

The Reformed Roots of Pentecostalism

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Exploring the roots of Pentecostal theology, the article contends that it is an oversimplification to understand Pentecostalism as a linear extension of the Wesleyan Holiness revival movement of the nineteenth century. Next to other influences, such as fundamentalism and Keswick theology, it is argued that the modern Pentecostal movement owes a considerable debt to the Reformed tradition. This view is substantiated by invoking the theology of John Calvin, Theodore Frelinghuysen, Jonathan Edwards, Edward Irving, Charles G. Finney, and Abraham Kuyper. However, a central issue with regard to Reformed theology remains in cessationism, a view which is debated in this article by following the works of Jon Ruthven.

Next month a series of celebrations will mark the centennial of the “Azusa Street Revival” in Los Angeles, California. It was there, in April, 1906, that a remarkable spiritual awakening occurred that many would call the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement. For the origin of this remarkable revival movement, some point to less known previous events that were stepping stones along the way, but certainly it was at Azusa Street that the modern Pentecostal revival became a world-wide phenomenon.

Vinson Synan, one of the best-known chroniclers of the Pentecostal movement, reported that within the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement grew from nothing to at least 500 million followers (Synan 2001:9)! Allan Anderson, noted missiologist, sees unabated growth into the near-term future for Pentecostalism and the associated Charismatic movement (Anderson 2004:285, 286). Anderson sees the future of world-wide Christianity becoming increasingly marked by Pentecostal influences. Certainly the modern Pentecostal movement is one of the most important religious and sociological phenomena of the century.

But, what does this mean? What are the special markers that identify Pentecostalism? Around the world, Pentecostals in their many cultural expressions, are in agreement about their commitment to *evangelical Christianity*. That is, there is a universal commitment to the authority of the Bible for

all matters of faith and practice. And, in addition to their loyalty to the Scriptures interpreted as literally as possible, there is the attendant belief that intellectual assent to Truth is to be accompanied by a vital, personal experience with the Risen Christ. Pentecostals everywhere emphasize the necessity of individuals being “born again.” In these respects, then, Pentecostals share common bonds with a host of other Christian believers, especially those who identify themselves as evangelicals. At the outset, it should be noted that Pentecostals owe a great debt to their evangelical theological forerunners, significant among which have been influences from the Reformed tradition. Donald Gee, one of the great British pioneer leaders in the Pentecostal movement, insisted that Pentecostals have really added nothing to mainstream, historic, orthodox Christianity, but should be seen as merely recalling the Church to its historic roots. Even though the appearance of charismatic phenomena produced widespread rejection of Pentecostals by virtually all sectors of the Christian church in its earlier years, Pentecostals have generally sought to maintain their allegiance to the tenets of traditional orthodox theology.

Pentecostals, although strongly allied to evangelical Christian values, however, have not been limited by traditional theological understandings about the work of the Holy Spirit. They have insisted that the core of orthodox faith does not preclude the expectation that God desires to empower His people in the present age with the power described in the Book of Acts. Pentecostals believe that the Scriptures teach that there is an experience, available to all believers, separable from New Birth. This experience, commonly called “Baptism in the Spirit,” is understood to be an enablement for Christian witness. Acts 1:8 is the primary text identifying the purpose for this special experience of the Holy Spirit. Baptism in the Spirit is understood by Pentecostals, therefore, as having a *missiological* objective. In retrospect, it does appear that there may well be a likely connection between this missionary perspective and the fact that Pentecostals have had strong missionary ministry throughout the world in the last century.

There are related values associated with this Pentecostal experience of the Spirit. Many early Pentecostals employed the term “reality” to express the profound and powerful encounter they had experienced. They talked about “the fullness of the Spirit.” They had encountered the “manifest” presence of God! A sense of wonder and joy were common elements in their public testimonies. Many reported manifestations of the charismatic gifts enumerated in I Cor.12:8-10. Generally, those reporting a “Baptism in the Spirit” identified *glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues, as the accompanying sign associated with Baptism in the Spirit. This vital experience with God gave rise

to exuberant worship services, often with loud shouting and lively music.¹ Because of the heightened intensity in both *witness* and *worship*, it seems fitting to describe this dimension of the Spirit's work in the individual as the *expressive domain*. Pentecostals in their exuberance, reported "being filled with the Spirit." This corresponded with the reports they read of occurring in the early Palestinian churches in the Book of Acts.

