁴ He asserted that “a prophet is one who has visions and revelations,” and to be a prophet “he has to have at least two of the revelation gifts plus prophecy operating in his ministry. He has the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and/or discerning of spirits.”⁵⁵

David Wilkerson, founder of Teen Challenge, did not claim to be a prophet, but published a book in 1974 entitled *The Vision* describing what he considered to be a prophetic vision of increased evil and resulting judgment from the Lord for the future, including predictions of such things as economic confusion, drastic weather changes and earthquakes, a flood of filth, persecution by media and Hollywood, acceptance of homosexuality by the “super church,” among others.⁵⁶ Many of the predictions have come true, but the book was controversial because he predicted some things that have not yet occurred such as persecution of Catholic charismatics by the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy.⁵⁷ Revivalist Leonard

⁵² R. M. Riss, “Latter Rain Movement,” *DPCM*, 532-534.

⁵³ For an analysis of the Latter Rain movement and related teachings, see B.J. Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh* (Peabody, MA: Henrickson, 1995), 58-65.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Hagin, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin, n.d.); Kenneth Hagin, *The Ministry of a Prophet* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin, n.d.).

⁵⁵ Hagin, *The Ministry of a Prophet*, 10.

⁵⁶ David Wilkerson, *The Vision* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1974). See also David Wilkerson, *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth* (Lindale, TX: World Challenge, 1985).

⁵⁷ Wilkerson, *The Vision*, 82-84.

Ravenhill endorsed Wilkerson's sequel prophetic book *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth*, calling him a New Testament prophet.⁵⁸

Late 20th and Early 21 Century Prophetic Movements

The modern prophetic movement of the last two decades of the 20th century and first decade of the 21st century finds its roots particularly in the Latter Rain, Charismatic and Third Wave Movements. Prophetic conceptualization re-emerged through the Third Wave movement beginning in the 1980s with leaders such as C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber. Influenced by his Quaker background, Wimber became a proponent of the "signs and wonders" movements, reviving the Quaker emphasis on hearing the voice of God.

Bill Hamon, who was significantly influenced by the Latter Rain Movement (as presented in his 1981 book *The Eternal Church*),⁵⁹ launched his emphasis on restoration of apostles and prophets through his organization Christian International in 1986, establishing an annual International Gathering of Apostles and Prophets Conference for enhancing the restoration of apostolic and prophetic ministry. He has further established a Network of Prophetic Ministries and Churches. His teaching consummated in his 1997 book *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God*, endorsed by Oral Roberts, among others.⁶⁰ Bill Hamon and his organization Christian International hold prophetic schools or regional prophetic conferences for "promoting and propagating prophetic ministry." In this book he envisioned the prophetic office being restored in the following ways:

1. In the 1980s came a renewed emphasis on the prophetic office.
2. Since then, a company of prophets has been developed.
3. Spiritual gifts and ministries have further been activated through the prophetic movement.
4. A new Joshua Generation has arisen, which has "crossed over the Jordan."
5. Warfare praise and prophetic intercessory ministry have been established.
6. Team ministry has been restored, especially apostle-prophet teams.
7. Prophets have not only prophesied to the church, but have become prophets to the nations.

⁵⁸ Wilkerson, *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth*, Introduction, n.p.

⁵⁹ Bill Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (Phoenix, AZ: Christian International, 1981).

⁶⁰ Bill Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God* (Santa Rosa Beach, FL: Christian Intl., 1997).

8. Prophetic personal evangelism is arising.
9. Apostles and prophets are being restored for the purifying, maturing, and perfecting of the saints (Ephesians 4:11-13).
10. The prophetic movement has been preparing the way for restoration of apostles.⁶¹

The prophetic movement expanded in the late 20th century, led by Hamon, Chuck Pierce, Cindy Jacobs, Mike Bickle, and Paul Cain, among many others, putting emphasis on personal prophecies, establishing prophetic and apostolic leadership, and training people to prophesy. Some have regarded it as a resurgence of the Latter Rain Movement, particularly because Cain had been a part of that movement and Hamon speaks highly of the movement. Bickle's church, Kansas City Fellowship, became embroiled in controversy over some of its prophecies and prophets, with at least one prophet accused of sexual indiscretions. Bickle's church then came under the authority of John Wimber's Vineyard Church, which exercised church discipline in the matters. Later, Bickle's church was absolved and became prominent once again in the prophetic movement, and known for its strong emphasis on prayer and spiritual warfare through launching the International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1999.⁶²

Paul Cain, who had been connected with the Latter Rain movement, was promoted by the Kansas City prophetic movement.⁶³ Cain also had associations with R.T. Kendall, pastor of the historic Westminster Chapel in England, and with Wimber and the Vineyard movement. Wimber eventually withdrew his active fellowship with and support of Cain in the early 1990s, presumably due to controversies over prophetic utterances and his eschatological views (apparently resurrecting in some form the Latter Rain Manifest Sons of God end-time teaching). More recently, Cain was exposed for homosexual activity.

Other prophetic leaders who have emerged include Cindy Jacobs, who with her husband Mike founded Generals of Intercession; James Goll, founder of Encounters Network; former Vineyard pastor James Ryle, founder of TruthWorks Ministry; and Chuck Pierce, president of Glory of Zion International Ministries who has served as prophetic counsel for the New Apostolic Roundtable. Another prominent prophetic leader is Rick Joyner of Morning Star Ministries, who re-

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God*, 105-121.

⁶² For an analysis of the Kansas City prophetic movement, see Oropeza, 52-58.

⁶³ For more analysis on Cain, see Oropeza, 53-55.

counts his prophetic vision of the end times in his book *The Final Quest*.⁶⁴ John Paul Jackson, founder of Streams Ministries, International, teaches on prophetic ministry and visions and dreams. Kim Clements, a prophetic musician from South Africa, has established a broad ministry in America. John and Paula Sandford, involved in both the inner healing and prophetic movements, wrote a prophetic book entitled *The Elijah Task* and founded Elijah House Ministries.⁶⁵

Two prominent theologians have embraced Third Wave prophetic movements. Jack Deere, a former professor of theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, recanted his cessationist beliefs and embraced the supernatural for today, recounting his spiritual journey and shift in theological paradigms in his book *Surprised by the Spirit*.⁶⁶ In his sequel book, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, he describes the prophetic gifting.⁶⁷ Subsequently, he became involved with the Kansas City prophetic movement and the Vineyard movement, but has since left both movements and launched his own ministry, yet remains friends with Bickle, Joyner and other prophetic leaders. Wayne Grudem, a Baptist theologian who embraced Third Wave theology and for a time identified with the Vineyard movement, has written extensively on prophecy both in his *Systematic Theology* and particularly in *The Gift of Prophecy for Today*.⁶⁸

The Toronto Blessing movement of the 1990s featured prophetic revelations, visions, and dreams. One of the unique traits of the movement was the occasional occurrence of animal-like sounds and behavior such as barking, roaring, crowing, etc. While such manifestations throughout church history have usually been considered demonic,⁶⁹ in this movement they were often interpreted as prophetic expressions from God acted out.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Rick Joyner, *The Final Quest* (New Kensington, PA; Whitaker House, 1996).

⁶⁵ John and Paula Sandford, *The Elijah Task* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1977).

⁶⁶ Jack Deere, *Surprised by Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993).

⁶⁷ Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

⁶⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994); Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*.

⁶⁹ Paul L. King, "Supernatural Physical Manifestations in Evangelical and Holiness Revival Movements," paper presented at the 32nd Society of Pentecostal Studies/Wesleyan Theological Society Joint Conference, Lexington, Kentucky, March 21, 2003.

⁷⁰ John Arnott, *The Father's Blessing* (Orlando, FL: Creation House, 1995), 168-183.

A significant branch and teaching of much of the modern prophetic movement is that God is raising up an end-time “Joel’s Army” of overcoming believers to become the army of the Lord, having major impact upon the world. Some who embrace the Joel’s Army concept, though not all, teach a kind of Dominion or Kingdom Now theology, in which the Church will take dominion over the earth and fully establish the Kingdom of God (akin to some post-millennial theology). Others, particularly from the Latter Rain movement, teach that Joel’s Army will be the manifested sons of God in the end times.

Related to the Joel’s Army concept are the concepts of prophetic praise and prophetic intercessory warfare prayer.⁷¹ Psalmists Robert Gay, Lamar Boschman, and many others have emphasized the relationship of music and prophecy, gleaned from the ministry of David and the psalms. Cindy Jacobs and others have related prophetic prayer and intercession with spiritual warfare, especially in the strategic level spiritual warfare movement.

In 1998 Wagner created the Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders (ACPE) under his apostolic leadership as a “peer level group of prophets” after urging from prophetess Cindy Jacobs to bring together a group of prophets who feel the need to build personal relationships with peer-level prophets from various prophetic streams and strands meets together once a year (sometimes more) in Colorado Springs.⁷² Wagner explains that “ACPE was organized on the basis that prophecies were being released without checking with others.”⁷³ Wagner has also held National Schools of the Prophets. Members of the ACPE have included Beth Alves, Mike Bickle, Paul Cain (honorary member), Stacey Campbell, Wesley Campbell, Joseph Garlington, Ernest Gentile, Mary Glazier, James Goll, Bill Hamon, Cindy Jacobs, Mike Jacobs, Jim Laffoon, David McCracken, Bart Pierce, Chuck Pierce, Rick Ridings, John and Paula Sandford, Michael Schiffman, Gwen Shaw, Dutch Sheets, Jean Steffenson, Steve Shultz, Sharon Stone, Tommy Tenney, Hector Torres, Doris Wagner, Peter Wagner, Barbara Wentroble, Dominic Yeo, and Barbara Yoder among others.⁷⁴

About 25 leaders meet annually, with Wagner as the apostolic leader and Jacobs as the facilitator. They produce an annual prophetic report summarized by Ja-

⁷¹ Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Move of God*, 114.

⁷² See website at: www.harvestnet.org/reports/aboutWagnerapostles.htm

⁷³ Matthew Green, “Speaking for God,” *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 53.

⁷⁴ <http://www.letusreason.org/Latrain21.htm>

cobs and published by Chuck Pierce, James Goll, and others.⁷⁵ The Elijah List Ministries provides a website listing prophecies given by prominent prophetic leaders⁷⁶ and also a website for prophetic television.⁷⁷ In 2004 *Ministries Today* emphasized the five-fold ministries of Ephesians 4, devoting an entire issue to prophets, but focusing more on operating with balance, discernment, and maturity in prophetic ministry, rather than looking at various prophetic ministries and movements.⁷⁸

Responses and Controversies

1. *Interpretations of Roles of Prophets.* As mentioned in the last article, current scholarship presents three views of the phrase “foundation of the apostles and prophets” in Ephesians 2:18-22: (a) genitive of apposition—the foundation which is the apostles and prophets, (b) genitive of possession—“the apostles’ and prophets’ foundation”—“that on which they built or that on which they were built,” (c) genitive of originating cause—the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets.⁷⁹ Which interpretation is valid continues to be debated. Thus, there are some who regarding the prophetic ministry as more authoritative, and others who insist that the prophetic role is no longer nearly as authoritative as in biblical days.

2. *Accountability for false or inaccurate prophecies.* There is debate over whether prophecies need to be 100% accurate or not. This is a major source of controversy. One school of thought declares that New Testament prophets are the

⁷⁵ [http://www.glory-of-zion.org/outmail/ACPE_Report\(2-2-05\)Online.htm](http://www.glory-of-zion.org/outmail/ACPE_Report(2-2-05)Online.htm); <http://flory-of-zion.org/news20040216.htm>; http://www.encountersnetwork.com/pdf/ACPE_word_for_2006.pdf; http://www.encountersnetwork.com/pdf/acpe_2007.pdf.

⁷⁶ <http://www.elijahlist.com/>

⁷⁷ <http://www.prophetic.tv/>

⁷⁸ *Ministries Today*, September/October 2004.

⁷⁹ James W. Garrett, “Translocal Ministry in the New Testament Church,” a paper delivered at the New Testament Church Conclave, May 2005, 22. See website: <http://www.doulospress.org/pprs.php>, 14; see also James W. Garrett, *New Testament Church Leadership* (Tulsa, OK: Doulos Press, 1996). For discussion of various scholarly exegetical views, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 904-911; John Ruthven, “Ephesians 2:20 and the ‘Foundational Gifts,’” accessed online at <http://home.regent.eu/ruthven/220htm>.

same as Old Testament prophets and must come under the same rigorous standard of complete accuracy.⁸⁰ Another school of thought says that New Testament prophets no longer have the authority of Old Testament prophets and therefore the standard bar is no longer that high. Further, it appears that since prophecies need to be evaluated (1 Corinthians 14) and Agabus and other prophets were not totally accurate in their predictions about Paul (Acts 21:10-14), the same standard of accuracy was not applied in the New Testament and therefore prophets can be fallible in the prophecies they deliver and yet not be considered false prophets. The latter appears to be the predominate view today in the charismatic movement, though not widely accepted outside of the charismatic movement. This is the view of Third Waver Wayne Grudem.⁸¹

Many today distinguish various levels or degrees of prophetic insight and inspiration, and thus various degrees of accuracy, in some ways similar to late 19th century evangelical holiness movements, as mentioned earlier. Joyner, for instance, posits a scale ranging from impressions, to special illuminations or anointings, to open visions with a higher level of clarity, to trances.⁸² Garrett distinguishes between “body-life prophetic activity” in 1 Corinthians 14 which “could be understood to have a degree of inaccuracy” since the prophecies were to be judged, and the activity of “ascension gift prophets” in Ephesians 4:11, which is to be just as accurate as the Old Testament prophets:

Based upon the scriptural test, when someone puts himself forth as a prophet and declares that God is present in the meeting to heal backs (no uncertainty—he has heard from God), and people with bad backs come forward for prayer, but no one receives a healing, then the purported prophet has misrepresented himself. He is not a prophet. He is someone who receives impressions. Receiving impressions is not wrong, but they must be recognized for what they are.⁸³

Likewise, there is a danger in excusing someone’s inaccurate prophecy and failing to call them to accountability. I heard one prominent prophet on Trinity Broadcasting Network prophesy that Saddam Hussein would be captured in a certain month. However, Hussein was not captured until three months later. To my knowledge, he never made any admission that he missed it, nor has he been held accountable. There is a tendency to excuse prophecies as not needing to be accurate, rather than follow the early counsel of Woodworth-Etter, “Don’t take

⁸⁰ See Foster, *Sorting Out the Supernatural*, 68-81.

⁸¹ Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 74-79, 120-123; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1049-51.

⁸² Joyner, 9-11.

⁸³ James Garrett, “Translocal Ministry in the New Testament Church,” 40.

up with every vision that comes along,” and admit that some prophecies are just plain false.

There is effort on the part of some to encourage discernment and accountability. Charismatic leader John Bevere warns about those who say “thus saith the Lord,” yet their prophecies prove false.⁸⁴ Those who claim to be prophets, if they are mature, should be discerning the voice of the Lord more clearly, and thus should be more accurate. If they are not more accurate, they should not be regarded as mature, or even as prophets. J. Lee Grady, editor of *Charisma* magazine, wrote about the need for those who are mistaken in their prophecies to admit them: “If prophets claim to speak for God they must submit to correction and make apologies. Prophets who aren’t willing to be corrected should not be in public ministry.”⁸⁵ The related question then arises: To whom are prophets accountable? Some say only to other prophets or apostles. Others say to the elders or church governing bodies. This is still an unresolved issue.

3. *Elevating the Status of Revelation.* Religious movements that have believed in the reality of prophetic revelations have sometimes elevated such supposed revelations to the status of Scripture, such as the Book of Mormon and the writings of Ellen White in Seventh Day Adventism. There is a tendency on the part of some in the prophetic movement to regard revelation knowledge on par with Scripture, to regard prophetic proclamations as authoritative, or to grant prophets authority to govern the church. Grudem addresses this in his book *The Gift of Prophecy*, and cites the counsel of Bruce Yocum: “It is usually a mistake for prophets to be the ultimate authority in a group. A number of heterodox sects and groups have been led by ‘prophets’ whose ‘inspired’ statements led people astray. . . . It is the place of prophets to prophesy, but it is the place of the heads of the community to judge prophecy.”⁸⁶

4. *Overdependence on prophecies.* Gordon Wright, who operates in a prophetic gifting, nonetheless cautions, “The danger of prophetic ministry is our temptation to replace the ministry of the Holy Spirit with a man or a man’s ministry. This in essence releases the believer from the *responsibility* of personally hearing from or getting a word from God. It is much easier to go to the prophet for a word from God than to spend the time and energy necessary to seek God in prayer,

⁸⁴ John Bevere, *Thus Saith the Lord* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1999).

⁸⁵ J. Lee Grady, “Can You Spot a Prophet?,” *Ministries Today*, September/October 2004, 38.

⁸⁶ Bruce Yocum, cited in Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 188.

find Him and hear His voice personally. This type of relationship tends to produce an unhealthy dependence upon man as our spiritual source rather than our *true* and *only* source, the Lord Jesus. . . . This unhealthy dependence upon man to hear from God for us also opens one up to prophetic manipulation.”⁸⁷

5. *Over-emphasis on the sensational.* Charismatic teacher Eddie Hyatt has expressed concern that the prophetic stream has lost its focus and is in danger of repeating the Colossian heresy (Col. 2:18) of “preoccupation with their own spirituality” and obsession with “supernatural phenomena such as visions and angelic visitations.” He explains that he was describing to a class that the Colossians’ “fascination with such sensational phenomena had distracted them from their one and only true Source, Jesus Christ.” Following his teaching, he went to the auditorium to hear a well-known prophetic teacher: “As I sat on the platform and listened to the ‘big name’ guest speaker, I was amazed at how closely what I was hearing coincided with the Colossian Heresy I had just delineated. This person talked almost exclusively of visions, prophecies and angelic visitations. . . . Jesus certainly was not front and center and I am not even sure if He was mentioned. It was incredible!”⁸⁸

6. *Hermeneutical issues: prominent use of symbolism, typology, allegory, numerology, mysticism, riddle, etc.* These features were often a part of Old and New Testament prophetic and apocalyptic literature. However, there is a danger of over-spiritualizing, over-using and misinterpreting such literature. A comparison of these features in the Bible with those in inter-testamental, non-canonical prophetic literature, and Gnostic literature shows that such features are more restrained in the Bible. Similarly, a comparison of these features in the Bible with modern prophetic revelation shows that such features are often less restrained today than in the Bible. Thus there is a danger of Gnostic mysticism and elitism. Mega-church pastor Michael Fletcher, who advocates prophetic ministry, nonetheless avers, “Whenever you allow the prophetic to interpret Scriptures—a prophetic hermeneutic—then you have a whole new set of meanings and ideas that may be derived from Scripture but are not grounded in it. That makes us all look flaky.”⁸⁹ Jack Hayford observes, “In its pure operation, the manifestation of the

⁸⁷ Gordon A. Wright, *The Ministry and Calling of the Prophet: A Word of Correction* (Tulsa, OK: Jesus Inn Ministries), n.d., 3-4.

⁸⁸ Eddie L. Hyatt, “The Colossian Heresy Revisited: Has the Prophetic Stream Lost Its Focus?” *Pneuma Review*, Vol. 8 No. 4 (Fall 2005), 26, accessed online at http://pneumafoundation.org/article.jsp?article-article_0038.xml.

⁸⁹ Cited in Matthew Green, “Speaking for God,” *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 48.