The corollary to this is what might be called the *interior* domain of the Spirit. This term speaks of the salvific work of the Spirit, rather than His charismatic energizing of believers for prophetic witness. The salvific dimension, or the interior work of the Spirit, has to do with the development of the new life in Christ, rather than the prophetic, or charismatic dimension. This soteriological work entails the effectual calling of the believer, his regeneration and justification, and his subsequent growth in spiritual development, or the process of sanctification. By attempting to distinguish between the *expressive domain* and the *interior* domains, one avoids the possibility of falling into a kind of triumphalism. Why is this so? Baptism in the Spirit is understood, then, to be an "overflow of the Spirit," and not necessarily a mark of a higher level of spirituality—which is clearly identified with the interior work of the sanctifying Spirit.² To be sure, not all Pentecostals have articulated their faith in this manner. Many, in fact, have taught a "three-stage soteriology," in which one is first born again, then "wholly sanctified," and, lastly, "filled with the Spirit." This teaching was generally advocated by Wesleyan believers who simply added the "third work of grace" to their theology when they adopted the Pentecostal message, especially in the early stages of the revival. Hence, some have employed terms like "Full Gospel," and "filled with the Spirit" in ways that inadvertently reflect a two-tier type of Christianity, with first- and second-class believers implied by their language. This, of course, is specifically a position repudiated by the Apostle Paul. See, for example, Romans 8:9, in which Paul stoutly affirms that *all* believers have the Spirit.

Conventional wisdom is the perception that the modern Pentecostal revival is a direct, linear extension of the Wesleyan Holiness revival movement of the nineteenth century. (Dayton 1987:35-54) In my paper I wish to point out that this is an oversimplification. In truth, the modern Pentecostal movement owes a considerable debt to the Reformed tradition, in addition to its Wesleyan forbears.

The writer of this paper acknowledges that his familiarity with American literature and activity has led him to present his paper from that perspective, apologizing for his lack of expertise in European literature and history.

WESLEYAN INFLUENCES IN THE PERIOD OF MODERN PENTECOSTAL ORIGINS: 1900-1910

The earliest years of the modern Pentecostal movement, from roughly 1900 to 1910, disclose a ferment of theological ideas which the early leaders employed in an effort to articulate their understanding of what God appeared to be doing among them. Nearly all of the first generation of Pentecostal leaders came out of the Wesleyan Holiness environment. The influence of Methodism is transparent. The followers of John Wesley taught “imperfect regeneration.” That is, the believer in his/her initial stages of Christian experience was “born again,” but was still tainted by the mark of inbred sin. John Wesley taught the objective of the Christian life was to enter into a state in which the “sin principle” is eradicated—something akin to sinless perfection. Wesley identified this by the term “perfect love.” This was achieved through a subsequent crisis experience of the Spirit his followers called “entire sanctification.” Pressed by critics for a definition of what this means with respect to the possibility of sinning, Wesley carved out a somewhat limited definition of sin: “the conscious violation of known law.” Before him, Luther and Calvin had spoken of sin in absolute terms as *any* transgression of God’s will, whether or not the individual was conscious of the violation. By narrowing the definition of sin, Wesley was able to bring the issue within the range of human responsibility. Wesley preferred the positive expression of entire sanctification, “perfect love,” but his detractors would not let him neglect the implications on the negative side of the equation, how this experience affected one’s ability to sin or not to sin. (Wesley 1964:252-267) Nonetheless, in spite of what some would criticize as imperfect theology, Wesley left a legacy in the Christian churches of a yearning and expectation of deeper experiences with God, a journey of faith urged upon all believers. This yearning after a deeper experience with God is the hallmark of most renewal movements.

The Methodist Church, which Wesley founded with great reluctance in the late-eighteenth century, flourished in the United States. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Methodist Church was the largest single component of Protestant Christianity in the country. However, success in numbers and influence was accompanied by rapid erosion of the special emphases that defined the first generation of Wesleyans. By the last decades of the century, Methodist bishops in the United States were marginalizing pastors who taught Wesley’s doctrine of entire sanctification.

The teaching of entire sanctification had become an offence to the leaders of Methodism. It was out of step with the theology of Modernism that most of the Methodist leaders had readily adopted.

In the 1860's, a whole range of new organizations and forums appeared in order to keep alive the passion of John Wesley. These new denominations and associations came to be called the "Holiness Movement." It was largely within this context that Wesleyan Holiness believers by the decade of the 1890's were exhorted to seek God earnestly for the full blessing of Pentecost. It was to these believers, hungry for all that God had for them, that the Pentecostal revival was poured out around the beginning of the twentieth century.