Holy Spirit in ‘prophecies,’ as I have observed them through the years, demonstrates and tends to sustain simplicity.”⁹⁰ In dealing with the Toronto Blessing phenomena, the Board of the Vineyard Churches counseled, “No doctrine should be based on a prophetic interpretation of a particular manifestation.”⁹¹ In a “charismatic” critique of the Toronto Blessing movement, scholar Mark Smith likewise cautions about the use of a “‘This-Is-That’ prophetic hermeneutic.”⁹²

7. Danger of psychic or occult phenomena. In a *Ministries Today* article entitled “Prophet or Psychic,” Raymond Watts has awakened to the increasing danger of spurious manifestations, especially psychic counterfeits of prophecy and word of knowledge, calling for testing the spirits.⁹³ John Wimber also admonished, “[Demons] may be very religious, very ‘spiritual.’ For example, they may prophesy, speak in tongues, even quote Scripture.”⁹⁴

These warnings are important, because some writers such as Morton Kelsey believe that prophetic giftings and revelations such as supernatural words of knowledge are a form of psychic or psi phenomena, not distinguishing between psychic and Christian forms. Kelsey even goes so far as to say that Jesus is the ultimate shaman, and that Jesus and the apostles practiced clairvoyance and ESP.⁹⁵ Some in the prophetic movement, such as Kim Clement, believe psychic power is a gift from God that psychics just do not know how to use properly for God.⁹⁶ Others, however, like Watchman Nee, regard such phenomena as “the latent power of the

⁹⁰ Jack Hayford, “Despise Not Prophecy,” *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 80.

⁹¹ “Association of Vineyard Churches Board Report: Summary Report on the Current Renewal and the Phenomena Surrounding It. Sept./Oct. 1994.” *Toronto in Perspective*, David Hilborn, ed. (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Publishing, 2001), 340.

⁹² Mark Smith, “‘This-Is That’ Hermeneutics,” *The Mark of the Spirit?*, ed. Lloyd Pietersen (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Publishing, 1998), 33-62.

⁹³ Raymond E. Watts, “Prophet or Psychic,” *Ministries Today*, Jan./Feb. 1998, 53-54.

⁹⁴ John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper, 1987), 232. For a historical overview of belief in demonization of Christians, see Paul L. King, “A Historical Survey of Belief and Practice Regarding Deliverance of Demonized Christians,” *Refleks* 3-1 (2004), 53-65.

⁹⁵ Morton T. Kelsey, *The Christian and the Supernatural* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 92-100; Morton T. Kelsey, *Transcend: A Guide to the Spiritual Quest* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981), 218ff.

⁹⁶ Kim Clement interview #3, <http://www.prophetic.tv/clement3/>

soul,” believing that humanity was created with para-normal powers in the image of God, but these powers were corrupted, restrained or short-circuited by the fall, and are not the same as the charismatic gifts and manifestations of the Spirit.⁹⁷ Others consider that when Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened after the fall, para-normal powers not intended by God were released. In both cases, supernatural spiritual entities not from God use these powers. Albrecht and Alexander conclude:

Scripture acknowledges the reality of occult phenomena and Para psychological manifestations, but it does not condone their pursuit and cultivation as a means of knowing God; on the contrary, much of the Biblical testimony emphasizes the futility and the danger of such questionable spiritual activities. . . . The Biblical revelation does not associate occultism and Para psychological occurrences with victory, joy, or absolute truth; instead it identifies the whole syndrome for the most part with humankind’s cosmic and temporal dilemma.⁹⁸

8. *Merchandising the anointing.* Rick Renner, an advocate of prophecy and other charismatic manifestations, nevertheless warns against “merchandising the anointing,” about those who sensationalize or invent new prophetic revelations for their own purposes of power, influence, money, or other self-centered motives.⁹⁹ A sidebar article in *Ministries Today* cautions against “propheteers.”¹⁰⁰ Similar warning was given by the *Didache* in the early second century, as mentioned earlier in this article, but it is just as much a concern in the church today.

9. *Intersecting with apostolic and strategic level spiritual warfare movements.* The modern prophetic movement is most often identified with and intertwined with the new apostolic and strategic level spiritual warfare movements advocated by C. Peter Wagner and others.¹⁰¹ However, not all who believe in prophetic

⁹⁷ See Watchman Nee, *The Latent Power of the Soul* (New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1972); Mark Albrecht and Brooks Alexander, “Separating Wheat and Chaff: Biblical Discernment and Parapsychology,” *Journal of the Academy of Religion and Psychological Research*, Vol. 3, No. 3, July 1980.

⁹⁸ Albrecht and Alexander, 205.

⁹⁹ Rick Renner, *Merchandising the Anointing* (Tulsa, OK: Rick Renner Ministries, 1990).

¹⁰⁰ “Propheteers?: Navigating the Dangerous World of Prophecy and Finances,” *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 48.

¹⁰¹ For historical surveys of these concepts and movements, see Paul L. King, “The New Apostolic Movement in Historical Context,” *Refleks* 5-1 (2006), 60-73; Paul L. King, “A Historical Survey of the Concept of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: Spiritual Mapping, Territorial Spirits, and Related Praxis,” *Refleks* 4-1 (2005), 56-70.

revelation accept all the tenets and practices of these movements. For instance, John Paul Jackson, active in the prophetic movement, has been criticized for writing his book *Needless Casualties of War*, which critiques some strategic level spiritual warfare beliefs and tactics.¹⁰² Advocates of prophetic ministry such as R.T. Kendall, James Ryle, and John Sandford have endorsed his cautions, but others in the prophetic and apostolic streams have been critical of Jackson's book. If someone who has a prophetic ministry, but does not fit in with these movements, then how are they regarded? Prophets have authority only in the sphere of ministry where their authority is accepted. In 2004 Doug Beachem of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church published *Rediscovering the Role of Apostles and Prophets*, endeavoring to provide a balance to the emerging apostolic and prophetic movements and responding to Wagner's books.¹⁰³ Beacham concludes, "While Pentecostal denominations accept the reality of contemporary 'apostolic and prophetic' ministries, not all accept the NAR [New Apostolic Revolution] premise that there are contemporary 'offices' of apostles and prophets."¹⁰⁴

10. *The artificiality of coaching people to prophesy.* Is prophesying a "spontaneous" gift that comes from God, or can people legitimately be taught how to prophesy? Synan comments, "The practicing of learning to prophesy in a classroom setting seems to take a gift of the Spirit, which is given and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and places it in humans apart from a worshipping community."¹⁰⁵

11. *Distain for balance and discernment.* Concern for over-balance or over-cautiousness in allowing the prophetic movement freedom and flexibility to progress forward, has resulted in some showing scorn for attempts at maintaining balance. Hamon, for instance, claims, "The 'balanced' group may become so protective of the truth and so reactionary toward the extremists that they retain the original form yet lose the flow of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁶ He goes on to make a broad claim that church history shows the balanced group becomes the persecutors of the next restoration move of God (but does not give any support for his statement). The question then becomes, just what is balance, or should one even

¹⁰² John Paul Jackson, *Needless Casualties of War* (Fort Worth, TX: Streams Publications, 1999), 11-42, 55-72.

¹⁰³ Doug Beachem, "The Leadershift," *Ministries Today*, Nov./Dec. 2004, 33ff.

¹⁰⁴ Beacham, "The Leadershift," *Ministries Today*, Nov./Dec. 2004, 35.

¹⁰⁵ Vinson Synan, "2000 Years of Prophecy," *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Move of God*, 186.

strive for balance? Is it possible to maintain a healthy balance in the middle without swinging to either extreme of the pendulum?

12. *Other prophetic pitfalls.* Jack Deere, while encouraging prophecy, also warns of “prophetic pitfalls”: prophesying out of wrong motives or attitudes, rejected prophet syndrome, desire to please or be awesome, rationalizing mistakes, “God told me” syndrome, among others.¹⁰⁷ One might wonder if Deere’s withdrawal from active involvement with the prophetic movement might be related to his perceptions of failure to heed his cautions.

Conclusions

There is effort on the part of many in the contemporary prophetic movements to exercise discernment and to deal with some of these issues. The *Ministries Today* issue on prophets addresses some of these problems, attempting to provide balanced counsel.¹⁰⁸

The Apostle Paul admonishes both to despise not prophesyings and to judge all things (1 Thess. 5:21). To deny the reality and legitimacy of prophecy because of excesses and misuses is not of value. The Latin phrase *abusus non tollit usus* applies here: “The abuse does not bear away the use,” or in other words, the abuse should not obscure or invalidate legitimate use. One early writer, A.B. Simpson, who observed both the benefits and the dangers of prophecy, put it this way, “The best remedy for the abuse of anything is its wise and proper use.”¹⁰⁹

Prophecy, when exercised in its proper place and manner can do what it is intended—to edify, comfort and encourage. Yet prophecy needs boundaries in order for it to be used properly and safely for benefit of all. Balance and discernment are vital, as well as accountability for mistaken prophecies, especially those spoken by prominent prophetic leaders. Hyatt presents three principles to keep the contemporary prophetic movement from losing its proper focus:

- Keep Jesus at the Center. Do not seek an experience, seek Him.
- Let the supernatural happen, do not try to make it happen.

¹⁰⁷ Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, 190-216.

¹⁰⁸ “Propheteers?”, 48; Matthew Green, “Speaking for God,” *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 45ff.; Eddie L. Hyatt, “Putting Personal Prophecy to the Test,” *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 30ff.; J. Lee Grady, “Can You Spot a Prophet?”, *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 36ff.

¹⁰⁹ A. B. Simpson, *Christian and Missionary Alliance Weekly*, March 27, 1891, 195.

- Stay humble. Do not allow spiritual experiences to become a basis for pride. Avoid an elitist attitude.¹¹⁰

Hyatt's recommendations echo counsel given even before the Pentecostal movement began to spread that appears to be timely and timeless sound advice for the prophetic movement a century later:

Beloved, let us understand and admit one for all that we are exceedingly *fallible* creatures. So very *fallible*, in fact, that, though our Father may be very desirous of imparting to us some truth and though He may breathe into the soul in all His Divine purity, yet when we undertake to give it voice and pour it out in verbal phrase to others, we are more than apt—unless we lie low at His feet in deepest humility—to so tarnish and becloud it by our clumsy touch and exaggerated language, as will place it beyond the Divine recognition.

A revelation may be truly from God. Yet, being such imperfect transmitters and interpreters of the Divine thought as is true of each one of us, one may easily be mistaken in the interpretation given to such revelation.

Those who confidently aver that marvelous experiences have been given them, accompanied by visions and repeated assurance that a certain one who is ill has been already healed or is to be healed in the future, and then following such assurance the sick one dies without healing having been experienced—such persons either misinterpreted God's revelation, or have mistaken the voice of the Adversary for that of the Holy Spirit.¹¹¹

Matthew Green, the managing editor of *Ministries Today* sums up a balanced attitude toward the prophetic movement today, "Fraudulent prophets will always be with us, as will sneaky evangelists, abusive pastors, heretical teachers and power-hungry apostles. But, if we allow our fear of the counterfeit to shake our faith in the authentic, we may miss out on hearing God speak."¹¹²



¹¹⁰ Hyatt, "The Colossian Heresy Revisited," 27.

¹¹¹ May Mabette Anderson, "The Prayer of Faith: Part II," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance Weekly*, Feb. 24, 1906, 106-107.

¹¹² Matthew Green, "Editor's Note: Can You Hear Me Now?", *Ministries Today*, Sept./Oct. 2004, 6.

Agnes Sanford: Apostle of Healing, and First Theologian of the Charismatic Renewal

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Introduction

In 1985 Dave Hunt, a lay cult watcher, published one of the most influential books of the 1980s, *The Seduction of Christianity*.¹ In that work he lambasted much of the leadership of the charismatic renewal for “seducing” the American Christianity with ideas and practices derived from occult sources. He attacked Mrs. Agnes Sanford and her writing with particular severity. Hunt claimed that her syncretistic theology was little more than witchcraft and shamanism, and should be totally rejected by the Christian community. Hunt was convinced that the ministry she pioneered, inner healing, was especially occultic and dangerous to Christians.²

In my work, *Quenching the Spirit*, I argued that such characterizations are destructive and untrue. Critics such as Hunt do not take into account the tragic situation within Nineteenth Century “orthodox” Christianity which labeled *any* form of healing prayer as cultic and heretical. The consensus orthodoxy of the era stressed the doctrine of cessationism, which also declared the gifts of the Spirit as unavailable in the current age. This theology combined with an unrecognized dependence on philosophical realism that came into both Catholicism and Protestantism from the late Middle Ages. The result was that the consensus orthodoxy of the era left no room for the role of the believer’s faith to move in healing prayer or in the gifts of the Spirit.³

An overview of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries shows a pattern in which the Holy Spirit moved the Church away from its cessationism-realism

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¹ Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1985).

² *Ibid.*, see especially chapter 9 “Shamanism Revived”. In this paper I will not cover Mrs. Sanford’s development of the ministry of inner healing.

³ William DeArteaga, *Quenching the Spirit* (Lake Mary: Creation House, 1996).

based theology. The Spirit simultaneously inspired different groups and individuals towards theologies that reincorporated the gifts of the Spirit. This allowed for a more active understanding of the role of mind, *acting through faith in Christ*, to activate the miraculous powers of the Kingdom of God. This was a move toward theologies based on *moderate idealism*, that is, that mind, with faith, can influence matter, as in healing and the miraculous, and away from theological systems based on radical realism where the Christian merely petitions that God act.⁴ A characteristic of faith-idealism is that physical evidence is of less immediate concern than the witness of the Word of God.

The shift from cessationist realism to faith idealism was a process that began in the middle of the Nineteenth Century and has yet to be completed. The first example of faith idealism as a conscious theology was in the writings and ministry of Phoebe Palmer, the famous Holiness evangelist who developed her “altar” theology which spread the gospel of Wesleyan total sanctification. For Mrs. Palmer the evidence of the believer’s sanctification was in the Word of God, not in a person’s physical actions.⁵ Later, the Faith-Cure Movement of the 1880s developed a similar doctrine in which healing was affirmed in spite of any immediate change in the health of the petitioner.⁶

Perhaps the single most important, and controversial, theologian of faith-idealism was the evangelist E.W. Kenyon. His work greatly influenced the theology and writings of Kenneth Hagin, and through him the entire charismatic movement. Dan McConnell’s work, *A Different Gospel*, strongly critiqued Kenyon’s (and thus Hagin’s) theology as syncretistic and occultic.⁷ McConnell attempted to show that Kenyon was mostly dependent on New Thought writers, and thus his

⁴ William DeArteaga, “Confusing the Roots With the Fruits,” *Ministries Today* 9 (July/August 1991), 56-62, and *Quenching the Spirit*, *passim*.

⁵ Charles Edward White, “Phoebe Palmer and the Development of Pentecostal Pneumatology.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (spring/fall, 1983), 198-212.

⁶ The classic work of the Faith Cure Movement is Carrie F. Judd, *The Prayer of Faith* (Buffalo, N.Y.: H. Otis, 1882).

⁷ D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel: A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988). Subsequent intensive research by Dale H. Simmons, published in his book, *E. W. Kenyon and The Postbellum Pursuit of Peace, Power, and Plenty* (Lanham, MD: Scare Crow Press, 1977) and Geir Lie in his article “The Theology of E. W. Kenyon: Plain Heresy or Within the Boundaries of Pentecostal-Charismatic ‘Orthodoxy’?” *PNEUMA* 22 (spring, 2000) 85-114, have shown that Kenyon was influenced mostly by Holiness theology, not New Thought.

theology was non-Christian and dangerous to the Church. However, in *Quenching the Spirit* I argued to the contrary and showed that influence by heretical movements has often forced Christians into a deeper encounter with truth. This is a process common to the formation of orthodox Christian theology throughout Church history.⁸

In the case of healing prayer in particular, the heretical Idealist Cults of the 19th. Century, the Mind Cure movement and especially Christian Science, forced many in the Church to reevaluate and ultimately reject cessationism. Mrs. Agnes Sanford was among those who faced the challenge of the Idealist Cults head on and helped to transform healing prayer from a cultic activity to a normative Christian practice. She played a particularly significant role in moving many Christians within the mainline churches away from cessationism and into the pastoral practice of healing prayer, and introduced many to the gifts of the Spirit. Agnes Sanford (and her friend and colleague, Prof. Glenn Clark) influenced mainline Protestants towards moderat idealism in much the same way that the ministry of Kenyon (and later Kenneth Hagin) influenced Pentecostal circles.⁹

Mrs. Sanford's Heritage

Agnes Sanford's father, the Rev. Hugh W. White, was one of the most distinguished American missionaries to China in an era filled with dedicated and self-sacrificing missionaries. Hugh White intended to be a pastor, like his father, but he felt a calling as a missionary to China and went there immediately after seminary. Except for home leaves, he stayed there until his death in 1940. During his long service the Rev. White was forced to confront the inadequacies of cessationist theology in two major crises.¹⁰

⁸ DeArteaga, *Quenching the Spirit*, chapter 13. My position is based largely on Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy From the Apostles to the Present* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1984) and Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964).

⁹ The role that Glenn Clark and his CFO played in challenging cessationism and preparing the way for the charismatic renewal is described in my article "Glenn Clark's Camps Furthest Out: The Schoolhouse of the Charismatic Renewal," *Pneuma* 25:2 (2003), 265-288.

¹⁰ The Rev White's trials with cessationist orthodoxy in China are mentioned in Mrs. Sanford's *Sealed Orders*, (Plainfield: Logos International, 1971), and extensively described in her autobiographical novel, *The Second Mrs. Wu* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1965), which gives a detailed description of her years at the mission station in Hsouchoufu.

One of his trusted Chinese elders baptized an entire family that had recently been converted. In this family the husband had *two* wives, as was the custom among the merchant class in China. For the elder, there was no problem in this. The elder recognized that 1 Timothy 3 takes into account this situation. Further, to have forced the husband to renounce one of his wives would have condemned the rejected wife to a life of prostitution. Unfortunately, as clear as this issue was *biblically*, mission doctrine and policy forbade such baptisms. The Rev. White backed his elder. As a result he was forced to leave his comfortable post and establish a new mission.

The second crisis began when another of the Rev. White's trusted evangelical aides reported that on a round of the villages he had baptized two persons, received three new inquirers and "cast a demon out of old Mrs. Tsu."¹¹ White was astonished by the reported exorcism – cessationist theology, the consensus orthodoxy of the times, claimed that demonic possession ended after Apostolic times. He accompanied his aid on his next rounds, and sure enough, the faith-filled layman ministered another exorcism in Rev. White's presence. From that time on Rev. White began collecting evidence on possessions and exorcisms, eventually ministering many exorcisms himself.

He presented his finding in a book called *Demonism Verified and Analyzed* which was published in 1922.¹² White believed that possession was a form of violent disassociation. The possessing force was not a spiritually independent entity; it was more like a psychic force or idea. Yet the exorcism itself was "real" in the sense that it was a form of rapid psychotherapy. This theory may not be entirely satisfactory, but it was a pioneer attempt to integrate biblical revelation with modern psychology, and his book deserved more attention than it received.¹³

Rev. Hugh White's ministry taught his daughter Agnes, in her years of special impressionability, that certain elements of normative, "consensus orthodoxy" could be stubbornly unscriptural. It also showed her that perfectly sincere Chris-

¹¹ A description of this incident is found in *The Second Mrs. Wu*, 209. See also: Agnes Sanford, "Prayer of Healing," Tape #140-A, Ft. Myers: Lord's Own Tape Ministry, n.d.

¹² Hugh W. White, *Demonism Verified and Analyzed*, (Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1922).

¹³ It is informative to see the similarities between Rev. White's view of possession and exorcism and the view of M. Scott Peck, whose books on evil have become best-sellers. See especially Peck's chapter 5, "Of Possession and Exorcism" in his *People of the Lie*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

tians, such as the fellow missionaries who opposed her father, were all too ready to confuse consensus doctrines with biblical revelation.

Birth, Education and Marriage

Agnes White was born in the Chinese city of Hsouchoufu on August 15, 1896, the eldest child of six. She received “home schooling” from her mother that stressed the conventional topics of Bible stories, verse memorization and reading. Mrs. White obviously did a good job, as she was able to encourage Agnes’s talent for writing to the point that at age ten she sold her first piece of writing to the *Shanghai Mercury*.

At age nine, during one of her father’s periodic home leaves, Agnes attended a revival in rural Virginia and made a “born again” commitment to Jesus Christ. By age eleven she was entirely dissatisfied with the conventional arguments that miracles were for the Apostolic Age alone. Later, as a teen-ager she became deeply depressed and bewildered over the denominational disputes over doctrines that split the American missionary effort in China, yet her commitments to Jesus and the Bible were unshaken. In 1914, age seventeen, Agnes returned to the United States to finish her education. She received a teaching certificate from North Carolina and subsequently attended Agnes Scott College for a year as an auditing student.

Agnes returned to China where she found a teaching position in Shanghai at a secondary school for missionary children.¹⁴ In that city she met and fell in love with Edgar (Ted) Sanford who was an Episcopal priest and principal of another Christian school. They were married in April of 1923 and the first of three children arrived the next year. Soon Ted moved his family to a post in the interior of China. That station proved to be a harrowing experience as the young missionary family was caught in battles between warlords.¹⁵ After this the Sanfords decided to take a temporary leave from China so that Ted could get an advanced degree. The year was 1925, and while in graduate school Ted felt a calling to go into the pastorate in America. He accepted a call as rector to a small church in Moorestown, New Jersey, Trinity Episcopal Church.

¹⁴ Agnes Sanford’s novel, *The Rising River* (New York: J.B.Lippincott, 1968), contains autobiographical details of this period of her life.

¹⁵ For a glimpse of this high-adventure, see Edgar L. Sanford, *God’s Healing Power* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1959), 155-159.

Continuing Education in Moorestown

After the Sanfords settled in Moorestown they had their third and last child, John - later to become the distinguished psychologist and writer. When John was a year and a half old he developed a severe ear infection. After several weeks of illness it seemed like John might die. The rector of a near-by Episcopal Church, Rev. Hollis Colwell dropped by the Sanford residence to see Ted on church business, and learned of John's situation. Fr. Colwell had read New Thought literature on healing, and by the time of his visit to the Sanford's he had developed into a practiced and faith-filled healer. He laid his hands on John's ear, after which the toddler promptly went into a deep sleep and awoke completely well. In the days before antibiotics this was indeed a miraculous recovery.¹⁶

Fr. Colwell encouraged Mrs. Sanford to pray for the healing of others. At first Agnes was reluctant to do so. However, with Fr. Colwell help, she began to investigate the topic. He believed that a necessary ingredient of the healing ministry is an adherence to a strict health-food regime. Apparently Fr. Colwell had read the works of the Episcopal healing and health food pioneer, the Rev. Robert B. H. Bell, and had taken Bell's dietary insights to an extreme position.¹⁷ Agnes looked into this and read some of the health-food literature available at the time (1931). In fact, for the rest of her life she adopted what would now be recognized as a moderate health food diet for herself and her family which avoided processed foods and stressed fresh fruits and vegetables. However, she also discerned that although eating health foods was good, that could not be the foundation of either Fr. Colwell's or anybody else's healing power.

Agnes then set out to find out as much about healing as she could, and at this stage made a critical decision. She determined to compare whatever she read or heard by the standard set up by Jesus in the four gospels.¹⁸

This sounds very simple, but it did not prove to be so. First of all, I found that what He said went directly contrary to many of the explanations concerning religion that I had been taught since my youth. For instance, I had been told that the age of miracles was past - yet I had seen a miracle...I also knew that there was no use in trying to understand what I had not experienced. Therefore I set myself to find an *experience* of God's power.

¹⁶ *Sealed Orders*, 96-98.

¹⁷ Fr. Bell's major work was *The Life Abundant: a manual for living*, (Milwaukee: Moorehouse Publishing Co., 1927).

¹⁸ *Sealed Orders*, 102-103.

In order to do this, I laid aside temporarily all that I had been taught concerning Christianity. I did not disbelieve it, I merely laid it on the table to be considered later. And that is what all of us must do if we are to learn.¹⁹

She began with reading Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*, but felt bewildered by the vocabulary and philosophical underpinnings of Christian Science (radical idealism), and laid it aside. Much more useful was the Christian New Thought writer Emmet Fox. In his classic work, *Sermon On The Mount*, Agnes's spirit found profound resonance.²⁰ Here was a person who believed in the power of God and of scripture for the here and now - a common assumption of New Thought writers. Ironically this non cessationist view placed Fox closer to the plain and literal understanding of scripture than the more orthodox and conservative Christians of the era. Agnes's firm devotion to Jesus and her determination to use the gospels as her discernment anchor saved her from adopting Fox's Arian Christology - something that in any case is not manifest in the *Sermon On The Mount*. She continued to look into the available literature of healing including the literature of the Unity School of Christianity. It seems that she did not encounter at this time the literature of the Evangelical healing revival of the 1880s. She also made contact with a small church in Philadelphia run by an ex-Baptist who had been expelled from her congregation for practicing Christian healing.²¹

Fr. Colwell continued to urge Agnes to move out in faith and pray for the healing of others. Her first attempt was a failure; she had prayed for a young man who had gone insane. Years later she recognized that type of illness is among the most difficult to heal, involving much prayer, deliverance and intercession.²² Her second attempt was totally successful. This case was one of a young child dying of severe infection which stirred in her a special compassion, for it was infection that almost killed her youngest child. Agnes described that case in *Sealed Orders*:

But the time came when I felt strongly urged to march myself to a hospital and offer to pray for a child desperately ill with a streptococcus infection. This was in the days before the miracle drugs, and the child had the infection in the heart, the kidneys, and the blood stream...

¹⁹ Agnes Sanford, *Behold Your God* (St.Paul: Macalester Park, 1958), 2.

²⁰ Emmet Fox, *The Sermon on the Mount: a general introduction to scientific Christianity in the form of a spiritual key to Matthew V, VI and VII* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932).

²¹ See *Sealed Orders*, 103 ff. for a description of the works she read in her first years of her healing ministry.

²² Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Power of the Bible* (New York: Pillar Books, 1976), 54.

I was terrified. I would as soon have walked up to the mouth of a cannon, or so I thought. But the urge of compassion was strong, for I knew the child would die unless *something* intervened... Strange to say, as soon as I sat down beside the bed and began to talk to the child, I had no fear at all! The venture seemed as simple and as natural as if I had been doing it all my life... I laid hands on the region of the heart and simply asked Jesus to make him well, and then thanked Jesus because I knew he was doing it. The next day the child's blood stream and heart were free of infection. The kidneys took one more day.²³

We should notice that already she was praying in the "moderate idealist" style, *thanking* God for the healing even though no *evidence* was manifest. This case greatly encouraged her, and she began praying for others. Soon she formed a lady's Bible study and prayer group which met in the parish chapel once a week. This group developed great power in intercessory prayer and soon Mrs. Sanford was building up case upon case in effective healing prayer. She also began acquiring a reputation as an expert in healing and began receiving invitations to speak publicly on the topic. At first she would be invited by women's groups, as ministers would be deathly afraid of anything to do with healing, especially from a *woman*, but gradually she began to receive a few direct invitations to speak in the churches.²⁴

Ministry at Tilton Army Hospital

By the outset of World War II she was well read, well practiced in healing and strong in discernment. Mrs. Sanford volunteered for service as a Gray Lady at Tilton Army Hospital at Ft. Dix. Every week she would spend a full day there. Her assigned duties were to pass around a cart of comic books, magazines, candies and flowers for the wounded men in the hospital. It was strictly and absolutely forbidden to pray for the men. Soon however her compassion overcame her respect for the lawfulness of authority (Acts 4:18-22). Often she would place her hands underneath a copy of *Life* magazine (the largest magazine available) so that the authorities would not see what she was doing.

Agnes later came to see this period in her life as the most fruitful one in her healing ministry. God's healing power flowed through her to an unusual degree, partly because there was no publicity and partly because war wounds were not associated with personal sin of the soldiers. Thus the healing power of God could flow without impediment from unresolved sin or unforgiveness. As she gained more confidence in this secret ministry she began to teach the soldiers

²³ *Sealed Orders*, 110-111

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

how to pray for themselves and one another. She had particular success in the “wet ward” where soldiers with infected wounds were often relegated to die slow deaths. Not long after she finished teaching the men to pray for one another, that ward was closed down with the soldiers discharged and healed.²⁵

Just after the war ended Agnes was caught in the *very act* of praying for a soldier! She was brought to her supervisor, a dedicated, orthodox Christian woman, who tongue lashed her as a dangerous heretic and witch, and dismissed her. Agnes was shaken and hurt by this, but understood that she needed to forgive the nurse or her healing ministry would be weakened. The Lord turned evil into good. Agnes then had time to return to her writing, and she wrote a best-selling novel about her experiences at Tilton Army Hospital, *Oh, Watchman!*²⁶ She also continued a busy schedule of appearances at church healing missions and lectures.

The Healing Light

It was during her ministry at Tilton Army Hospital that Mrs. Sanford wrote her first, and most successful book, *The Healing Light*.²⁷ The book was based on the notes she prepared for an adult education class that she gave during the war. It was written in simple language. In fact, Mrs. Sanford read the text to her nine year old niece and would not be satisfied until the girl could understand it.²⁸ The manuscript was finished in 1945, but it was rejected by the major trade publishers. However, several chapters were serialized in *Sharing* magazine, the organ for the Order of St. Luke, the Episcopal healing order. Professor Glenn Clark, founder of the CFO camps, read the chapters in *Sharing* and recognized their superior quality. He offered to publish it through Macalester Park, his own publishing house. It initially sold slowly, partly because Macalester Park was not listed in *Books in Print*, and thus had difficulty in distribution, but word of mouth soon overcame that handicap.

The Healing Light might be termed the crown work of Christian New Thought. That is, Mrs. Sanford appropriated many of the motifs, vocabulary and insights

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 178-188.

²⁶ Agnes Sanford, *Oh, Watchman!* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1951).

²⁷ Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light* (St. Paul: Macalester Park, 1947).

²⁸ Taped interview with Dr. Harry Goldsmith, August 1983. Dr. Goldsmith was severely wounded as a young soldier in W.W.II, healed by Mrs. Sanford's prayers at Tilton, and became her life-long friend.

from New Thought writers, but using her biblical knowledge as filter, eliminated the unbiblical aspects of New Thought, such as its drift into radical idealism (evil is unreal, as in Christian Science) and its sub-orthodox Christology. Central to her understanding and theology was the concept that the Kingdom of God is manifest through prayer and power *on earth*, and is not just “other-worldly.”

Among the New Thought motifs that Mrs. Sanford appropriated was that Christian spirituality could be described as a form of scientific endeavor. This was the initial intent of Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science, and it permeated all New Thought writings. It was common to many movements and ideologies of the Nineteenth Century, such as Marxism and psychoanalysis. In Mrs. Eddy’s writings and other New Thought systems of radical idealism, the end result of this quest was little more than a doctrinal mythology with an authoritative, convoluted syntax and pretentious vocabulary that aped the science of the times.

In comparison, Mrs. Sanford was far ahead of her New Thought contemporaries in understudying what true science was and was not. Mrs. Sanford saw that true science was not a new system of doctrines, but a methodology of knowledge that involved exploration, testing, verification (and failure) and humility of spirit with which to attack a problem. Although this is well understood today, it was not so clear when Mrs. Sanford wrote *The Healing Light*.²⁹ Mrs. Sanford wrote:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.” The scientific attitude is the attitude of perfect meekness. It consists in an unshakable faith in the laws of nature combined with perfect humility toward those laws and a patient determination to learn them at whatever cost. . . Through the Same meekness those who seek God can produce results by learning to conform to his laws of faith and love.³⁰

The title of her book, *The Healing Light*, points to the main thesis, that the healing power of God is light energy that is accessible to all who understand its lawful application in compassion and love. Agnes speculated that the healing light was the primal light that originated at the beginning of creation, and that this light is everywhere. On the practical level Agnes guides the reader on how to use the free gift of God’s healing light for healing. This is done by visualizing God’s light flooding the afflicted person or area of disease. To many Evangelical and cessationist educated Christians this seemed like occult hocus-pocus. In fact, the

²⁹ Compare her basic understanding of science with the seminal work of Sir Carl R. Popper, especially his technical *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Science Editions, 1961), and the more readable *Conjectures and Refutations: the growth of scientific knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1962).

³⁰ *Healing Light*, 21.

use of light in prayer is alien to Western Christianity, but common to Eastern Orthodoxy, which has a highly evolved theology of light, especially in reference to contemplative prayer.³¹ What is innovative about Mrs. Sanford's work it not that it urges the use of light in prayer, but its use in healing prayer.

Among other advances in healing prayer that *The Healing Light* presented was Mrs. Sanford's discovery on intercessory prayer for someone distant. The ex-Baptist minister who had previously advised her gave her the key to effective distance healing.

When you think of someone, you always see the person in your mind. If you really believe he's going to be well, you see him well. If he pops into your mind like your eyes saw him last, or like your friends tells you he is, all moans and groans and fever, that shows that your subconscious mind does not really believe he's going to be well...When you pray for someone, dearie, you must learn to see him well.³²

This whole issue of the use of visualization also caused much controversy, especially in latter years when cessationist influenced Evangelicals such as Dave Hunt believed that all visualization was occultic. This of course has no basis in scripture, and visualization prayer, as a form of devotional aid to Bible reading, has a long history in Christianity.³³

In spite of the New Thought vocabulary of visualization and vibration, *The Healing Light* is biblically orthodox where it counts, in its Christology. In practical terms this meant that the "name of Jesus adds power to all prayer."³⁴ Mrs. Sanford believed that it is only through Jesus' name that the great works of healing described in the Bible can be achieved.³⁵ Mrs. Sanford's participation in her husband's Episcopal liturgy had given her an appreciation of the effectiveness of the sacraments in healing. She also discerned that the ordained clergy had a special anointing to heal.³⁶ Another indication of the biblical orthodoxy of *The Healing Light* is Mrs. Sanford's understanding that God is both immanent and transcen-

³¹ See for example George A. Maloney, *The Mystic of Fire and Light: St. Symeon, the new theologian* (Denville: Dimension Books, 1975).

³² *Healing Light*, 145

³³ *Quenching the Spirit*, chapter 17, "Visualization and the Christian," and Brooks Alexander's masterful article "Mind Power and the Mind's Eye," *SPS Journal* 9, no 3, (1990), 8-20.

³⁴ *Healing Light*, 64.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 128

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

dent. "God's light shines both within us and without us, and by learning to receive Him within we begin to perceive Him Without."³⁷

This balanced, classical view of immanence and transcendence had practical consequences. She discovered that a prayer life of meditation (silence) and active mental prayer of praise, thanksgiving and petition was the way of optimizing one's ability to be a channel for God's graces and light to others. This is different from most New Thought writers who stressed meditation, but neglected worship of the transcendent, personal God.

Another major contribution to the modern Christian theology of healing found in *The Healing Light* is healing prayer as evangelization. "Some may wonder whether it is right to pray in the name of Christ and by the power of Christ for one who might not be willing to accept Christ. But after all, was it not that way when He was on earth? Did the nine lepers accept Him as Savior?"³⁸ In fact, in her personal ministry at Tilton Army Hospital Mrs. Sanford followed the pattern of first praying for physical healing, then evangelizing. It was an effective combination and a precursor to the theology of "power evangelism" made famous decades later by John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

The years immediately after the publication of *The Healing Light* were both hectic and most fruitful for Mrs. Sanford. Her speaking engagements in teaching missions and CFO camps multiplied. The healing missions were often in Episcopal churches where the pattern of a two or three day teaching with healing service and Eucharist had been developed earlier by John Gaynor Banks, founder of the OSL. However, the missions were by no means limited to Episcopal churches, and in the South, where Mrs. Sanford's work was especially welcome, the healing missions were given in churches of practically every denomination. CFO camps, where of course non-denominational, with participants coming from every denomination of Protestantism (and after the 1960s the Catholics began attending).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

By 1952 the success of Mrs. Agnes Sanford's first book, *The Healing Light* brought some unintended difficulties to her life. She was in demand as a speaker, and toured the US. and Canada in CFO camps and independent healing missions, while at the same time trying to raise a family and support her husband as rector

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 77

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

of a busy Episcopal church. She was exhausted yet felt an inner compulsion to preach the Good News that Jesus lives and heals in the current age.

Provisionally, Agnes had been scheduled for a healing mission in Tucson, Arizona. It was canceled when she arrived, and she took time to rest and pray with two local women who were also in the healing ministry. All three felt an exhaustion from their ministry and cried out to God for relief. As they prayed for guidance, all three received the same direction, pray for “the Holy Ghost.” In obedience, the three women prayed for each other with the laying on of hands. The three were instantly healed of their exhaustion and other maladies and received an infilling of joy and peace.

None manifested the gift of tongues. They neither expected nor understood it. After Agnes had returned to Moorstown, one of them, Mrs. Marion Lovekin, went to a local Pentecostal meeting and received the gift of tongues, and wrote Agnes enthusiastically explaining her experience. Agnes wrote back saying she wanted no part of tongue speaking. Mrs. Lovekin wrote again showing her the biblical basis for tongues, and challenging her to meditate on the issue. Not long after, Agnes returned to Tucson and the three women again prayed together. Agnes lifted the “tongues” question to God in prayer:

...immediately I desired the gift of tongues with a great longing! And in another moment I spoke as they had spoken, in words that the conscious mind did not understand....I felt as though the love of Christ, already in me, now moved down, down to a deeper level.³⁹

Agnes spent several days in deep prayer and praise, although still did not quite understand what had happened. Within a few weeks, on a healing mission in Florida, she stayed with a Christian woman who had had the gift of tongues for years. The woman was able to resolve her theological and biblical reservations, and after that Agnes utilized tongues daily in private prayer. She also used the gift of tongues while writing, discovering that form of praying helped her avoid errors by giving her a “check” in her spirit if she wrote anything contrary to the Word.

The first work Agnes wrote in this manner was *Behold Your God* (published in 1958).⁴⁰ This was her first attempt at serious theological reflection since *The Healing Light* of 1945. It came after two novels, which Agnes termed her “teaching parables,” and two children’s books. Mrs. Sanford’s brother badgered her for something more “meaty” and suggested a commentary on the creeds.

³⁹ Agnes Sanford, *Sealed Orders*, 221.

⁴⁰ Agnes Sanford, *Behold Your God* (St. Paul: Macalester Park, 1958).

Agnes felt this was a word from the Lord and she began work on *Behold Your God*. It developed as an extended commentary to *The Healing Light*, demonstrating a considerable deepening of her thought. The references to the creeds were reduced to incidental after thoughts.

Like *The Healing Light*, *Behold Your God* was simple in language and humble in its presentation. Mrs. Sanford admitted, for example, to being befuddled by the theological discussions of the Holy Spirit that dealt with a *filioque* debate that separated Christendom in the Eleventh Century. Yet her understanding of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, as well as her understanding of the spirit of man were both pioneering and profound.

By the time Mrs. Sanford wrote *Behold Your God*, she had witnessed wide varieties of healing, from demonic based spiritualism, to Christian Science and metaphysics, to authentic Christian and Spirit-filled healing. In her understanding, godly spiritual healing could come at any one of three levels, which she related to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity⁴¹. At the first level, *any* person who believed in one God, and who prayed believing would be granted some healing power. This was true regardless of whether or not one was a Christian. This position, which some Christians believe is impious, is biblical. The healings in the Old Testament all took place not because of faith in Jesus, but because of faith in God as healer (*Jehovah-rohi*). Agnes saw the contemporary equivalency of Old Testament healing in those in the Christian Science and the Metaphysical Movements who had strong faith in God, though they saw nothing uniquely divine in the person of Jesus. However, once a person believed in the divinity of Jesus, and made a commitment to His Lordship, the person was elevated into a healing power double that of the Old Testament position. The third and highest level of healing was reached when a believing Christian accepted the person and baptism of the Holy Spirit and received the gift of healing. Mrs. Sanford's insight makes clear the sad situation of the contemporary world, Metaphysical believers can be healers, while "born again" Christians, who believe in cessationism, are often completely ineffective as channels of God's healing power.