There was no single leader who can be rightly labelled the "father" of the Pentecostal revival. Rather, it seems that at about the same time, in many parts of the world, in isolated clusters of praying believers, the Spirit fell. How did they know this had happened? The common denominator in these episodes of Holy Spirit activity was the testimony of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. It is easy to understand how Wesleyan believers, who previously had taught a two-stage soteriology, now quickly modified their teaching to employ a three-stage understanding. First—saved by God's grace; second—emptied, or sanctified; and third—filled with the Spirit. This seemed to the early Pentecostals to be a satisfying way to meet their need for a useful means of communicating what had happened to them. And, it was very real to them! There is no way to account for their willingness to be subjected to the rejection, even the persecution they suffered, apart from their steadfast belief that they had found "reality." God was, indeed, very real to them!

By the time of the Azusa Street revival, as word spread, largely through the printed page, isolated believers in diverse places recognized that what was being reported in Los Angeles was what had happened to them! Consequently, believers in communities in North America, Europe, and elsewhere, found ways of forming associations. Independent congregations, largely comprised of Wesleyan Pentecostals at first, used terms like "the Apostolic Faith" or "Full Gospel" to identify their local churches. Between 1907 and 1909, several entire Wesleyan denominations were swept into the Pentecostal fold. Examples of this are the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) and the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the church of which Vinson Synan is a member and the denomination from which Oral Roberts emerged. After 1909, the Wesleyan Holiness movement in the United States took a strong stand against the Pentecostal revival, and the leakage to the Pentecostal movement was virtually closed.

So, it appears that the period up to about 1910 was largely a Wesleyan Pentecostal story. But, there is more that must be said. Within the next decade, the growing influence of non-Wesleyan Christianity emerges, and, in fact, by 1920, the non-Wesleyan component of the modern Pentecostal movement emerged as the main stream of the Pentecostal movement worldwide. The Assemblies of God is a clear example of this development.

NON-WESLEYAN INFLUENCES SHAPING PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY: 1910-1920

Fundamentalism. The religious forces sweeping into the American churches in the late nineteenth century produced consternation among orthodox believers. Two parallel, sometimes overlapping, movements—fundamentalism and the holiness revival, developed in opposition to what was felt to be an alarming trend in the larger church world. American Fundamentalism was the product of a coalition of the Reformed scholastic theology centered at Princeton Theological Seminary and Scofieldian “dispensationalism,” a hermeneutical system that featured a pre-millennial eschatology. The chief contributions of the Princeton theology lay in the attempt to support the credibility of biblical Christianity by appeal to reason and to external evidences. The Princetonians adopted a “citadel” view of biblical inspiration, in which inerrancy was accorded only to the original biblical documents written in the hand of the authors or their amanuenses. Of course, none of these documents exist today, all having disappeared through time. However, this line of argumentation narrowed the focus of inquiry to a clearly-defined defensible perimeter. The question of the history of the biblical text was therefore avoided as a separate issue to be pursued.

Princeton served as the great bastion of orthodox Protestant theology in the United States throughout the long and contentious history of the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” debate. The apologetic works of the great Princeton scholars, most notably B.B. Warfield and J. Gresham Machen, are still useful resources. Proponents of Modernism had largely discarded the possibility of biblical miracles, and hence had cast aspersion on the traditional views of the atonement of Jesus Christ, his virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, and His physical return to Earth at the end of the age. The Princeton apologists presented powerful arguments defending biblical Christianity, arguments that the Modernists never really succeeded in refuting. Modernism took over the

apparatus of much of American mainline Christianity by subterfuge rather than by open discussion of the pertinent issues.

B.B. Warfield adopted as his strategy in dealing with the issue of miracles the principle of refusing to debate the possibility of *modern* miracles, choosing rather to deal specifically with the miracles cited in Scripture. By withdrawing into this narrowly-defined perimeter, or “citadel,” Warfield sought to concentrate his focus on what he perceived to be the crux of the debate. In so doing, however, he chose to identify with one particular stream in the Reformed tradition, a view held in part at least by John Calvin and, earlier, by Augustine. This view essentially divided the gifts of the Spirit into *pastoral* gifts (such as preaching, teaching, leading, etc.) and *visible* gifts, such as those listed by the Apostle Paul in I Cor. 12:8-10. Today such manifestations of the Spirit are usually called *charismatic* gifts. This teaching of Warfield was expressed most clearly in his monumental work, Counterfeit Miracles which appeared in 1918. His desire to avoid disputes over a variety of claims for supernatural phenomena in the contemporary world led Warfield to become a major theological opponent of the modern Pentecostal movement. We will presently return to Warfield and subsequent developments within the Reformed tradition.