Mrs. Sanford saw the practice of positive thinking and visualization (holding a desired goal in the imagination) as having similar levels of power. Visualization is God-given and available to any believer in God. The power of visualization and positive thinking are increased when a person becomes a Christian and adds the name of Jesus to his prayer-visualizations. A third level is reached through

⁴¹ *Behold*, 136-137.

the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴² Agnes looked at the biblical evidence and saw a pattern that explains this: Jesus taught first *faith* (i.e. positive trust expectancy) to his disciples and only revealed his divine nature later in his ministry.⁴³ (*Behold Your God*, 35-36).

This concept of “levels” of spiritual power was broadened to explain the relationship between the powers of the soul (the “psychic” powers) and the powers of the Spirit-filled human spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not do violence to our natures, but only increases and develops in us gifts that are already potential to our natures. Some people have natural-born spiritual sensitivity, and if they use them only in the realm of meditation and spiritual living, avoiding séances, Ouija boards and automatic writing, the gift can be greatly used in God’s service.⁴⁴

Agnes believed that certain natural powers of the soul are increased when a person becomes a Christian and fulfilled with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. For example, the gift of prophecy is a spiritualized fulfillment of the soul’s ability to perceive non-material realities, often manifested in pre-cognitive dreams. Similarly, the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are increments of powers of the soul to make intuitive judgments. This is a modern version of the traditional Catholic doctrine that “grace perfects nature.” It was later used by Catholic theologians of the renewal to explain to fellow Catholics the gifts of the Spirit.⁴⁵ This understanding of the gifts is contrary to that of many other Pentecostals and charismatics, who base their understanding of the gifts of the Spirit on Calvin’s doctrine of “total depravity.” In this theology the human soul was so ruined by original sin that anything “psychic” is sinful. This position - popularized by Watchman Nee and well established among Evangelicals, Pentecostals and charismatics - does not make biblical sense. It makes, for instance, the prophetic dream of Pilate’s wife a psychic and *sinful* experience, quite contrary to the biblical text (Matt. 27:19). However this theology is so set among evangelical and a majority of charismatic circles that when Dave Hunt and other critics of Mrs. Sanford called her theology “psychic” and “occultic” because of its nature-to-grace basis, the accusation felt “true” it spite of its biblical contradictions.

⁴² Compare with Brooks Alexander’s essentially similar position in his “Mind Power And The Mind’s Eye,” *SCP Journal* 9 #3 (1991) 8-20.

⁴³ *Behold*, 35-36.

⁴⁴ Agnes Sanford, *Behold Your God*, 146.

⁴⁵ Rene Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 134.

*The School of Pastoral Care*⁴⁶

One of the most important achievements of Mrs. Sanford during the late 1950s was the founding of the School of Pastoral Care. She and her husband Ted were deeply grieved by the destructive nature of the instruction provided by the major seminaries, which resulted in pastors who knew little of effective prayer and nothing of healing or exorcism.⁴⁷ The Sanfords wanted a place where pastors, medical professionals and seminarians could be taught the spiritual dimensions of healing and effective prayer and integrate these within their professional ministries.

Although the Sanfords loved the institutions of the church missions and especially the CFO camps, both these had limitations. They attracted few ministerial or medical professionals, and because they were open to all, had the problem of slow learners or persons too deeply wounded or neurotic to receive much instruction. To remedy these shortcomings the Sanfords founded the School of Pastoral Care. It was based out of Westboro, Massachusetts, their "retirement" home, with Ted as first director and administrator. The Episcopal diocese of Massachusetts provided their retreat facilities for the School. The first School began in October, 10, 1955, lasting from Monday to Friday. The audience was limited and screened to include only pastors, medical professionals and seminarians. The participants at this School, and the ones following came from practically every denomination of mainline Protestantism. The program taught effective prayer, prayer for physical healing, inner healing and deliverance. The staff for this and all subsequent school included an ordained minister, a medical professional (physician or nurse) and a lay person experienced in prayer and bible teaching. Like the CFO camps, time each day was spent on practicing with each other the lessons of prayer and healing.

In the first years Ted and Agnes were invariably the main instructors, with one of their medical friends rounding out the team. The School was founded after the Sanfords had experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and as a result the curriculum incorporated the Baptism of the Spirit and its role in healing. The School began to multiply in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1956 two branches were

⁴⁶ The Sources for this section are a taped interview with Dr. J. Howard Rhys, former director of the School of Pastoral Care (Aug. 13, 1983) as well as his article, "The School of Pastoral Care," *The Living Church*, 162 (May 30, 1971), 8-9. The web site for the School is www.schoolofpastoralcare.net/

⁴⁷ Agnes' heartfelt prayer for the renewal of the seminaries is found in her devotional work, *Twice Seven Words* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1971), 93.

begun in Texas and Ohio. One was begun in Austria in 1961, and this was followed quickly by others in England, Canada, Holland and New Zealand. The Canadian branch was particularly influential, and for a period the Anglican hierarchy in several Canadian dioceses used the School as part of their priests's continuing education program.

Mrs. Sanford as First Theologian of the Renewal

The Charismatic Renewal broke out in 1960, triggered by the publicity surrounding the Rev. Dennis Bennett's "tongues" incident at his Episcopal Church in California. It reached its crescendo in the mid 1970s. In the beginning years of the Renewal many of Mrs. Sanford's books served as the primary theological inspiration of the movement. *The Healing Light* was its first healing textbook. Two other books were also influential, *Behold Your God*, published two years before the Renewal began, but circulated among Mrs Sanford's following at CFOs and denominational churches, and *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit*, published in 1966 while the Renewal was in full bloom.

From the very beginning of the Renewal there were some who believed Mrs. Sanford's theology was "far out" and occultic. Besides the "strange" nature-to-grace theology, critics would point to her belief in the "pre-existent spirit" as proof of her unorthodoxy. Significantly, the concept of the pre-existent spirit is clearly indicated in both the Old and New Testaments. For example in Jer. 1:5, God addresses the prophet Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." (Note also: Eph. 1:4 and 2 Thes. 2:13.) The idea seems heretical to contemporary Christians because it was ruled off the theological agenda as in the Fifth century by a Byzantine Emperor who fancied himself as a great theologian, and wanted to discredit the earlier theologian Origen. His prejudice became part of the theological consensus of the Medieval Church and went unchallenged during the Reformation period.

The Rev. Ted Sanford died in 1960, and five years later Agnes moved to Monrovia, California, to be close to her children. From there she continued her teaching and speaking ministry and wrote her last books, including her autobiography, *Sealed Orders*. In California she developed what might be called her "nature" ministry, which involved praying for the non-human created order. This is a ministry ignored by most Christians and entered into only by few persons such as St. Francis and George Washington Carver.

In a story related to this author by Mrs. Barbara Schlemmon, Agnes was scheduled to give a healing lecture in a nearby town, and the minister who was to drive her found her in her home amidst her house plants with arms upraised and deeply in prayer. He asked Agnes what she was doing and she said "I'm praising the Lord

with my prayer group, and they are doing a better job!” Psalm 96:11-12 would support this unusual view:

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound, and all that is in it;
let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them.
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;
they will sing before the Lord, for he comes, (NIV)

Agnes wrote a powerful book on this aspect of her spiritual life, *Creation Waits* (1978). In it she gives multiple examples of her experiences with nature prayers. In her view, the secret to prayer power in this areas is standing in the authority of a child of God:

It is far more effective to talk directly to sea or sky, wind or storm, than simply to ask God to do this or that. We are God’s agents upon this earth. When praying for people we ask in His name and by His power, because we so often lack the necessary understanding of the people for whom we pray. In praying for nature, however, it is more effective to speak directly to wind or storm or tempest. That, after all is the way Jesus stilled the storm. “Peace, be still!”⁴⁸

Pat Robertson, of “The 700 Club,” used a similar prayer and command to veer a hurricane away from the Virginia coast. His prayer, although successful (the hurricane suddenly turned out to sea) became a point of ridicule and a negative factor in his 1988 presidential bid. Needless to say, Mrs. Sanford’s nature ministry to nature seemed especially “far out” to more traditional, cessationist influenced Christians and added ammunition to the charge that she was a shaman.

Mrs. Sanford’s later theology was quite insightful and prophetic. She felt many charismatics were immature, and divisive of the unity of the church as a whole. Her book, *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit* (1966) was written in the early years of the Renewal and there she warned her readers that receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit was “strong medicine.” A person who has a weak self-concept, or a poorly disciplined Christian life, may have serious problems handling the energies of the Holy Spirit⁴⁹ She was particularly leery of the value that the new charismatics placed on the gifts of tongues. Especially destructive, she believed, was their doctrine of “initial evidence,” derived from the older Pentecostals. She saw that this belief often produced nothing more than subconscious babble, an opinion often mentioned among charismatic leaders, but rarely written.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Agnes Sanford, *Creation Waits* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1978), 16

⁴⁹ *Healing Gifts*, 14.

⁵⁰ See David du Plessis, “Mr. Pentecost Looks to the Future,” *Charisma* (May 1985), 95.

Mrs. Sanford was particularly concerned about the damage caused by imprudent ministries of exorcism. For a period in the 1960s there circulated a teaching that any personality fault or sin was due to a demonic spirit. Thus people were being delivered from “spirits” of smoking, over-eating, criticism etc. Agnes insisted that exorcism should be the ministry of last recourse. She had witnessed damage done to persons who were put through charismatic exorcism rituals when in fact they needed counseling or inner healing.⁵¹ Eventually her suspicions of the Renewal softened. From her home in Monrovia, she learned to appreciate the “Jesus People”, those most exuberant, hippie children of the Charismatic Renewal, and her heart went out to them. Her last novel, *Route 1*, (1975) shows the Jesus People in a positive light.⁵²

Just how much her speaking engagements and writings helped to bring the Charismatic Renewal out of its initial immaturity and theological naiveté is one of those things that is impossible to quantify. She personally spoke to thousands in that decade, and touched many more through her books. She was especially influential in the Episcopal and Roman Catholic branches of the renewal. This should not be taken to mean that Mrs. Sanford was the only person of the 1960’s who had a mature theology of the Holy Spirit and gifts of the Spirit. In fact, the Renewal was blessed from the very beginning with outstanding leaders who had excellent theological training and insights.

However, by the late 1970s many charismatics were becoming leery of Mrs. Sanford’s theology. Some were unconvinced that the ministry of inner healing had any biblical warrant, more believed her theory of the pre-existent spirit was “far out” and cultic. As the Calvin-Nee theory that all psychic activity was inherently demonic became part of charismatic/evangelical consensus theology, Mrs. Sanford’s more “Catholic” theology of the levels of spiritual powers was also seen as erroneous. Thus even before the caricature of Mrs. Sanford appeared in Dave Hunt’s *The Seduction of Christianity* many leaders of the Renewal were distancing themselves from her and her theology.

Mrs. Sanford went to be with the Lord on February 21, 1982, Transfiguration Sunday. She was full of vitality and curiosity to the very end. A week before she died she planned to go up in a two-person glider and had been excited about it. To her daughter and to several close friends she said, “You know, I might not

⁵¹ *Healing Gifts*, 144, ff.

⁵² Agnes Sanford, *Route 1* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1975).

come back. I might just keep right on going!"⁵³ There seems no doubt that she knew she would continue to a higher place.

Mrs. Sanford's Place in the Charismatic Renewal

There is little doubt that in spite of the controversies she generated, Mrs. Sanford was indeed the first theologian the charismatic renewal. *The Healing Light*, issued as a Logos International paperback, became the healing text book of the early charismatic movement.⁵⁴ She disciplined many of the leadership of the charismatic renewal, including a handsome young priest named Francis MacNutt who met her at a CFO camp and eventually passed on the core of her teaching to the charismatic movement with his vastly influential works on healing.⁵⁵

The tragic rejection of Mrs. Sanford's theology by large sections of Evangelical, and charismatic leaders is a sad case of the persistence of theological conservatism confusing denominational theology and prejudices with true heresy. In every case I have outlined in this paper Mrs. Sanford took solidly, and literal biblical positions that were declared "heretical" not because they contradicted scripture, but because they were expressed in New Thought vocabulary and would not fit into the mold of cessationist influenced Evangelical theology. Mrs. Sanford and her work reminds one of the great Third Century theologian, Origen, who pioneered the discipline of Christian theology. He was rejected as a heretic by more conservative and often ignorant critics and his writings anathematized. It is only in recent decades that Origen's monumental contributions to Christian theology and his fundamental orthodoxy have been appreciated.⁵⁶ It took over a millennium to begin to clear Origen's name and appreciate his true role in Christian history. Hopefully Mrs Sanford's achievements and fundamental orthodoxy will not take that long to be reestablished.



⁵³ Story related to author by Mrs. Sanford's daughter, Mrs. Virginia Clark, in telephone conversation in Aug. of 1986.

⁵⁴ *Healing Light* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1972).

⁵⁵ See the introduction of Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1974).

⁵⁶ See the seminal work by Jean Danielou, *Origen*, Trans. by Walter Mitchell (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955).

Narrative-Rhetorical Aspects of Literary Hermeneutics
Leaving Questionable Methods Behind and Retaining What Greco-Roman
Christian Writers Appreciated and Respected

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Abstract

With regard to noticing, appreciating and appropriating authorial intended continuity, a century-old hermeneutical strategy within a contemporary revivalist and restorationist Christian movement arguably shows an interesting affinity and congruency to commonsensical interpretive ideas prevalent within narrative-rhetorical and progymnastic procedures in first-century Greco-Roman education. The nascent development of a Bible reading method within this Pentecostal/Charismatic sector of contemporary Christianity that calls attention to critical narrative connections such as plot, sequence, personification, exemplarity and repetition, with an emphasis on faith-response and experience by readers in community, could be of interest to current critical hermeneutical discussion. However, this Christian method that may be detected within global Pentecostalism is not something new, but rather somewhat of a practical and experientially confirmed interpretive procedure that bears a resemblance to what rhetorically trained and compositionally minded narrators and active readers in first-century Christianity would, I suggest, have easily understood. If contemporary Christianity should recapture this interpretive approach that is respectful of expected meaning and authorial intent, in conjunction with recognizable and confirming experiential activity of the Holy Spirit, perhaps the central christological and pneumatological concerns of New Testament writers might receive some beneficial illumination.

In concert with briefly noting the potential similarity between critical narrative connections raised by the twentieth-century Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal and the narrative-rhetorical methods taught in Greco-Roman progymnastic education, it seems appropriate to critique two interpretive methods that currently command Christian attention. They are not comparable and stem from entirely different origins. Yet they both tend to mask the potential similarity that I contend does exist between the ancient progymnastic rhetorical method and a strand of significant narrative-critical interpretation within the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.

It may be suggested that what is usually framed as an “Evangelical Historical Critical Method” is in need of narrative-critical redesign, given that it is too sus-

ceptible to and uncritical of both the presupposition of a chasm between original and later New Testament readers and of the imposition of artificial, narratively alien and disruptive temporal epochs upon Luke-Acts. These questionable “apostolic age” features of some Reformed-style interpretation, according to this method, have been insufficiently scrutinized and may be duly jettisoned. They are unlikely to foster a dynamic relationship or engagement among readers with the structural elements of texts whose authors do not operate in this propositional realm. The literary cohesion and connectedness of narrative sequence, plot, and personification required of literary minded Greco-Roman writers and readers exposed to first-century progymnastic education and rhetorical culture should not be subjugated to a method with such rational blind spots. Unless the “Evangelical Historical Critical Method” is redesigned, renewed or redeveloped, what is to be reasonably expected of communicatively minded Christian narrators by their active readers with respect to the desired rhetorical goals of clarity, conciseness, and plausibility cannot be fully realized.

Also to be questioned, with respect to authorial intention and original meaning as relevant and vital literary concepts that deserve respect, is what may be framed as a radical “Postmodernist Biblical Hermeneutic.” The overt textual relativism embedded in the secular philosophical construct of “postmodernism” runs counter to the mainstream canons of ancient literary composition. Its extreme relativism may be appraised as challenging the central claims of New Testament Christianity wherein intelligent biblical authors deserve respect. The skeptical philosophical assumption of the non-existence of objective truth within history seems especially inappropriate when it is misguidedly touted as beneficial to Christian knowledge and theology. The radical “postmodern” expectation of the illegitimacy of truth and objectivity precludes a serious interest in realistic narrative-critical concerns and is ill-suited to carefully addressing interpretive concerns within literary texts where authorial competence may be assumed. It may be suggested that the overly simplistic and poorly conceived insistence that humankind supposedly inhabits a “postmodern age” and that this pronouncement then somehow supposedly motivates the Christian adoption of a radical and shadowy interpretive approach to biblical narrative—an approach steeped in relativism and especially well suited to an agnostic or atheistic perspective toward literature that claims to express objective truth and historical veracity underpinning that truth—is difficult to reconcile with the research methodology of the wider academic community.

Introduction

Charles Kingsley Barrett reminds us that “Other studies have their place, but Christian theology is founded on the study of texts, and exegesis is founded on a

precise understanding of grammar—logic in relation to language.”¹ Authorial intent and meaning on which Christian theology is built is also detected by a recognizable strategy with regard to hermeneutical method,² which brings us to the topic at hand. Archer advocates that within the development of a century-old revivalist, restorationist, gender-neutral and multi-racial movement there can be found an authentic Christian hermeneutical approach that can be retrieved and reappropriated.³ This approach is not indebted to a strand of modern secular philosophical speculation that will remain controversial within the wider academic community where written information with authorial intent and original meaning that accurately tells and confirms truth is employed to advance a multitude of various concerns. However, in terms of the state of biblical hermeneutics today,⁴ which is beginning to explore ancient rhetorical influence upon literary composition and reading, as I have suggested in previous discussion of Archer’s thesis,⁵ such reappropriation could be a welcomed thing for biblical studies and narrative criticism.

In the present study, I would like to address two points. First, such potential reappropriation is welcome, and deserves consideration, because it serves to draw attention to the unlikely probability of some modern methods being able to reliably determine what a biblical writer—or any serious ancient writer who deserves

¹ C. K. Barrett, “J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Prolegomena*,” *Expository Times* 90 (1978), pp. 68-71 (71).

² Indeed, Hans Hübner, *Evangelische Fundamentaltheologie: Theologie der Bibel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 9, goes so far as to suggest that “Ohne Hermeneutik bleibt die Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift in dem, worum es den biblischen Autoren *eigentlich* ging, stumm!”

³ Cf. Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (JPTSUP 28; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004), passim.

⁴ Cf. Adele Berlin, “A Search for New Biblical Hermeneutics: Preliminary Observations,” in J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz (eds.), *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 195-207.

⁵ Paul Elbert, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Review Article,” *Ashland Theological Journal* 38 (2006), 111-15; idem., “Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Observations on Archer’s Progressive Proposal,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 9/2 (2006), 320-28.

respect—actually means. Or, to put it another way, for those who would present their theology through narrative and worship, “By employing more modernistic epistemological methods we undermine the credibility of our spirituality, we rob our (own) narrativity of its formative power.”⁶

Here, I appraise an “Evangelical Historical Critical Method” as an attempt by Christians at constructing an interpretive method that is in need of recalibration toward more narrative-critical sensitivity, principally because of the destructive and disruptive literary effect created by the chasmal and the epochal “apostolic age” presuppositions it uncritically hides, employs, and implicitly supports.

Another method in need of scrutiny, one with no immediately appealing or intrinsic relationship to biblical interpretation, is the questionable quasi-literary “post-modern” relativism of a supposedly “post-critical” world, a world in the fuzzy wordsmithery of “postmodern” jargon as supposedly beyond “modernity.” The attack upon objective truth and the discarding of authorial intention by philosophical relativism undermines not only the credibility of Christian experience and belief, but, ultimately, even the credible existence of objective Christian spirituality and testimony. In this scheme, texts that underpin and are harmonious with that objective experience are no more authoritative or reliable or trustworthy than any other literary presentation, whether it be the Homeric epics or writings venerating Buddha.

According to “postmodern” relativism, to take one example, there is no way to determine whether the universe is the work of Zeus, Buddha, or the biblical God. Given the philosophical shredding of commonsensical and validly established literary tenets attributable to authors and readers, no text could possibly produce knowledge or truth (the two concepts being interchangeable) that would possibly contribute to such a determination.⁷ This emanates from a fuzzy “postmodern” worldview—where the adjective “postmodern” is faddishly, simplistically and

⁶ Kenneth J. Archer, “A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology: Method and Manner,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9/3 (2007), 302-14 (306), parenthesis mine.

⁷ Nevertheless, I think ancient literary texts exist that do contribute to such a determination, not because they claim to be “inspired,” but because a reasonable and culturally sensitive interpretation of them yields a result that is harmonious and consistent with the experimental findings of modern science, cf. Paul Elbert, “Genesis 1 and the Spirit: A Narrative-Rhetorical Ancient Near Eastern Reading in Light of Modern Science,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15/1 (2006), 23-72.

unthoughtfully applied willy-nilly to morph almost anything into semantic skeptical fuzz where unexemplified theories can hide underneath stairs to nowhere. One manifestation of this worldview is the claim that it is not primarily what an author intended or what meaning a writer conveys that is very important or even relevant to the reading event. Rather one might assess how one feels after reading, since meaning is primarily in the mind of the reader.

The determination of meaning is no longer a task. This is left behind in the domain of reader response. Neither could the experimental findings of modern science—insofar as physical reality is concerned—be understood to question the authority of literary relativism and the essential irrelevance of authorial intent and original meaning. To suggest otherwise may simply mark one—among some philosophic cognoscenti—as an uninformed literary “fundamentalist,” one who is tendentious and in disrepute. Further, and of particular relevance to the Judeo-Christian faith tradition, to some philosophic cognoscenti only a “fundamentalist” would assent to objective truth as being divinely revealed to humankind in any form or format. This sentiment might be hidden and unarticulated, but this methodological tenet has deep roots. Perhaps Christian theology should exercise care and due diligence when embracing or adapting insufficiently documented literary arguments stemming from intrinsically agnostic and atheistic methodology.

The second point I would like to briefly mention is that a potential reappropriation of a Bible reading method well attuned to narrative convictions is welcome and deserves consideration because of its potential consistency with what would be the lasting result of first-century Greco-Roman progymnasmatic instruction. This lasting result may be seen as impacting the writer of Luke-Acts. This literary instruction, part of the system of Greco-Roman rhetorical education, on how to properly compose narratives and speeches within them, leads to a literary approach to active reading that sees reasonably intended authorial connections between the same subject. Since authorial intention and the desire to present meaning that original readers would understand is part and parcel of the Greco-Roman literary mindset, it is interesting that interpretation with regard to the subject of the Holy Spirit found in Five-Fold or Four-Fold Gospel proclamation is not dissimilar, with respect to attention to narrative connections, from that advocated within the stable first-century rhetorical tradition of progymnasmatic instruction.

By way of brief review, the distinctive paradigm of the Five-Fold Gospel expresses the significance of the story of Jesus and Christian experience via salva-

tion/justification, sanctification, baptism in the Holy Spirit,⁸ healing,⁹ and as soon-coming king.¹⁰ In this theological explanation of the New Testament message, the Gospels and the book of Acts share a central place and all biblical authors are believed to participate in “God’s inspired authoritative witness—scripture.”¹¹

One might ask, since Pentecostalism originated and progressed due to the logical coherence of the Five-Fold or Four-Fold Gospel message, validated by supernatural confirmation and in direct opposition to the worldview of overly rationalistic, secular philosophical and cessationistic presuppositions traditionally applied to spiritual issues within New Testament narrative and epistolary discourse, why should global Pentecostalism and the international Charismatic Renewal now uncritically embrace questionable interpretive methods unrelated to its existence, namely literary methods formulated with prominent underpinnings opposed to its *raison d’être*? How can interpretive approaches at odds with the communicative genre of the New Testament world be of assistance? For me, this is the central issue in hermeneutical critique. Hasty embrace of alien philosophically based methods, unharmonious with the literary emphases in first-century Greco-Roman rhetorical education, seems to me to be a retrograde and ill-

⁸ For an interesting treatment of one aspect of this New Testament experience of interirity by a historically prominent minister and educator, cf. Donald Gee, ‘The Initial Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit’, *Redemption Tidings* 39/22 (May 31st, 1963), 10-12. For recent treatment of various strands of evidence, cf. Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (JPTSUP 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 104-228; Paul Elbert, “An Observation on Luke’s Composition and Narrative Style of Questions,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66 (2004), 98-109.

⁹ Cf. Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (JPTSUP; Blandford Forum, Dorset: Deo, 2006). Alexander’s thesis is complemented by the biblical theology of John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (JPTSUP 13; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998).

¹⁰ This Five-Fold terminology finds foundational documentary expression in Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (JPTSUP 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 47-57, *passim*.

¹¹ Archer, “Pentecostal Way,” 311.

considered move, given that this sector of Christianity has thrived—ostensibly with the blessing of the one true biblical God—by going commonsensibly in a different direction.

Perhaps an example might illustrate this. It is observed that “Pentecostalism gave and still gives to the marginalized masses a new identity within a community where they are respected as individuals and given a reason to live. The Pentecostal emphasis on the supernatural together with its rigorist ethics proves to be a haven of protection from the horrors of bewildering secularization.”¹² Similarly, “Pentecostalism provides a sense of community of being personally recognized and welcomed, of connecting in a more permanent and warmer way with other human beings, of being treated as equal, of not being despised and marginalized in the church because one is illiterate or because one is a woman or brown or black.”¹³ Neither the chasmal and epochal interpretive approach of the “Evangelical Historical critical method,” presupposing a chasm between original and later readers and the effective existence of a “post-apostolic age” holy spirit or a “spirit of prophecy,” nor the secular erasure of objective truth by “postmodern” relativism and a radical “Postmodernistic Biblical Hermeneutic,” are employed in the missionary endeavors of Pentecostalism or the international Charismatic Renewal. Instead, right spiritual affections, transforming initiatives and a new heart¹⁴ put the Christian theologian/missionary into direct involvement among and with those poor and marginalized who suffer and who seek to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from the heavenly Jesus. There is emphatic concern for and identity with those who are suffering and those who sincerely desire to receive and be obedient to a heavenly person. Right doctrine—as important as sound doctrine is to Christianity—and speculative philosophical relativism do not of themselves alone produce these right affections or right missionary actions. One

¹² John P. Medcraft, “The Roots and Fruits of Brazilian Pentecostalism,” *Vox Evangelica* 17 (1987), 67-94 (89).

¹³ Otto Maduro, quoted by Manual A. Vasquez, “Pentecostalism, Collective Identity, and Transnationalism Among Salvadorans and Peruvians in the U.S.,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67/3 (1999), 617-36 (631).

¹⁴ Cf. Chiu Ban It, “The spiritual gifts,” in Michael Harper (ed.), *Bishops’ Move: Six Anglican Bishops share their experience of Renewal* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), 139-60; Glen H. Stassen, “Recovering the Way of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 22 (2002), 103-26.

might ask why the right affections that the Holy Spirit has wrought should now be seriously jeopardized in favor of adapting or adopting the supposedly more fashionable modern constructs of some?

Critique of an "Evangelical Historical Critical Method"

As to a working definition of method, I would suggest that a method is a comprehensible series of instructions or guidelines with a special purpose,¹⁵ the purpose in this case being to determine the intended meaning (the *intentio auctoris*) of a narrative written by an intelligent biblical author who deserves respect. Narrative criticism,¹⁶ with attention to all the visible narrative elements such as plot, story line, repetition, personification and characterization, literary cohesion and connectivity (recurring terms and themes) and exemplarity, evidently comes into play when the method is rightly applied. Critical engagement should ask if the method could be modified or redesigned in such a way so that its positive impact and proper function is increased.

¹⁵ With R. Kamitz, "Methode/Methodologie," in Josef Speck (ed.), *Handbuch wissenschaftstheoretischer Begriffe, II* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 429-33 (429); K. Lorenz, "Methode," in Jürgen Mittelstrass (ed.), *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie, II* (Mannheim: Bibliographic Institute, 1984), 876-79 (876).

¹⁶ E.g., Mark A. Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, ²1997); George J. Brooke and Jean-Daniel Kaestli (eds.), *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts* (BETL 149; Leuven: Peeters, 2000); James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005).

One of the disagreements between Evangelical Protestantism and the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements is about what Scripture is and is not.¹⁷ This disparity is accentuated because the former tradition can be generally perceived as narratively insensitive and disruptive (with respect to Luke-Acts) and manipulative of obvious authorial intent (with respect to interpersonal spiritual gifts discussed discursively by Paul). In this sense the “Evangelical Historical Critical Method” can be perceived as over emphasizing appropriate historical concerns and interests at the expense of some important narrative-rhetorical concerns in its selective exclusion of divine action. In this way the Gospel message is diminished. A series of dispensations imposed upon biblical texts and a set of epochs imposed on Luke-Acts was built on the unquestioned theory of an “apostolic age.” Evangelicals imbued with the scheme of Lukan and Pauline cessationism as absolute often seem to assume that such beliefs commission them to educate others: “The Pentecostals simply had to be educated into the modernistic thought and argument of the more ‘intellectual’ tradition.”¹⁸ However, it does not seem to be who is the most intellectually astute, but rather what presuppositions are brought to the text

¹⁷ Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Towards an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (JPTSup 14; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 94-95, stresses that “Classical Pentecostalism did not ground the authority of Scripture on inerrancy of its composition, as did the fundamentalists. On the contrary . . . the verification of Scripture’s claims was not to be found in the internal claims made by Scriptures themselves, but in the external power of the Holy Spirit transforming people’s lives in the light of those claims.” Mathew S. Clark, “Pentecostalism’s Anabaptist Roots: Hermeneutical Implications,” in *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler* (ed. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies; JPTSup 24; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 194-211 (206), observes that “Pentecostal interest in the accuracy of Scripture is based on a different concern to conservative evangelicalism: not to validate the great confessions of the church, but to inform a choice for a lifestyle of discipleship and witness.”

Land argues that “The Bible as Spirit-Word is the light that shines upon the path illuminating the journey of life as salvation and mission. The Bible was and is inspired. In the community of worship and witness, of praise and proclamation, the Word is written, living and preached. But it is not so much a textbook of propositions as it is a story of redemption in Christ by the Holy Spirit and the journey in the Spirit through Christ to the Father. The doctrines of verbal inspiration and infallibility are precipitants of a spirituality which practiced a much fuller doctrine of the Word of God” (Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 74).

¹⁸ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 64.

that is a major factor in what meaning is perceived and applied.¹⁹ Evangelical Protestants generally assume that some Lukan characters, like the women in Luke 7:36-50, exemplify repentant sinners who experience forgiveness and salvation. Pentecostals share that view. Other Lukan characters, for Evangelicals, exemplify nothing. They are merely historical events, like Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8, 14; 2:4, 33, 38-39; 8:12-18; 9:17 (a passage that according to Evangelical theology neither exemplifies nor indicates any previous tradition of Spirit-filling); and

¹⁹ Graham N. Stanton, "Presuppositions in New Testament Criticism," in I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 60-71 (62), observes that "If an individual's prejudice is so deep-seated that, in effect, a verdict is passed before the evidence is even considered, then, surely, prejudice negates the possibility of understanding a text."

In an "Evangelical Historical Critical Method" the presupposition against narrative coherency and a disconnect between original and later readers (à la the chasmal and epochal-mindset of some Calvinistically-oriented scholarship in the early twentieth century) come directly into play. Personal Spirit-reception in Lukan characters' lives are presuppositionally encapsulated or entombed in an "apostolic age." Evangelical Protestant dictums are arrived at: "Pentecost can never be repeated," or Lukan portraits of a personal Spirit-reception were osmotically "Once for all."

Other persuasive presuppositions may be identified, namely a bias against the possibility of the supernatural, doctrinal prejudice against experience and an almost exclusionary suspicion of the non-rational and the non-cognitive. If a conjunction of these presuppositions would occur, or if any one of them becomes overridingly intense, it is unlikely that a valid reading of a text like Luke-Acts, with regard to activities of the Holy Spirit in literary connection, would even be possible.

By "valid" reading I mean a reading that realistically detects Lukan expectations for Theophilus. It is obvious to me that Luke intends Theophilus to anticipate shared experience with the characters that Luke chooses to portray. Luke has both salvific experience (repentance, forgiveness, faith, conversion) and pneumatological experience (Spirit-filling, Spirit-reception by disciple-believers) in view due to the examples and precedents of each category that he employs in his personification of this event in diverse characters' lives. Assuming that Luke personally knows that Theophilus is already a believer, a circumstance that most students of Luke-Acts would agree with, Luke's narrative arrangement and personification of Spirit-baptism may have been considered especially appropriate for Theophilus.

19:1-7. Pentecostals do not share that view and find it both narratively inconsistent and revealing of hidden and unarticulated “apostolic-age” presuppositions.

Although Evangelicals and Pentecostals share some overlapping tradition, their lack of agreement about what Scripture is also plays a role in how these two faith traditions are going to interpret Scripture. When Evangelicals sneeze, some Pentecostals catch a cold; others do not, as illustrated by Archer’s willingness to initiate a critique of an “Evangelical Historical Critical Method.”²⁰ It is clear that differences exist between these two faith-traditions and that interactive discussion of particular textual portions of Scripture and hermeneutics in general could be appropriate. From the perspective of Pentecostals, there is a history of negative results stemming from the uncritical acceptance of what Evangelicals say about proper interpretation. This shame-enhancing, spiritually unproductive acceptance of what is supposedly more rational, more intellectual—with perhaps little discernable attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit and communal verification with the Holy Spirit on the part of Evangelicals²¹—might be observable today within some Pentecostalism in the marginalizing of testimony, of tarrying and in the propensity of some to be led more by their own acquisition of academic history than by the Holy Spirit, or by dreams and visions.²² On the other side of the coin, some Evangelicals bemoan the loss of influence their axiomatic cessationist presuppositions once had, as if Christianity itself had been lost.²³

Historically, I think that traditional Protestant Christianity, somewhat scholastically, did employ more of a “proof-texting system,”²⁴ whereas a more proper Bible reading method would require all of the biblical data to be gathered and har-

²⁰ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 148-54.

²¹ On these possibilities, cf. James B. Shelton, “Epistemology and Authority in the Acts of the Apostles: An Analysis and Test Case Study of Acts 15:1-29,” *The Spirit & Church* 2/2 (2000), 231-47; John Christopher Thomas, “Women, Pentecostals and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994), 41-56.

²² This is suggested from several considerations in my “The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Review Article,” *Trinity Journal* 23NS/1 (2002), 81-101.

²³ Cf. Michael Scott Horton (ed.), *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* (Chicago: Moody, 1992).

²⁴ With Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 74.

monized with respect to plot and context.²⁵ For example, Evangelicals proof-text 1 Cor 14:34 out of its context, erasing 1 Cor 11:5a and 14:39 in the process. This result satisfies a previous presupposition in the form of a principle, a principle not coincidentally aligned with secular culture, that they impose on the text.²⁶ Pentecostals are not above some proof-texting of their own, as in the case of 3 John 2, but I would suggest that the catechistic and over-reaching philosophical “apostolic age” style of interpretation is much more likely to merit a proof-texting award. Pentecostals take a much greater interest in uniting the biblical past with the present, contrary to traditional chasmal-oriented creeds, prayers and ecclesiastical dictums that imply or demand otherwise. I suggest that personal reception of the Holy Spirit by disciple-believers—according to the examples and precedents set out in Luke’s second volume—is responsible for this difference. Oneness (or Trinity) and Trinitarian Pentecostals see the first Jerusalem Pentecost and its ensuing repetitions in the ministry of disciple-believer-witnesses as a “commanded promise”²⁷ for all Christians who were and who are now afar off,

²⁵ One of the five premises of “premodern” interpretation adduced by Luke Timothy Johnson and William S. Kurz, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A Constructive Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 47-59, is that Scripture speaks harmoniously.

Just why such a working premise is necessarily “premodern” needs to be spelled out. For example, would an active literary Greco-Roman reader of the Pauline letters, who later picked up a copy of Luke-Acts, not think that these texts should speak harmoniously? To argue otherwise would be difficult. Nevertheless, this premise, an assumption against Greco-Roman rhetorical culture, of a difference between the Christian worldview and Christian expression of Luke and Paul, seems to be a foundational presupposition hidden within an “Evangelical Historical Critical Method.”

²⁶ This and other ingrained proof-texting proclivities by some Evangelicals are addressed in my *A Pastoral Letter to Theo: An Introduction to Interpretation and Women’s Ministries* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, forthcoming).

²⁷ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 91.

whether they be Jew or Gentile, a personal promise to all believers—whether they be original or later readers—beyond narrative time.²⁸

In a “Charism-Sensitive or Pentecostal/Charismatic Narrative-Critical Method,” plot would encompass the framework of a narrative and its detailed arrangement of incidents and patterns as they relate to each other. Narrative-critical aspects of all the repetitive elements of the author’s presentation would be duly considered and appropriate historicity and authorial intention would not be denied. None of these literary elements would be systematically excluded or marginalized, nor made to fit chasmal presuppositions. Neither would plot be dissected and disrupted by the imposition of divisive artificial temporal epochs on the narrative. Temporal carvings and the cocooning of narrated events to enforce “apostolic age” Protestant meaning are inappropriate, as are readings of Luke-Acts through glasses attributed to Paul that he never wore himself.²⁹ A better understanding of

²⁸ As to the syntactical setting in Lukan thought of the gift of the Holy Spirit as a “promise to as many as the Lord shall call who are afar off” at the conclusion of Peter’s speech in Acts 2, not only is it necessary to consider the intentional foregrounding of the “promise” in the preceding narrative in Luke’s double-work, and to consider the impact of Greco-Roman personification, as I mention below, but also to consider the original meaning of Luke’s own Greek-speaking and Greek-thinking with regard to his employment of an imperative-future passive combination at Acts 2:38. This syntactical combination in a conditional sentence indicates two temporally non-simultaneous events, cf. Paul Elbert, “Acts 2:38c Reconsidered: The Syntax of Imperative-Future Passive and Imperative-Present Participle Combinations in Luke-Acts and Implications in Light of the Narrative-Rhetorical Tradition,” presented at the Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting, Gregorian University, Rome, 2001.

²⁹ The result of such questionable procedures, where the Holy Spirit may be essentially marginalized or replaced as a character by a new spirit, or just willfully rewritten out of a narrative, is aptly identified by Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Mystery of Pentecost* (tr. Glen S. Davis; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 43. Cantalamessa is concerned about a procedure that results in “holding the Holy Spirit carefully outside of the true and actual life of the Church, demanding that he adapt to our truth, instead of we to his.”

(footnote continued)

plot also operates in the mind of the reader who then tends to organize and make connections between events. However, if presuppositions and “make it fit” impositions break these connections between events or exclude them from impacting readers, this understanding of narrative is lost.