The other wing of American Fundamentalism, premillennial dispensationalism, had its origins in the Plymouth Brethren, a British sect founded by J. Nelson Darby around 1830. Darby visited the United States on various occasions between 1866 and 1877, having a powerful influence on key American churchmen, especially those agonizing over the inroads of Modernism. His influence is evident in the Bible conference movement which began in 1876. A series of interdenominational meetings, combining a zeal for promoting serious Bible study with a kindred zeal for eschatological themes, culminated in the Niagara Bible Conference of 1895. It is from this series of meetings that the platform of Fundamentalism was hammered out, finding expression subsequently in various denominational statements and especially, in The Fundamentals, a 12-volume set of lectures produced between 1909 and 1912, which were widely distributed throughout the American churches (Shelley 1967:62). The main points of Fundamentalism became intimately associated, not only with the towering apologetic scholarship of the Princeton theologians, but disclosed an affinity with the eschatology of C.I. Scofield, perhaps the chief popularizer of dispensational eschatology. (Masserano 1966:31-34) Those who held to historic premillennialism, rather than to dispensationalism, gradually lost influence, particularly after the publication of the Scotfield Reference Bible in 1909.

As an indicator of how important the influence of Fundamentalism was on the Pentecostal movement, in the Assemblies of God, as just one Pentecostal denomination, more than 200 titles by dispensationalist-fundamentalist writers appear in the catalogs of the Gospel Publishing House during the years of the height of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. Further, it is significant that the eschatology of the Assemblies of God is derived directly from the categories provided by C.I. Scofield. Frank M. Boyd and Ralph M. Riggs, important theologians in the formative years of the Assemblies of God, turned dispensationalism on its head, making the Church Age the age of the Spirit, rather than the hiatus advocated by Scofieldian dispensationalism! The result is that Pentecostals, such as the Assemblies of God, are still prone to employ the terminology of a now largely-discarded system of eschatology, using the terms of dispensational theology in ways totally contrary to the intended teaching of people like Scofield (see Boyd 1949)!

A strong sense of kinship with Fundamentalism remained acute in the Pentecostal movement even after the World Christian Fundamentals Association at a convention in Chicago, in May, 1928, passed a resolution disavowing any connection with the “tongues-talkers and faith healers.” The editorial in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, dated August 18, 1928, conveys the wounded spirit of the Pentecostals, who responded to the Fundamentalist diatribe with a statement affirming solidarity with Fundamentalist values in spite of the rejection that had been expressed. The editors held out an olive branch to the Fundamentalists, yearning for the day when the Pentecostals would no longer be spurned.

The Keswick Influence. The Holiness movement which flowered in late-nineteenth century America really had two wings. One was the attempt to recover Wesley’s second-blessing doctrine of sanctification. This found expression in the National Holiness Association, which looks back to a camp meeting in Vineland, New Jersey in 1867 for its genesis. New denominations were spun off from the Methodist Church and various Wesleyan Holiness associations proliferated well into the early years of the new century. But, this was but one wing of the larger Holiness movement.

In the Lake District of northern England, in the Anglican parish of Keswick, an interdenominational convention was conducted in the mid-1870’s with the specific objective of promoting a deeper Christian life. Robert Pearsall Smith, an American Quaker with long-time association with the Presbyterian Church, was instrumental in establishing Keswick as a perennial convention throughout the English-speaking world—a tradition that continues to this day. He brought the Keswick emphases back to the United States. A central teaching of Keswick was the

displacement of the “eradication of the sin principle,” a concept important to the Wesleyan seekers after holiness, with a recognition that sanctification is not so much a state of being, as a daily-maintained condition appropriate to a healthy Christian life.³ Soteriology was understood in terms that resonate with a Reformed understanding of the soteriological track. Along with this attenuated holiness expectation, Keswick featured an appreciation for the need to seek the Holy Spirit for an endowment of power for witness and service.