Both Evangelicals and Pentecostals believe that the narrative of Luke-Acts tells what happened. The traditions share a strong sense of textual truthfulness. In the case when redaction criticism can be applied to assist what individual Evangelists may mean and be interested in doing, as in Luke’s improvements on Mark and Matthew, both traditions share a common understanding of the reasonable lack of modern precision of historicity and temporality. But in an “Evangelical Historical Critical Method” the pressure to bend Luke’s text, to essentially “proof-text” it in order to “make it fit,” appears much more intense because of adherence to undeclared presuppositions tied historically to the construct of an “apostolic age” and its interpretive ramifications and requirements. Correction and rejection of im-

However, anti-narrational carving of Luke-Acts into three divisive epochs to supposedly determine *Heilsgeschichte*—marginalizing *Pneumageschichte* and *Pfingstgeschichte*—became formally fashionable within some Protestant scholarship via the thesis of an Estonian Lutheran pastor, Heinrich von Baer, *Der Heilige Geist in den Lukasschriften* (BWANT 3/3; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926), who resisted the wise and thoughtful narrative instincts of Hermann Gunkel. Von Baer’s thesis, from the university of Greifswald, was later embellished by Hans Conzelmann, James Dunn, and Max Turner in Protestant tradition. Von Baer assumed an “apostolic age” and an apostolic-age Holy Spirit as a pre-condition for his simplistic and narratively insensitive epochal theory of salvation that accordingly began for Lukan characters at the first Jerusalem Pentecost. For example, Luke 7:36-50 is not cited in von Baer’s thesis, evidently because it cannot be proof-texted to make it fit his scheme of epochal imposition.

Acta-Forschung in Roman Catholic tradition over the past eighty years takes little notice of von Baer’s thesis. It is infrequently mentioned or employed. For example, it is not cited in sources of “Apostelgeschichte und lukanische Theologie,” by Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte, I. Teil: Einleitung. Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1 – 8,20* (HTKNT 5/1; Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 29-48.

Von Baer’s thesis illustrates uncritical over-catering to the Reformers’ cessationistic pneumatology and to a poorly considered proof-texting process wherein discursively disconnected Pauline snippets are extracted and inserted into narratively disconnected Lukan snippets to supposedly find out what Luke means.

balanced and inaccurate procedures that are unflattering to Luke's intelligence are needed. Perhaps developing a "Charism-Sensitive or Pentecostal/Charismatic Narrative-Critical Method" might be helpful. Not until Evangelicals are ready to articulate "full disclosure" regarding what approaches they are taking—what presuppositions they are assuming—will they be able to articulate an interpretive method that "will lift us out of the quagmire in which we find ourselves."³⁰

It was well known to ancient literary culture that a narrative elicits a dynamic interpretive relationship between text and readers. One may note as well that the great narratives of Homer have long been read by classicists in just this manner, similar to how Homer was read in the progymnastic stage of Greco-Roman education before and within the New Testament period.³¹ But now Pentecostals are engaged in a battle of interpretation with their Evangelical Protestant forerunners who inherited and have embellished both an exclusionary tradition between Luke and Paul with respect to the Holy Spirit and a chasmal division between original and later readers of both of these authors. These features of "apostolic-age" hermeneutics are not helpful and may be overdue for reconsideration.³²

As a methodological example of one probable feature within a "Charism-Sensitive or Pentecostal/Charismatic Narrative-Critical Method," Shelton,³³ Thomas,³⁴ and Archer³⁵ call attention to the role of the community, in concert with the quite possible activity of the Holy Spirit—recognizable and discernable

³⁰ So, Joel B. Green, "Interpretation, Reflection, Formation: Unfinished Business," in Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, and Anthony C. Thiselton (eds.), *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 437-51(447).

³¹ Cf. Ronald F. Hock, "Homer in Greco-Roman Education," in Dennis R. MacDonald (ed.), *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2001), 56-77.

³² With respect to some Evangelical Protestants, a recent five year dialogue with them is reported in Paul Elbert, "Pentecostal/Charismatic Themes in Luke-Acts at the Evangelical Theological Society: The Battle of Interpretive Method," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 12 (2004), 181-215.

³³ Shelton, "Epistemology and Authority in the Acts of the Apostles," *passim*.

³⁴ Thomas, "Women, Pentecostals and the Bible," *passim*.

³⁵ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 156, 182-91.

activity that could be guiding and helpful—with respect to a Scriptural text. The situation in Acts 15 provides a solid example or basis for this suggestion. When a difficult issue arises, a matter that is not made entirely clear to some by an appeal to texts, texts on which there may be conflicting opinions, the collective wisdom of individuals within the Spirit-filled community, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, may play a positive role over time in understanding what a biblical writer meant in the setting of his original concern and what the Holy Spirit would advise or endorse in a contemporary setting. This of course does not imply or even suggest that interpretation of the text resides solely in the mind of a reader. When a certain contextual meaning may not be entirely clear, surely the Holy Spirit and the community together, through testimony, prophecy and other charisms and through collective wisdom, could reach a consensus with regard to a contemporary circumstance. However, this will not be the case, for example, in determining the meaning of John 3:16 or Rom 3:23. For most Scriptures, a rational, studious, and multi-contextual approach will yield an understandable and highly probable outcome. There is no need to deny that objective truth can be contained in Scripture. Biblical scholarship is an ongoing task. The fact that biblical writers are intelligent, competent, appear to be making serious effort to communicate effectively and obviously believed that their preservation, presentation, and interpretation of events were able to provide objective truth about God assists the hermeneutical task and should not be discarded.

In developing the different interpretive method that I am suggesting, some disagreement may be expected and this needs to be entered into in an atmosphere of gentleness and respect. In what will be controversial territory for many Pentecostals and Evangelicals, as well as for many throughout world Christendom and in Judaism, there are some who would draw a marked distinction between an author's intended meaning and a meaning that might later be determined by readers. This theory is being taken to extremes by a strand of contemporary secular philosophy and may unduly influence some. For example, Archer is skeptical of the following construct: "Once the authorial intention is uncovered (say, by encircling levels of contextual exegesis), which is then argued to be the true meaning of the text, one may apply it to the contemporary church. This application of past meaning, however, would be the *significance* of the text for the contemporary reader. The significance of the text should not be confused with the intended *meaning* of the author. The significance of the text will become the different ap-

plications based on the intended meaning, but the meaning always remains fixed and determined.”³⁶

According to Archer, this construct is wrongheaded because it adopts a “modernistic historical paradigm as the defining arbiter of truth.”³⁷ Just what Archer’s ahistorically sounding statement indicates is bound to be unclear, since what has happened in history, when truthfully reported, can be a basis for truth.³⁸ Further,

³⁶ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 148-49 (parenthesis mine). This construct quoted above is one that Archer proposes to be deceptive and insufficient. *To the contrary*, Robert P. Menzies, “Jumping Off the Postmodern Bandwagon,” *Pneuma: Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 16/1 (1994), 115-20 (118), presses a cogent and convincing argument in support of the construct set out above, namely that “The distinction between the meaning of the text and the numerous applications or significances it may have in situations and cultures is necessary if we are to restrain ourselves from distorting the text. Unfortunately, this distinction is lost in the postmodern paradigm.”

³⁷ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 148.

³⁸ Several conversations with Archer have helped me understand what a “modernistic historical paradigm” is to him and why, accordingly, he thinks that it cannot be a “defining arbiter of truth.” To begin with Archer defines a concept of “Modernity (Modernism)” as follows: “A nineteenth- and twentieth-century western cultural worldview that was an intensive extension of Enlightenment beliefs. It is characterized by strong belief in human progress through scientific, rationalistic reasoning from the perspective that a person is neutral and objective. *Scientific and historical verification were the means of validating all truth claims.* Modernism was the attempt of some Christians to bring Christianity into harmony with the beliefs of Modernity. The reconfiguration of traditional Christian thought into acceptable modernistic concepts produced Liberalism and Fundamentalism” (*Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 198 [italics mine]).

The highlighted portion is the key to his statement that a “modernistic historical paradigm” cannot be a “defining arbiter of truth.” In my opinion, Archer is reacting to the exclusion, by some Christians in the past and in the present, of personal experience as a source of true knowledge within charismatic Christianity. Within global Pentecostalism and the international Charismatic Renewal, personal experience is widely believed to be able to convey revelatory information and experience that can be reasonably evaluated to be spiritually helpful, valuable and true. This information is Scripturally seasoned. So, there is immediate disagreement with those Christians—mainly some Evangelical Protestants—who excluded and who exclude this experience. However, labeling those Christians as “Fundamentalists” may not be the most accurate means of defining them, perhaps “Lukan and Pauline Cessationists” might be more apropos.

(footnote continued)

to assess the aforementioned construct as “deceptive and insufficient”³⁹ seems to suggest that an author cannot have an intended meaning, which is unbelievable in itself. For Archer, the supposed deception and insufficiency of the construct lies elsewhere, namely in his claims that “Texts have meaning only as they are read and used by communities of readers,” that “Meaning is created in the very process of dialogue with a text” and that “Meaning is not something we discover then appropriate. Meaning is something we construct.”⁴⁰

However, to suggest that the role of the reader or the reader’s community is so great in the act of interpretation that an author’s work and effort is erased or obliterated and is really of little or no import cannot be correct. Cultural and historical analysis, together with contextual exegesis that is sensitive to narrative-rhetorical concerns, provides necessary controls on a reader’s possible subjectivity; a Scriptural text has limits; it cannot mean anything.⁴¹ Unless this theoretical stance can be well illustrated via convincing illustrative textual examples (Archer does not provide any), I suspect that it will be difficult for most Christians to believe that it is correct, or that it is related to the Holy Spirit and to biblical writers. One might ask, how do we know that human perception will be so active and so reliable in the reading event that an intelligent author’s meaning and intent no

My input on this point is that the scientific method and historical research that throw light on the past have nothing whatever to do with the practice of Christianity. Accordingly, there is no need to posit an age of “modernity” within the affairs of humankind because some Christians did behave in the manner that Archer cites. Employment of this characterization of Christian history is insufficiently precise when addressing important details and ideas that everyone wants to understand. Further, the Enlightenment was beneficial to humankind in several respects. In other words, Archer’s categorizations are over extended in their explanatory range and introduce nebulosity. Generally, they make sense, but they may be too general for effective usage in discussion that needs to be more precise for everyone’s benefit. *Lastly, it is certainly not correct to suggest that the scientific community—past or present—ever believed that its methodology could address spiritual matters.*

³⁹ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 149.

⁴⁰ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 149, 154.

⁴¹ So too, Hannah K. Harrington and Rebecca Patten, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Postmodern Literary Theory,” *Pneuma: Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 16/1 (1994), 109-114 (113-14).

longer have a significant role? Or, has this claim that originates in secular literary theory of twentieth-century philosophy, where it was not adequately tested in the first place, been prematurely appropriated? If so, perhaps its philosophical roots should be thoroughly examined to appraise its relevance and the wisdom of its hasty adoption to Christian theology.

The fact that Archer provides no biblical or literary examples to substantiate such sweeping claims about intelligent and competent authors would be astonishing to participants in large sectors of the wider academic community. However, if they are paying any attention to “postmodern” speculation, this is something they already know. My own search for any worthwhile examples to support such theoretical claims within the so-called “postmodern” literature shows very clearly that Archer is no exception here. He is repeating a tradition that is essentially bereft of solid examples of an author’s lack of intent and of communication of original meaning, as contrasted with a reader’s uninhibited and pleasurable construction of a valid meaning that is not already present in the text.

Repeating tradition is something that thesis writers often do. Some of this is to be expected by the nature of the exercise. Foremost, however, it is up to thesis supervisors and established professionals to challenge the repetition of what somebody advances as a new thesis within their own professional ranks. Is it right? Is it believable? Is it supported by evidence? Does it have literary documentation? Is it supported by concrete examples that are convincing, credible and plausible? If not, should it be repeated ad nauseam? These are primarily the concerns, obligations, and responsibilities of the profession itself, not of postgraduate students and thesis writers. Foremost, it is a professional concern and obligation to inculcate and propagate attitudes of “How do we know?” and “Why do we believe?” If an established profession is not taking care of its own housekeeping, thesis writers cannot be expected to do it for them.

I patiently have looked in the professional philosophic literature produced by “postmodern” theorists for these necessary examples to support claims that meaning is primarily in the mind of readers and that authorial intention is supposedly obtuse and to be evacuated. *They are not there*. Perhaps inventive philosophers might not have assumed that overly indulgent colleagues and/or ensuing students would allow such claims to be passed on without critical engagement. Perhaps they expected colleagues and students to challenge their speculative notions, to see if they might be verified. Nevertheless, imitation and uncritical repetition can happen. (As an example, I once was able to convince a physics student—with no questions or challenges from him—that the phases of the Moon occurred because the Earth’s shadow fell upon it!) As a physicist-theologian in the scientific tradition and an explorer of philosophical constructs, I expected to

eventually find examples somewhere *in plentitude*, given the overarching literary claims advanced as if they were the assured results of scholarship, claims imitated and repeated by “postmodern” talkers and writers.

What I have found, however, is something utterly different, if even anything worth mentioning. One might occasionally encounter something perhaps approaching an example, like a New Testament passage lifted out of its narrative context and subjected to a convoluted discussion, perhaps comparing it to a passage from Alice in Wonderland. No convincing conclusion is ever reached—assumptions are built upon assumptions, hand-waving rules and professional housekeeping is overly dormant. No one ever writes, as the wider academic community would expect, “according to the following well known examples, we can confidently assert the literary theory that . . .” *This academic emperor has no clothes.*

Modification of such emphatic claims on meaning created by readers instead of primarily by authors could, hopefully, begin to flow from an awareness or recognition of the dearth or non-existence of convincing and persuasive examples of this strand of literary “postmodern” philosophy. The inventors of this speculation, whom I interact with below, presented themselves as “postmodern” theorists using various ploys of wordsmithery, perhaps the most intimidating one being the talk of a “postmodern” world. To suggest that an interpreter—let’s say a Greco-Roman active reader—helps create meaning and, especially, that a text “only” has meaning as it is read by that reader, finds no grounding in concrete and convincing biblical examples so as to be adapted to Christian theology.

It will no longer suffice to direct me to another book and tell me that if I look harder and read more I will “get it,” as if these controversial claims about authors and readers somehow represents a sweeping, grandiose, and supposedly obvious fact. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, after close inspection, for me, it really is a duck. *I think I understand what I am looking at, namely at unverified, unsubstantiated jargonizing that is unexemplified.* Even as a literary possibility these emphatic claims find no known cogent support from specific examples from ancient and respected narratives that first-century rhetorical students would be reading and discussing and that the world’s literary community has studied for centuries. I am sure that educated Greco-Roman writers who took pen and papyrus or parchment in hand to record, interpret, explain and proclaim the Gospel would find such claims by modern secular philosophers of literary theory difficult to reconcile with their own literary projects and with what they rightfully expected their readers to understand.

Since narrative criticism is concerned with meaningful relations within the text itself, to suggest that this intended authorial meaning only occurs in the world of

a reader, and is not already fixed in the text by an intelligent author, much less an inspired author, will require precise argument from specific examples. These have not been proffered by the inventors of “postmodern” theory, let alone by their students. Until then, the aforementioned construct of making significant applications of an author’s original meaning cannot be easily dismissed as at all deceptive and insufficient. *In fact, it is neither.* Since a multitude of competent authors, ancient and modern, will be read and understood as making their meaning clear, supposed exceptions in their work where viable meaning can “only” be achieved through an overt interpretive act on the reader’s part, through a reader’s special knowledge, must be set out by way of clear example lest the inadequately examined theory of some gets way ahead of itself. Time has passed and such theory is well ahead of itself.

Leaving controversial theory behind for the moment and, importantly, welcoming Evangelicals into the conversation, we might take note of Archer’s purpose, namely that “We praise the Lord who saves, sanctifies, heals, Spirit baptizes and is coming for us. The central narrative convictions of our story are doxological testimonies that shape our community. . . . Pentecostal theology must be done in a holistic integrative manner. We can be more creative in our articulation of the Gospel. This may lead to important insights missed by other traditions as well as necessitate a revision of our story. Furthermore, a Pentecostal narrative theology would have immediate benefits for the Pentecostal community by shaping and reshaping its identity through a critical engagement of its story. A Pentecostal theology structured around the Five-Fold Gospel would make an important contribution to the Pentecostal communities, but not necessarily the definitive contribution. For surely the Spirit has more to say and ways to say it.”⁴²

Neither Archer nor I want to attempt to develop an interpretive method that “entirely accepts the pluralistic relativism of Postmodernism.”⁴³ We would insist, however, that the reader must not subjugate a passage to secular or cultural

⁴² Archer, “Pentecostal Way,” 312, 314. A New Testament theology structured around the Five-Fold Gospel has yet to be written. Having taught New Testament theology, I suspect that such an endeavor would turn out to be interestingly different than, for example, I. Howard Marshall’s *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2004). I suspect that perhaps more unity and less diversity among the witnesses would be found with respect to pneumatology and that more individuality among the Evangelists might be detected.

⁴³ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 153.

norms, nor try to “make it fit” a previous ideology. In particular, the marginalizing of the narrative character of Scripture in some Evangelical theology in order to extract propositional statements cannot be sustained.⁴⁴ In this vein, as I have argued, the supposed difference or diversity between the pneumatology of the epistles of Paul and the later composition of Luke-Acts must be reconsidered.⁴⁵

Further, the reader or the reader’s community must not approach Scripture so as to extract from it some disembodied principle supposedly hidden in the text—a principle that a biblical author or authors probably never intended or would not even probably contemplate—and then turn this into the authoritative and absolute “word of God.” The proof-texting and cultural extraction of 1 Tim 2:12 may come to mind here. A sensible interpretive method should explicitly disallow this tactic by its very nature. Lukan and Pauline cessationism might also be curbed thereby. In all these particular areas, a traditional “Evangelical Historical Critical Method” should be reconfigured and renamed. As a continuing interpretive practice among many Evangelicals indicates, the temporal chasm inserted between New Testament authors and their later readers with respect to the work of the Holy Spirit—in Luke’s case even between his characters and his original read-

⁴⁴ So too, Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 106. Of course many Evangelicals do not encourage exegesis by proof-texting or the extraction of disembodied principles. Note, for example, the sincere desire to make the best attempt possible to understand a Scriptural author’s intended meaning as “that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intention of its author/editor and the probable understanding of that text by its intended readers” (William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Dallas, TX: Word, 1993], 133). Note too the reasonable realization that “We can apply interpretive controls only if we seek as our primary goal the meaning that would have made sense to the original writer and readers” (Klein *et al.*, *Introduction*, 135). This commonsensical approach has a time-honored history and emulates the efforts of the great classical grammarians, cf. Eduard Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik, auf der Grundlage von Karl Brugmanns Griechischer Grammatik, II: Syntax und syntaktische Stilistik* (4th. Edition; ed, Albert Debrunner; München: Beck, 1975), *passim*.

⁴⁵ Cf. Paul Elbert, “Possible Literary Links Between Luke-Acts and Paul’s Letters Regarding Spirit-Language,” in Thomas L. Brodie, Dennis R. MacDonald, and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Intertextuality in the New Testament: Explorations of Theory and Practice* (New Testament Monographs 16; Sheffield: Sheffield-Phoenix, 2006), 226-54

ers—is an interpretive act by contemporary readers that mistakenly leads to the manipulation or the outright erasure of the original meaning of many New Testament passages. A critical examination of the impact of Evangelical pre-understandings built upon the semi-theological conception of an “apostolic age” in their faith tradition would be a good place to start the redesign.

Critique of a Radical “Postmodernist Biblical Hermeneutic”

As a physicist-theologian, when I first learned that I was supposed to believe that I was living in a “postmodern” world, I immediately wondered how and by whom such a worldview characterization was reached. I also took an interest in discovering what it meant and on what was it based. Upon investigation I was astonished to find that philosophers of religion had decided to divide up the world into “modern” and “postmodern” categories based on the simplistic notion that the advent of Einstein’s general theory of relativity, along with the tiny simultaneous uncertainties between certain dynamical variables in quantum physics supposedly marked a dividing point. According to them, the scientific method of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton lead to the scientific characterization of physical reality as “modern.” This would presumably include thermodynamics and the disciplines of engineering and technology. Atomic, nuclear and particle physics, plus other scientific disciplines like physical chemistry that made use of quantum mechanics, would be “postmodern.”