These teachings—the denial of the eradication of inward sin and the emphasis on premillennialism, faith healing, and the “gifts of the Spirit”—opened a wide breach in the holiness ranks. The conflict spread to America when Dwight L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, first president of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Adoniram J. Gordon, father of Gordon College, Boston, A.B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman began to propagate in this country the Keswick version of the second blessing. (Smith 1962:25)

One of the principal early figures who had a direct impact on the Pentecostal movement was John Alexander Dowie, an Australian with Scottish Presbyterian roots, who later became a Congregational minister. Dowie adopted revivalistic views, especially featuring divine healing. Dowie emigrated to the United States in 1888, just prior to the Pentecostal outpouring. Although he never identified with the Pentecostal movement, nonetheless many of his followers left his Christian Catholic Church, located near Chicago, to join the Pentecostals. Donald Gee classifies his views of sanctification as Keswickian (Gee 1949:5 and Lindsay 1951).

The single most significant influence from the Keswick world which the Pentecostal movement experienced was that of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. A.B. Simpson, Canadian-born Presbyterian minister, adopted a Keswick view of sanctification, experiencing a remarkable personal spiritual and physical renewal in the summer of 1881 at a convention in Old Orchard, Maine. Within a short time, Simpson had left his New York City pastorate and was devoting himself to evangelism. Out of his evangelistic and missionary zeal, eventually in New York the “Gospel Tabernacle” was erected. By 1887, Simpson had founded one of the first Bible schools in the nation, the Nyack Missionary Training Institute, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination was formed. The Alliance began as a relatively loose federation of churches which adopted a four-fold message: Jesus Christ as Savior, Healer, Sanctifier, and Coming King. Simpson’s teaching on sanctification featured the terminology of the “indwelling Christ,” which was his way of identifying with the progressive sanctification scheme of the Keswick orbit. George Pardington, an official theologian of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, employed similar

Keswickian language (See Paddington n.d.). In the official biography of Simpson, written shortly after his death, A.E. Thompson included a chapter of eulogy written by James M. Gray, the dean of Moody Bible Institute. Gray was a long-time friend of Simpson's. He recalls the origin of the Simpson's "four-fold gospel," citing the influence of the Baptist educator, A.J. Gordon. Evidently Gray saw common theological threads in Gordon and Simpson, emphases to which he himself was sympathetic (Thompson 1920:258).

Gordon's view of sanctification, which seems to resonate with Simpson, emphasized the progressive nature of sanctification. In addition, Gordon advocated an additional work of the Spirit, separate from regeneration and subsequent to it, which he titled "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." This Baptism in the Spirit Gordon understood to be specifically an endowment of power for Christian witness and ministry (Gordon 1894:74).

In effect, by the 1890's, chiefly through Keswickian influences, a theology supporting the Pentecostal revival was already well developed—with virtually everything in place except the Pentecostal propensity for insisting on the initial physical evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit being speaking in other tongues. This is clearly evident in the theology of the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal denomination generally recognized as the most widely-representative of the various Pentecostal denominations. In 1916, out of a perceived need to state important theological positions to provide stability in the midst of the turbulent and disruptive "Jesus Only" issue ⁴, with great reluctance the Assemblies of God adopted a "Statement of Fundamental Truths." This doctrinal statement was largely the product of one individual, D.W. Kerr, a former Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor. The General Council in session readily adopted his recommendation for a statement of faith, and the crisis was quickly resolved.⁵ What is significant is that the Assemblies of God in its initial formulation borrowed wholesale nearly the entire apparatus of the Christian and Missionary Alliance—its polity and its doctrine, including the "Four-fold Gospel." The obvious point that failed to come across was a difference of opinion regarding the Baptism in the Spirit. The leaders of the Assemblies of God perceived this experience of the Spirit to be accompanied by speaking in tongues—a teaching repudiated by the Alliance. It should be noted that the "Four-fold Gospel" was altered somewhat, as well. Instead of the A.J. Gordon/A.B. Simpson teaching that "Christ is the Sanctifier," that point was modified by the Assemblies of God to state "Christ is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit."