As far as I am aware, no physicists were consulted as to the veracity of this overly simplistic philosophical dichotomization as a basis for controversial theories about literary relativism that have nothing whatsoever to do with physical reality. The scientific method as used by physicists and their colleagues in the scientific and engineering communities, and less exactly in humanities like sociology, psychology and elsewhere, is a method that eliminates doubt. Invention without testing is not science. Science must be construed as real, if sometimes incomplete, knowledge. Sometimes it is able to eliminate all doubt. Sometimes not all doubt can be eliminated, but a respectable level of inexactness reasonably suggests a correct interpretation. Einstein’s general theory of relativity has been tested experimentally over time in a number of entirely convincing ways. Now there is no doubt that it is the correct theory.

The “postmodern” literary theory that authorial intention is nil and that meaning is only to be constructed by readers, as I have stated above, entirely lacks the necessary elimination of doubt via exemplarity. This is more than a very serious defect; it is a fatal flaw. Therefore, I suspect that is why inventive humanities scholars never ventured across campus to try out their pet theories on students actively using literary compositions written by scholars who expect readers to

grasp their authorial intent, and most certainly not to construct their own meaning. When “postmodern” theorists travel by air, I doubt that they look out the window and say to themselves, “I hope that these big engines under the wings were designed and built according to how I taught my students to read literary information.” Here, they don’t reject the “modern” and invent the “postmodern.” Now, in the real world, not just the world of talk, they like “Cartesian modernity.” Here, it does not necessitate the need for “ahistorical detachment.” The pejorative philosophical characterization of modern science as “immanentism” seems forgotten.

In any case, the “deconstruction” contained in the notion of “postmodern” literary relativism, where authorial intention is marginalized or erased—and where playing word games implies that the goal of reading is to make one pause to see how one feels, not to comprehend meaning—is in no way connected to any aspect of modern physics. Also, such abstract and controversial theories about how written information may be perceived, philosophically charming to inventors who obviously had a deeper secular agenda, bears absolutely no relationship or connection to classical physics or to any scientific, engineering or technological discipline. While the scientific and engineering academies in the world’s public universities were busy using the scientific method—which depends on objective truth that occurs now and in the past because of the continuing physical properties of the real world revealed by experimentation and observation—a small group of insular philosophers were headed off in the opposite direction.⁴⁶

Again, Einstein’s general theory is believed to be true because it has been extensively verified by a series of repeatable experiments. There is no belief-system in science prior to experimental confirmation, something that some philosophers might take to heart. Physicists are not prone to exhibit professional “belief” in a theory of macro-evolution because evolutionary biologists say that there is an undiscovered, unexplained, and unobserved mechanism of increasing complexity

⁴⁶ Some brief thoughts on this are offered in Elbert, “Globalization of Pentecostalism,” 95. For an essentially praise-oriented assessment of some basic “postmodern” tenets, but one that is so lopsided so as to fail even to mention the efforts of “postmodernism” to rationalize positions by claiming supposed analogies with modern science, cf. James K. A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (The Church and Postmodern Culture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 18-21, *passim*. Smith’s zeal to convince Christians that “postmodernism” exhibits a “deep affinity with central Christian claims” (22), may have overshadowed some pertinent facts that are unhelpful to his thesis.

that must account for all observable life forms.⁴⁷ They will assess claims, but, for the most part, will not rush to the ultimate stage of “belief” without considerable experimental evidence from examples that are unambiguous and convincing. The presupposition of the non-existence of God may also be reassessed, given the discovery of a cosmic beginning in 1964.⁴⁸ This is another “belief” issue that can effect the paradigm of exclusive naturalism.

Further, the nature of time as a dimension, something whose intrinsic nature depends on the relative motion of the observer and the observed, offers nothing whatever to support the philosophical notion that objective truth is not present in physical reality or in historical reality. Further, while some “postmodern” philosophers and theologians, who have not done the necessary work to get into the details, engage in empty talk of “collapsing wave functions,” the understanding of physicists today who work in numerous experiments involving the quantum properties of light is that the intrinsic nature of the microcosm itself simply precludes the simultaneous knowledge of certain dynamic variables. This tiny quantum uncertainty has nothing whatever to do with positive knowledge of the

⁴⁷ A molecular biologist appears not to have forgotten everything he learned in physics classes when he demonstrates by way of examples—in the face of over-extended and repeated assertions of evolutionism and exclusive naturalism that go beyond theory to true belief too quickly—that concepts of random mutation and natural selection cannot explain the series of physically unlikely events in the history of life on Earth, cf. Michael J. Behe, *The Edge of Evolution: The Search for the Limits of Darwinism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

⁴⁸ Agnostic astronomer Robert Jastrow, describing this discovery, quipped that “For the scientist who had lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries” (*God and the Astronomers* [New York: Norton ²1992], 107).

physicality of the rest of the universe.⁴⁹ Moreover, the precision and predictability of what we would call laws of nature, like the second law of thermodynamics in open systems, do not break down anywhere in the large structure of the cosmic machine nor in molecular machines within cells. It might be recalled as well that one of the great successes of quantum mechanics was Dirac's ability to predict the existence of the positron (the positive electron which was subsequently discovered). Here, quantum physics led, as it often does experimentally today, to a quantitative and well-verified prediction, *not* to the extinguishment of objective truth or to physical relativism.

The philosophers of religion and of secular literary theory who invented the supposed "modern" and "postmodern" dichotomies evidently did so for their own purposes, to advance their own innovative views. They simply used features of the real world in an incorrect and naïve manner to try and make their theories credible within their own academic niche. They find it easy to talk and not bring physicists into the conversation. Their philosophical claims are not motivated by science in any way and these inventors of highly controversial approaches to lit-

⁴⁹ So-called "postmodern" theologians and philosophers now attempting to influence the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements with such ideas might realize that Heisenberg was not thinking about how his discovery would later be grossly misused by others to invent splashy and controversial claims of literary relativism. His own words are appropriate: "The physicist must postulate in his science that he is studying a world which he himself has not made and which would be present, essentially unchanged, if he were not there. . . . we see that the statistical nature of the laws of microscopic physics cannot be avoided, since any knowledge of the 'actual' is—because of the quantum-theoretical laws—by its very nature an incomplete knowledge. The ontology of materialism rested upon the illusion that the kind of existence, the direct 'actuality' of the world around us, can be extrapolated into the atomic range. This extrapolation is impossible, however" (Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* [World Perspectives 19; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958], 144-45).

For an explanation of the basic ideas for laypersons, cf. Richard P. Feynman, "Probability and Uncertainty – the Quantum Mechanical view of Nature," in his *The Character of Physical Law* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1965), 127-48; Richard P. Feynman, "Basic Physics," in his *Six Easy Pieces: Essentials of Physics Explained by Its Most Brilliant Teacher* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 23-45. For helpful context, cf. Gordon Kane, *The Particle Garden: Our Universe as Understood by Particle Physicists* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 1-40.

erature should not be taken seriously on this score, as Poirier and Lewis demonstrate to those with Pentecostal/Charismatic interests.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, I want to be clear that I entirely support philosophers of religion and of literature being free to propose and discuss whatever they want. My advice to them is not to misuse science in the process. Misusing science to justify and make their notions attractive to outsiders is improper. This gives the impression that they are trying to impose their controversial literary “postmodern” theories upon the scientific and engineering communities. Since these theories—the ones under scrutiny here—would be appraised there as ridiculous and nonsensical, this tactic of justification via scientific analogy will backfire and cannot be in the best interest of philosophy as an academic discipline. Perhaps this is why Smith’s project, *Who’s Afraid?*, ignores this subject altogether. Perhaps someone who already is an inhabitant of a “postmodern” culture and a “postmodern” church is reluctant to risk a topic that might contribute to the unmasking of the Wizard of Oz while encouraging Christians to step onto and keep traveling the yellow brick road. Nevertheless, if urging this distinctively contemporary philosophical approach to literary composition and communication upon Christendom is misguided, as I suspect that it ultimately is, we may look back and ask whether most philosophers do not have something better to offer.

However, irrespective of what philosophers like Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault may assert about historical reality or literary communication, humankind today lives in a world of science and technology.⁵¹ This circumstance and characterization is very unlikely to change. From my Christian perspective, the possibility might be suggested that perhaps the biblical God is modestly initiating dramatic

⁵⁰ It is encouraging that finally some other voices from within the theological community are recognizing this truth and speaking up in a quantitative manner, cf. John C. Poirier and B. Scott Lewis, “Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics: A Critique of Three Conceits,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15/1 (2006), 3-21. One of the conceits that Poirier and Lewis competently address is “Postmodernism, the Miraculous, and Quantum Physics,” 6-11. They expose the hoax that “postmodern” relativism is supported by quantum physics.

⁵¹ Perhaps a brief perusal of the following might serve to illustrate this widespread awareness, cf. Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990); John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); idem., *Faith, Science & Understanding* (London: SPCK/New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

new natural revelation of his creative power for those in humankind that are paying attention to recognize and appreciate.⁵² Of course, to some that are overly indulgent to agnostic/atheistic methodology, the suggestion that humankind might be considered to have entered into an “Age of the Glimpse of God” within a world of science and technology will seem completely absurd. But, if so, let me caution them that this is a suggestion, not a claim of conclusive evidence.⁵³ Also, I do not share the automatic methodological perspective of some that the biblical God would not or did not interact with life at any time in over a billion years of life-history on Earth to make anything, or that one poorly understood mechanism explains all or that exclusive naturalistic processes can satisfactorily account for all experimental observations to date. I attempt to reason from the experimental findings of modern science. Also, I take Christian theology to begin with the

⁵² My suggestion is that we might consider ourselves as living in an “Era of the Glimpse of God,” possibly inaugurated in 1964 for world attention, cf. Elbert, “Globalization of Pentecostalism,” 96. This former suggestion might be complemented by the implications drawn from ongoing investigations of the temporally abrupt explosions of dissimilar complex animals in the Ediacaran and Cambrian geological periods. The prospect that a new law of physics may be discovered that could validate the self-organization and increasing complexity required for these striking radiations of different animals to occur, very unusual and sudden worldwide events that cannot be explained by changing environmental conditions alone, as well as to validate cellular “evolution,” seems bleak.

⁵³ In the process of experimentation and observation within the scientific method, ambiguities may not be able to be removed. So there is the presence of doubt and one is content with the weight of a reasonable suggestion based on what experimental evidence is available for interpretation. My suggestion of an “Era of the Glimpse of God” falls in this category and cannot be fully discussed here due to limitations of space. However, I might note some similarity, some parallel nature, of my suggestion with the efforts to determine whether sedimentary rocks yield unambiguous evidence of carbon-based life some 3.820 to 3.840 billion years ago, which would be the oldest indications of life on Earth to date, cf. John M. Eiler, “The Oldest Fossil or Just Another Rock,” *Science* 317 (24 August 2007), 1046-47. For argument against life before that time in the Hadean geological period, cf. “Extreme Life,” in Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, *Origins of Life: Biblical and Evolutionary Models Face Off* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 171-81.

starting point of Christian faith and to be done in the light of the contemporary faith of the Church.⁵⁴

In any event, it is my opinion that there is little evidence, if any, that may be construed so as to claim, and indeed confidently assert, that humankind currently inhabits some vague “postmodern world” where objective truth and historical reality is supposedly illegitimized or voided because of notions of literary relativism. In my opinion, such worldview language functions as a tool of wordsmithery to justify these philosophical notions, notions that were originally held by the inventors in their reaction to modern science and who sought a respectable framework through which to propagate them as scholarly results, bereft of examples.

It is easy, however, to see why physicists were ignored while unsubstantiated talk about their work was employed to supposedly make credible what would be seen as incredible. There is no “po-mo” science, if I might preempt an adjective from the frivolous socio-jargon of “postmodern” theologians. The idea that objective truth cannot be conveyed in the literature of intelligent authors and that meaning rests only with the reader, and not essentially with a competent author, would be perceived by the scientific and technological community, as well as by the majority of the world’s thinking community, as bizarre. This would be especially so if the camouflaging husk of worldview wordsmithery is peeled away. Objections to philosophic quasi-literary theory and to adopting interpretive methods unhelpful to Christian theology, and to Pentecostal/Charismatic theology in particular, are not strawmen. The fuzzy “postmodern” conception cannot be sold as fashionable by claiming that it somehow provides a philosophical space wherein it is meaningful to speak of encountering the transcendent. *Christians should realize that biblical Christianity already does that, the Holy Spirit making texts relevant for life*, and say, “No sale.”

To the contrary, instead of “no sale,” we now observe a new commercial enterprise that, in its first volume, Smith’s *Who’s Afraid?*, essentially exploits the results of past philosophical notions that science is supposedly nihilistic (following

⁵⁴ Perhaps I am somewhat similar in outlook, with respect to faith being the starting point for Christian theology that is then conducted throughout in the light of faith, to Michael C. McGuckian, “The Role of Faith in Theology: A Critique of Lonergan’s Method,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 71/3 & 4 (2006), 242-59.

the theories of Heidegger from his *Sein und Zeit* [1927] that “language is the house of being” and that things are a derivative of language), that the textual world is walled off from reality (following the theories of Derrida) and that promoting “postmodern” relativism is beneficial for Christianity.⁵⁵ Smith claims that “postmodern” theorists and their formulas for understanding how texts should be understood have been misread and inappropriately sloganized, to wit: “there is nothing outside the text” (Derrida); postmodernism is “incredulity toward meta-narrative” (Lyotard); “power is knowledge” (Foucault).⁵⁶

Derrida’s walling off of the text does not correlate in any way with the Reformers’ concept of *Sola Scriptura*. This kind of comparison is unreliable. Saying that the understandability of Scripture with “meaning that is objectively there—available for the taking” necessarily comports with modern isolationist deportment⁵⁷ is a fabrication. Community and the Holy Spirit may assist in some difficult cases, but the understandability of the Evangelists—because they are interpreting events in what they believe to be a truthful manner—does not require that the community in turn must always play a central role in interpretation. Calvin, for example, stressed that the Holy Spirit brings texts to life and helps build faith. The texts were not walled off from spiritual reality in the perception of an individual disciple-believer.⁵⁸ *It is Christian faith and the Holy Spirit that enable a Christian to obtain meaning in and from the text.* How would the absence of faith and Spirit affect a non-believer’s interpretation of such a text? He would also be able to use rhetorical principles to determine meaning and an author’s intent. Yet,

⁵⁵ *Contra*, John C. Poirier, “Why I’m Still Afraid: A Response to James K.A. Smith’s *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 69 (2007), 175-84.

⁵⁶ Smith’s project is designed to show that there is a “cultural shift” that supposedly makes it possible for Christians to appreciate these secular assertions of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault (*Who’s Afraid?*, 23-24). This “culture” of a supposed “postmodern church” is up-front worldview wordsmithery imposed onto the real world of the readers as an ill-defined prelude. This presupposed environmental prelude—more undefined than ill-defined—then allegedly fits Smith’s dubious Christianized adaptation of the philosophers’ agendas.

⁵⁷ So Smith, *Who’s Afraid?*, 57.

⁵⁸ Cf. Paul Elbert, “Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts,” in Richard Gamble (ed.), *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin: Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (vol. 8; New York/London: Garland, 1992), 303-31, *passim*.

he would miss out on spiritual meaningfulness. Invoking Derrida's theory of a "postmodern" community does not help Christians in their community and is totally unnecessary and superfluous.

Lyotard's attitude toward a meta-narrative like the Bible, colored by his thinking that all experience is interpretation, is a far cry from biblical hermeneutics. Smith's simple argument is that the centurion's claim that Jesus was truly the Son of God (Matt 27:54) is an interpretation. This is simply stating the obvious. Matthew understood that (11:27 and his use of Son of Man support this). But Matthew selects this statement to impress his readers with the point that he (Matthew) also believes this truth claim. That is his authorial intent and the original meaning of the centurion's statement about Jesus—like reading a road sign—is clear, as this title, the related Son of Man, and the development of New Testament christology in general, strongly suggests. Neither Lyotard nor Smith seems to appreciate these aspects of biblical study and hermeneutics. Smith's claim that Lyotard pushes us to "recover the narrative character of the Christian faith"⁵⁹ is extreme. *It is Christian faith and biblical scholarship within the Christian community that pushes Christians here, not a strained adaptation of Lyotard.*⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Smith, *Who's Afraid?*, 23.

⁶⁰ Smith is repeating here his earlier argument, "A Little Story About Metanarratives: Lyotard, Religion, and Postmodernism Revisited," *Faith and Philosophy* 18/2 (2001), 353-68, which seems quite unconvincing for the following reasons.

The Bible is a meta-narrative and, for Christians, is unharmonious with Lyotard's interpretive approach that urges "incredulity toward meta-narrative" and that abandons any "idea for a universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view."

Meta-narrative to Lyotard is a story that legitimates its universal claims by appeal to reason, but reason here must include the input of Christian experience and Christian faith. This helps legitimate this story and this is incredulous to Lyotard. Lyotard seemed to think that the scientific method could not even legitimate the past so as to offer an objective neutral rationality. Hence no meta-narrative could exist that could reveal objective truth. Smith seems overly sympathetic to this (362) since he wants to reappropriate Lyotard. However, science can legitimate the past because natural rules or physical principles exist now that existed then. Lyotard's "postmodern" critique of meta-narrative—based on a wrongheaded appeal to what science supposedly could not do, but actually does—says that a story cannot contain objective truth. This philosophy is unharmonious with the Bible and with Christian faith and thought; it is certainly not an ally, as Smith mistakenly advocates.

As to Foucault, Smith's performance here may be the most convoluted and ostentatious of all. Yes, knowledge is power in a political sense, but the Smith/Foucault knowledge-power connection is not the power that Luke-Acts (Acts 1:8) or Paul (1 Cor 4:19-20), or even the Fourth Gospel (John 1:12) is talking about. It is personal reception of the heavenly Jesus and of the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes possible the building of spiritual discipline and Christian formation, not an appeal to Foucault.⁶¹ *To overlook a New Testament interpretation of this information in favor of trying to twist Foucault around to make him sound like a Christian epistemological benefactor is wrongheaded.* It may be difficult to follow a number of assertions and implications, namely how Christians should subscribe to treating truth and knowledge interchangeably, as Smith seems to do on occasion,⁶² or how they should subscribe to a theory that writers and interpreters are almost irrelevant as individuals, or how texts can only be properly interpreted by a socially minded community. It is highly unlikely that these three fleshed out slogans—unharmonious with authorial intent and original meaning—display a supposed “deep affinity with central Christian claims.”⁶³

Other impressions of and implications from Smith's effort to adopt for Christianity what might be labeled a radical “postmodernist biblical hermeneutic,” or an interpretive method as a series of thought processes, deserve scrutiny. If truth is identified as the meaning attributed to a community of readers, how could a community ever be wrong? Where would this lead Christendom? Might there not be meaning somewhere else after all, like in the mind of a credible author who tells a truth that readers can be certain about? Smith seems impervious to this point, but it is unlikely to go away; for example, “A philosophical paradigm and a hermeneutical method which cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, valid and invalid interpretations, will hold little attraction for most Christians.”⁶⁴

Next, why bring Derrida and Lyotard and Foucault to church? Nowhere in Smith's presentation do I find the suggestion that work of the Holy Spirit will be assisted in any way by adapting the work of these philosophers into how biblical

⁶¹ Cf. Smith's appeal, *Who's Afraid?*, 95-103.

⁶² Smith, *Who's Afraid?*, 43.