In summary, then, it is evident that at least a significant portion of the modern Pentecostal movement derived much from non-Wesleyan sources. A standard book of doctrinal teaching employed widely throughout the Assemblies of God, develops a soteriology clearly based on a Reformed understanding, rather than on the Wesleyan. This is evident, for example, in the statement regarding justification:

Justification is the breathtaking announcement that the sinner is not guilty. In God's eyes the sins are gone, removed from us "as far as the east is from the west"—which is an infinite distance (see Ps.103:12). Micah 7:18-19 says it beautifully, "Who is God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (Menzies and Horton 1993:105, 106)

The document goes on to point out three results of justification, or "positional righteousness." The penalty of sin has been dealt with, the believer is restored to divine favor, and finally, the believer has imputed to him the righteousness of Jesus Christ. (Loc.cit.) This corresponds rather well with a standard Reformed theology textbook commonly used in college classrooms (Berkhof 1950:256-264).

The doctrine of sanctification is another point at which a close correspondence exists between Pentecostals, such as the Assemblies of God, and the Reformed understanding. The Assemblies of God rejects the notion of a necessary crisis experience subsequent to regeneration, what Wesleyans call "entire sanctification." Rather, the emphasis is on the cultivation of an appropriate Christian life-style, what is recognized as a "growth in grace" (Menzies and Horton 1993:147-154).

This is mirrored by the teaching of Louis Berkhof (Berkhof 1950:265-273).

The Presbyterian Charismatic J. Rodman Williams follows precisely the same understanding of justification and sanctification as do the Assemblies of God teachers mentioned above, and the Reformed scholar, Louis Berkhof (Williams 1990:61-117). The affinity for the Reformed platform for soteriology among Pentecostals, such as the Assemblies of God constituency, appears to be convincing. It is evident that a Presbyterian scholar, such as J. Rodman Williams, has no problem erecting his Pentecostal theology on the Reformed, or Presbyterian, platform. From this we can see that the Pentecostals between 1910 and 1920 clearly divided into two wings, largely defined by differing views of sanctification. The earlier Wesleyan view no longer dominated. Those

Pentecostals who displayed an affinity with Reformed soteriology grew increasingly influential over the ensuing years.

REFORMED PRECURSORS TO THE MODERN PENTECOSTAL REVIVAL

The Teaching of John Calvin. It is probably safe to say that John Calvin did not subscribe to the notion that believers in his day should look for the charismatic, or to use his term, the “visible” gifts of the Spirit. In his discussion of baptism, Calvin seems to have adopted the idea that baptism in the Spirit, mentioned in Acts 1:5, identified with the “visible graces” of God, was dispensed by the apostles through the laying on of hands. He seems to suggest that this was Luke’s way of speaking about the initial regeneration of the Palestinian believers. (Calvin 1960 vol.1:1318) However, J. Rodman Williams sees in Calvin’s treatment of baptism the likelihood that Calvin saw the Spirit being distributed through the apostles’ laying on of hands. Williams perceived that Calvin was reluctant to reduce the gifts of the Spirit to merely another way of speaking about regeneration. (Williams 1990:179) Calvin certainly does acknowledge gifts of the Spirit, but he is clearly urging his readers not to go looking for visible giftings. “If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing.” (Calvin 1960, vol.1:527)

It is quite clear that Calvin, following Augustine, makes a distinction between those ministries that have a permanent character necessary for the effective ministry of the church, and those ministries that were only intended to be temporary. It is here that Calvin makes the point that charismatic gifts were, for whatever reason, limited to the Apostolic Age, and that only the pastoral gifts enumerated in Paul’s epistles have an enduring value (Calvin 1960, vol.2:1061).⁶ Regarding the first Pentecost, Calvin makes this curious comment: “As for ourselves, let us understand that the words spoken then to the Jews are true for us today, for although the visible gifts of the Spirit have ceased, God has not yet withdrawn His Spirit from His Church.” (Calvin 1965:59)

Calvin, in treating the episode of the Spirit’s outpouring at Samaria, says this:

To sum up, since the Samaritans had the Spirit of adoption conferred on them already, he extraordinary graces of the Spirit are added as a culmination. In these God for a time showed to His Church something like the visible presence of His Spirit, in order to establish for ever the authority of His Gospel, and at the same time to testify that the Spirit will always be the Governor and Director of the faithful. (Calvin 1965:236)

Calvin recognized that the gift of the Spirit described in the Pentecostal episode at the home of Cornelius was of a different order from the regenerating work of the Spirit. He resigned himself to the fact that such extraordinary manifestations no longer are evident in the Church, but it does not appear that Calvin diminished their value in any way. “Certainly the gift of tongues and other things of that kind have long since ceased in the Church, but the Spirit of understanding and regeneration thrives and will always thrive.” (Calvin 1965:317)