⁶³ Smith, *Who's Afraid?*, 22.

⁶⁴ Menzies, “Jumping Off,” 117. Poirier, “Why I'm Still Afraid” also raises this serious methodological question in various ways.

texts are to be understood. Deliberate interpretive methods⁶⁵ that could be assisted by the Holy Spirit do this far better. Are we going to embrace the unhistorical god of the philosophers?⁶⁶ Far be it for a lowly physicist to assume that his advice to secular philosophers might always be heeded, but I find very good company in Plantinga's advice to Christian philosophers.⁶⁷ Plantinga warned the latter to beware of seriously compromising, distorting or trivializing the claims of Christian theism. He advised that Christian philosophy must be wary about assimilating or accepting presently popular philosophical ideas and procedures, since many of these have roots that are deeply anti-Christian. Smith's project must surely be considered in the light of Plantinga's advice.

I find "postmodernism" à la Smith to contain a number of oversights perhaps driven by the desire to formulate novel ideas. This is particularly evident and problematic if one would attempt—perhaps with undue haste—to apply "post-modern" notions to biblical authors or even to the basic idea that God could have or would have decided to provide humankind with literary documents that conveyed objective truth within history. The notion that meaning only occurs in the minds of readers is not a Jewish or Christian or Greco-Roman literary concept. It certainly has never been nor will ever be a quantitative concept that is employed in any serious communication. Perhaps it may be flattering if I label it as a "quasi-literary" concept, given that from the time of the first ancient literary texts a writer's intended meaning has always been respected as the province of authorial intelligence. On the merits, it is evident to me that "postmodern" understand-

⁶⁵ For example, cf. Berlin, "Search" and Archer's emphasis on "Central Narrative Convictions" (*Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 114-18).

⁶⁶ Cf. Heribert Mühlen, "Die epochale Notwendigkeit eines pneumatologischen Ansatzes der Gotteslehre," *Wort und Wahrheit* 18 (1973), 275-87 (278).

⁶⁷ Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy* 1/3 (1984), 253-71; slightly updated version online at <http://www.faithandphilosophy.com/onlinearticle/advice>.

ing of truth and meaning is incompatible with the Gospel as presented by New Testament thinkers who evidently believe what they write.⁶⁸

Another impression of Smith's application of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault is his apparent unwillingness to admit or acknowledge that he is not illustrating his controversial claims with specific, plausible and concrete examples. This should at least have been attempted before overarching and sweeping new generalities are proclaimed. I appreciate that some professional philosophers might be unaccustomed to this requirement or be unwilling to do the necessary work to find and identify them, and further that in this philosophic debate there is a tradition that ignores the otherwise quantitative use of exemplarity in the wider academic community to illustrate a thesis, especially a controversial one. Smith is not a postgraduate student writing a thesis where it may be expected that some element of undue acceptance of some previous material naturally occurs because of the nature of the exercise. Because of Smith's stature as a professional philosopher this leniency toward requiring concrete and specific examples does not apply to him.

Smith is obligated not just to engage in a broad philosophical outlook supposedly provided by a new interpretive paradigm that he desires to espouse, but to be specific. He employs no Scriptural texts to support his improbable thesis as to how "postmodern culture" and a "postmodern church" supposedly exist in a "postmodern" age and why the philosophers' theories he touts supposedly display a deep affinity to central Christian concerns. Does this seem a bit odd? For Smith and his likeminded "postmodern" fellow-theorists of quasi-literary relativism, it may not seem odd. That is why I suggest that they are insular and not in tune with the central concerns of the wider academic community. Also, Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault could be adapted equally well to Buddhism or to Islam, not just to "Church." But the Bible is a world-class book. It is the subject of intense international study. It is not going away any time soon. One would think then that textual examples from it would be judged to be crucial if Derrida, Lyo-

⁶⁸ This is essentially the independent result of Poirier's analysis of Smith's *Who's Afraid?* In his "Why I'm Still Afraid," Poirier, a keen contemplator of pertinent philosophical materials, concludes as follows: "In spite of the book's goal, a careful reading of Smith's book reveals many reasons for Christians to be wary of postmodernism. The postmodernist understanding of truth and meaning truly is incompatible with the Gospel of the New Testament" (184).

tard, and Foucault are now to be refashioned as churchmen. Could we possibly conclude that “postmodern” theorists are reluctant to offer those illusive convincing examples because they don’t want to stop theorizing down the same path instead of finding a more productive path?⁶⁹

For example, does 1 John 2:20, 27 state unambiguously that the *chrisma* teaches true knowledge or not? The Johannine *chrisma* (often rendered in English as “anointing” and in German as “Salbung”) apparently functions interiorly to teach truth and the author intends to convey that information as an objective experiential fact, independently of whether his readers believe or understand this interior operation of the Spirit or not. Surely this writer did not believe that this information was “socio-cultural fiction.” Truth and knowledge are not interchangeable. Truth must consist of knowledge, but not all knowledge is true. Objective truth is knowledge that is true. It is difficult to see how “postmodern” assumptions can void these observations or adapt textual meaning to fit how the reader or community may like to feel. When Smith enters the public arena of Christian thinking, he should be expected, as an established philosopher, to explain his meaning by a serious set of convincing concrete textual examples, not by constant appeal to novel philosophical innovations. The wider academic community is a rigorous place and expects a bit more.

Of course I come from a different academic tradition than Smith, but the lack of recognition of the importance of illustrating a controversial thesis by specific

⁶⁹ For an example of a scholar who might fit this mold and perhaps better employ his talent elsewhere, cf. George Aichele, *Sign, Text, and Scripture: Semiotics and the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997). Aichele is good at setting out what everybody already knows, but the dearth of illustrative examples persists. Here it is again: “The reader ‘plays’ the text . . . Meaning is dependent on the reader in the same way that playing a game is dependent on the player” (39); “From the modernist point of view, the goal of biblical study is to uncover the message that is contained in the Bible . . . there is a message and it is ‘in’ the biblical texts(s)—this is the basic assumption of modernists semiotics” (37). “Postmodernist” or “postmodern” semiotics “rejects the notion that language offers a clear channel of communication Postmodernism holds that the seemingly clear message must always be questioned . . . language is fundamentally fictional. ‘Reality’ and ‘history’ are themselves narrative constructs, socio-cultural fictions” (38). With all due respect, Aichele is a thesis writer who imitates, repeats and embellishes, but does not critically engage or evaluate inherited claims.

textual examples from the Church's book is troubling. Advancing a theory that is argued to be obviously the right literary theory—so as to assert not only the questionable existence of a “postmodern” age in which the Church is supposedly to dwell, but also a questionable “postmodern biblical interpretation” that is going to lead Christian theology in a better direction, the latter without specific argument from literary documentation—seems hasty at best. In the world of Christian thought where a stable and venerated text is employed that is not irrelevant to his thesis, Smith's lack of examples from that text to support his ambitious claims is questionable.

Of course I realize that Smith may dismiss the above criticism as nothing more than quaint bibliolatry or “fundamentalist” nonsense. I also raise another issue. How about some quantitative examples for the shifty wordsmithery-division of humankind into “modern” and “postmodern” epochs, quantitative and competently reasoned historical analysis of the endeavors of humankind as a whole that support such talk, along with counter examples. Philosophers, not their post-graduate students, need to seriously justify their employment of this fuzzy talk to the wider academic community if they are going to use it as a prelude to other theories. They can't just say so and so said this or that, or go read this or that and you will “get it.” This is not how the thinking community operates.

Perhaps I am what Smith ambitiously labels as a “quasi-gnostic” because I hold to the scientific belief of real or true actuality in spacetime and that this eventuality can be portrayed by literary characterization with authorial intention. I am probably also a “quasi-gnostic” because I value documentary evidence as necessary to support argument. Perhaps in Smith's philosophical niche these concepts that the scientific and engineering communities highly value might seem less

necessary. If “history” is but the history of religious ideas,⁷⁰ perhaps employing textual examples from a meta-narrative that is historical and is believed by Christians to convey objective truth, not just a mythological text or fable that contains truth, to support his “postmodern” claims of relativism, ecclesiology, mission, worship, etcetera—may, for those of Smith’s mindset, not be necessary at all.

It is apparent, when some scholars advocate “postmodernism” as a way of intellectual life that Christian theology should adopt, that within the secular “postmodern” construct of relativism the Bible has virtually no more literary significance than the *Odyssey* or the *Aeneid*. The work of biblical authors, not perceived within relativism as objective truth tellers, may actually be treated with less respect than authors/editors of other ancient literary compositions. Also, attributing the creation of physical reality, spacetime actuality, to the work of Zeus may be easily, readily, humorously and mockingly suggested to draw attention to the dictum that in a “postmodern” age attributing the existence of the cosmos to the biblical God is out of tune with relativism. Whether the cosmos is the work of Zeus, Buddha or the biblical God must remain an open question.

This should be understood by Christians as the very real and visible fruit of relativism and, perhaps not too indirectly at all, of “postmodernism.” The same philosophically rooted mindset motivated and led seamlessly to the agenda of demy-

⁷⁰ This is how I understand Smith’s presentation of “history.” Whatever Smith’s diffuse concept of “history” may be, perhaps more than evidenced by *Who’s Afraid?*, it is to be expected that his methodology of “postmodern” relativism would be decidedly prone to marginalize history. This is understandable, given that what could be objectively true and therefore be intentionally conveyed by an intelligent and competent author would occur in history. If readers are the predominate players in determining meaning, the value of history is considerably lessened. While it could be argued that 100% objective truth is unavailable, my response would be to go for the real and historically sustained truth that is available, not to opt for its ultimate non-existence. Also, insofar as the Christian Gospel is concerned, there is objective truth that can be contained in what is not historical, like the parables of Jesus, for example. To marginalize history and truth for the sake of a philosophical theory, an in-house theory that will appear to many other academic thinkers—Christian and non-Christian—as unreasonable, unreal, and very poorly exemplified, not only goes against the grain of Plantinga’s “Advice,” but also offers a less than helpful testimony to the cause of the Christian Gospel, no matter how many faddish “postmodern” adjectives are appended.

thologizing Scripture. Now, again, overtones of an agenda wherein Scripture is inert and eclipsed, skepticism about biblical authors' competence and intelligence reigns, readers and communities are king, and wherein the world is immune from the interference of God loom large. Openness to the gods may be but empty talk. Which god is the one to be open to? Insistence on the inactivity of the biblical God to produce Scripture or to make or to do anything in cosmic history looms large. Just why Christians employ the Bible in their churches instead of Homeric epic is considered a "good question." Is it because they wanted to have a Christian testimony? Or, is it because of their "unwarranted" epistemological presumption of information that was objectively true independent of them? "Postmodernism" would favor the latter explanation. Christians had better take a careful look at what a radical "postmodernist biblical hermeneutic" actually entails and astutely consider its story before they take the first bite from this apple.

The Potential of a "Charism-Sensitive or Pentecostal / Charismatic Narrative-Critical Method" with Greco-Roman Pro-gymnastic Affinities

Poirier and Lewis suggest that "Pentecostals are best served by a primitivist hermeneutic that looks back to the earliest apostolic witness as its criterion for theology, practice, and affections."⁷¹ They are rightly concerned with the truth that the New Testament writers evidently sought to convey.⁷² I would suggest that biblical interpretation in this case would be well served by considering the literary methods that functioned in the contemporary world of Greco-Roman education, credible literary methods that probably influenced the New Testament writers and their active readers. Their hermeneutic is actually a well-developed and

⁷¹ Poirier and Lewis, "Pentecostal and Postmodernist Hermeneutics," 20. They are concerned that the undermining of traditional methods of biblical hermeneutics by a sector of literary philosophy within the historical and biblical guilds could cause Pentecostals to shy "away from restorationist identity of their movement, siding instead with a more ahistorical hermeneutic of Scripture" (20).

⁷² "Pentecostals need to get back to the understanding of truth that underpins New Testament theology, an understanding that turns on the *spacetime* actuality of the events narrated in the apostolic kerygma" (Poirier and Lewis, "Pentecostal and Postmodernist Hermeneutics," 21).

historically stable tradition of literary minded rhetorical education in the Greco-Roman world.

Young men in rhetorical schools that prepared students for various professions were drilled in the composition of exercises, *progymnasmata*,⁷³ that taught them how to appreciate narrative convictions such as repetitive themes, aspects of narrated time, plot development, personification and characterization.⁷⁴ This educational procedure is believed to have had a lasting impact upon students. Kennedy translates portions of textbooks employed by these grammatical instructors.⁷⁵ Students learned how to critically interact—both orally and in written exercises—with the best literary features that the great literature of their day afforded, particularly Homeric epics. I have drawn attention to this wealth of contextually relevant background with respect to two areas, namely the common Spirit-language of Paul and Luke, and Luke’s probable use of progymnasmatic procedures.⁷⁶ Perhaps many probable connections to New Testament documents remain to be investigated here. However, it is clear that extant contributions to narrative-rhetorical literary composition and critique, contemporary with the New

⁷³ In his discussion of Progymnasmata, Klaus Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament,” *ANRW* II.25.2 (1984), 1031-1432 (1296-98), cites the common appraisal “denn die Progymnasmata sind ‘the minimum formal rhetorical equipment of any literate person from the Hellenistic period on’” (1296).

⁷⁴ These are some narrative elements that may be drawn attention to when assessing the development of interpretation that is assisted by oral-aural relationships with biblical texts, cf. Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 118.

⁷⁵ George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (SBLWGRW 11; Atlanta: Scholars, 2003).

⁷⁶ Elbert, “Possible Literary Links,” (n. 45), 234-37; “Paul of the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians: Critique and Considerations,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentlich Wissenschaft* 95/2 (2004) 258-68 (265-67); review of Mikeal C. Parsons, “Luke and the *Progymnasmata*: A Preliminary Investigation into the Preliminary Exercises,” in Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (eds.), *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (SBLSS 20; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), in *Review of Biblical Literature* (August 20, 2005) on-line at http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/4026_5045.pdf; and “Luke’s Possible Progymnasmatic Improvements on and Employment of Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” presented at the Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting, University of Vienna, 2007.

Testament as evidenced, for example, by the work of Aelius Theon,⁷⁷ are of significant import with regard to narrative cohesion and connectivity.

Theon's teaching on how a proper narrative should be composed to enhance clarity and plausibility (plausibility, for Theon, being the most characteristic quality of complete narrative), his teaching on how a thesis about a controversial subject should be composed and his teaching on how to compose a speech in character with a speaker, all have immediate resonance with the method by which Luke-Acts should be interpreted. For example, consider the following narrative sequence: Luke 3:16; 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:4, 33, 38-39. Here we find connective and cohesive repetition and variation as in Homeric epic.

Theon's instructions for narrative composition indicate his concern for effectively treating important acts. When a significant character like John the Baptist prophesies about the central character (Luke 3:16), this would be, for Theon, an important attention-getting act. Theon advises that a narrative becomes unclear if things are omitted that of necessity ought to be mentioned. Would the central character (Jesus), being aware of this prophecy about him, be likely to say something about it? Obviously, for Theon and for Luke, plausibility indicated that he certainly would and that such characterization should not be omitted. So, we expect to find Jesus engaging this prophecy. He does so at Luke 11:13 in the context of his instructions on how and what to pray for. (Luke would not anticipate that Jesus' instructions on prayer would later be extracted via Luke 11:2-4, since these instructions reach their narrative zenith as readers traverse Luke 2-13.) For Theon, a narrator is obliged to pay attention to the thrust of the whole subject. This prophecy creates a subject about Jesus that requires matters relating to it to be addressed in a plausible and believable manner. It would be implausible for Jesus to appear unaware of and not to respond to this prophecy about himself. This subject, to be convincing to active readers, must be treated with consistency. Luke's performance is consistent with this progymnasmatic guidance. Theon advises that the final portions of a narrative are where commands should be placed. From Luke 11:13, we connect with the command of Luke 24:49 and are

⁷⁷ Cf. Michel Patillon (ed.), with Giancarlo Bolognesi, *Aelius Théon: Progymnasmata* (Collection des Universités de France; Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1997).

then led to Acts 1:8 which provides a Theonic thesis-statement, a focal point for the entire narrative.

For Theon, a controversial thesis requires contiguousness and continuity in that the subject under discussion must be dynamically related to what succeeds it. Obviously this procedure is conducive to the arrangement of a successful argument. So we might expect the narrative sequence of Luke 3:16; 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8 to extend into the argument of a major speech to that effect. In Peter's speech, Acts 2:16-18 explains the event of Acts 2:4 and progymnasmatic speech-in-character or personification is employed to set forth in a non-controversial way what this speaker—already portrayed as a disciple-believer—would appropriately be expected to say if he were present, namely that his “gift of the Holy Spirit” Spirit-reception language at Acts 2:28-39 refers to the same gift that he himself just received.

While this narrative cohesion may seem unusual today, from a first century progymnasmatic mindset it could seem rhetorically clear, concise and plausible.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The critical emphasis and attention to plot, sequence, repetition, unity, emphases, expectation and narrative-rhetorical continuity within ancient narrative-rhetorical composition (including Luke-Acts), enhanced by the focus on the narrative virtues of clarity, conciseness, and plausibility is a distinctive feature of first-century progymnasmatic education.

As to the state of education in Luke's world, cf. Henri I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris: Seuil, 1950); Donald L. Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957); Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Teresa J. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge Classical Studies; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

(footnote continued)

Theon's intention to provide narrative-rhetorical guidance marks him as a serious and respected educator.⁷⁹ In addition to ancient rhetorical strategy in general,⁸⁰ Theon is committed to illustrating main points with the finest examples and precedents that would not be tarnished by time and that could be imitated. Luke's employment of believable examples to show how Christian readers, who like Luke's characters are also disciple-believers, should expect John the Baptist's prophecy to be fulfilled by the heavenly Jesus with respect to them. Such examples would be essential and expected in order to make John the Baptist's prophecy about Jesus' ministry plausible. These examples and precedents complement and make complete the rhetorical processes detected in Luke's treatment of the subject of the narrative sequence initiated by John the Baptist's prophecy. Luke would anticipate his active readers to seek to imitate these examples and precedents, or to put it another way, to expect them to occur when they too, along with Theophilus, are appropriately attentive to the earthly Jesus' teaching on prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The development of a narrative-critical method sensitive to connective detail and to the fulfillment of prophecy theme evidently visible in Luke-Acts must be willing to shed some of the presuppositional features of an interpretive method locked into the "apostolic-age" presuppositions of the Reformers. In "Die Zeit der Geistgabe"⁸¹ new approaches to New Testament interpretation are needed that are sensitive to narrative convictions and to connections within discursive thought. Authorial intention as appreciated and respected in the Greco-Roman

The introductory prose exercises of the *Progymnasmata* were a basic part of Greco-Roman education and probably a component of Paul's and of Luke's own Greek education. Progymnastic training in compositional exercises created an indelible impression upon students, shaping their writing skill, style and rhetorical knowledge whether or not they moved on to the full rhetorical curriculum, cf. Ruth Webb, "The *Progymnasmata* as Practice," in Y. L. Too (ed.), *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 289-316 (309-10); Craig A. Gibson, "Learning Greek History in the Ancient Classroom: The Evidence of the Treatises on Progymnasmata," *Classical Philology* 99 (2004), 103-29 (105).

⁷⁹ Patillon, "L'auteur et son propos," in *Théon: Progymnasmata*, vii-clvi.

⁸⁰ Regarding this background, cf. Bennett J. Price, "*Paradeigma* and *Exemplum* in Ancient Rhetorical Theory" (Ph.D dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1975).

⁸¹ Rudolf Pesch, "Die Gabe des Heiligen Geistes," *Bibel und Kirche* 21 (1966), 52-53 (53).

literary world must be reclaimed. Modern philosophical speculation that is textually unwarranted and inhospitable to Christian theology must be left behind.