It is important to place Calvin in the context of his times. On the one hand, Calvin was endeavouring to release the Christian message from the tyranny imposed on it by the suffocating influences of the Medieval Church. And, on the other hand, he, like Luther, sought to avoid being distracted from what he felt were reformation of the Church. Both Luther and Calvin were opposed to enthusiasts who wished to rush on past the Bible to make room for immediate leadings of the Spirit. The enthusiasts were impatient with the more temperate teachings of Luther and Calvin, who were indeed anchored to the Bible. The “radical reformers” made the mistake of placing prophetic revelations, purporting to come from the Holy Spirit, on a plane with the objective Word of God, or, in some cases, putting prophetic utterances above the Bible. It is little wonder that Calvin was cautious about opening the door to such enthusiasts.

I think a case can be made for seeing Calvin acknowledging the reality of the “visible gifts” for the Church, but it is equally clear that there is a difference between mere acknowledgement and strong endorsement. He seems to accept the manifestation of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as those described in Acts, as valid operations of the Spirit, but appears to limit their apparent value to that of substantiating the Gospel message for the benefit of the earliest Christian believers.

Theodore Frelinghuysen. A key instrument in bringing renewal to the Middle Colonies was Theodore Frelinghuysen, a Dutch Reformed pastor in New Jersey. Beginning in 1726, his ministry brought revival, not only to the Reformed people of New Jersey, but also had a powerful influence on the Presbyterians in that region. Among those deeply affected by the revival were William and Gilbert Tennent, Presbyterian pastors in eastern Pennsylvania. William Tennent endeavoured to teach young men how to be effective pastors. His humble “log college” was the direct antecedent of Princeton College. From the Middle Colonies, the Great Awakening spread to New England where the Congregationalists were stirred.

The Contribution of Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) is considered to be perhaps the greatest theologian to appear in North America. A thorough-going Calvinist, Edwards

was God’s chosen instrument to bring about a remarkable renewal among the Christian churches of colonial New England. He might be considered a forerunner to later revival movements, including the modern Pentecostal revival, in three ways. First, against fierce opposition from fellow-clergymen, Edwards encouraged people to seek God for a profound, life-changing personal experience. Second, his preaching and teaching were marked by keen insights into the subjective dimension of Christianity, into the realm of Christian experience. He was acutely aware of the pastoral need to distinguish between true and false religion. And, third, Edwards in his own life exhibited what later Pentecostals would identify as “the anointing” of God. He was an instrument of renewal, one who lived out what he wrote about! In a broad sense, then, he might be considered a legitimate “pre-Pentecostal.” His Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, published in 1746, is generally recognized as one of the greatest works ever written on religious psychology. It is evident that he had a keen insight into the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people—and how to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate religious experience.

Edward Irving. Edward Irving (1792-1834), was a native of Scotland. He was ordained in the Scottish Presbyterian Church, and in the 1820’s was dispatched to London to pastor the Caledonian Chapel. His effective preaching attracted large crowds. By 1827 he was encouraging his parishioners to seek for a deeper work of the Spirit in their lives. He rejected the notion that the gifts of the Spirit ceased with the Apostolic Age, and that believers should expect the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them in their own day. In 1830, on a visit to his native Scotland, Irving came upon a group of people who were, in fact, experiencing extraordinary things. He witnessed a remarkable healing. People began to experience what they termed a “baptism in the Spirit,” punctuated with speaking in other tongues. On his return to London, Irving exhorted his people to reach out to God for a baptism in the Holy Spirit. For him, speaking in tongues was “the standing sign” of Spirit baptism (Dorries 1991:49).

Edward Irving went on to found the Catholic Apostolic Church upon his excommunication from the Scottish Presbyterian Church. Many of his parishioners followed him. Unfortunately, he fell into the error of appointing apostles and for predicting the imminent return of Jesus Christ. This unusual movement quickly fell into obscurity upon the early death of its founder. There is no clear connection with this British revival episode and the later emergence of the Pentecostal revival. However, what is significant for our purpose is the identification of a theologian from the Reformed tradition who openly advocated a recovery of the Apostolic gifts.

Charles G. Finney. Charles G. Finney (1792-1873), an attorney in the state of New York, was converted to Christ in a Presbyterian Church at the age of 29. He separated from the Presbyterian Church and joined the Congregationalists, another denomination in the Reformed tradition. For more than 40 years, Finney was used by God to bring remarkable awakenings to numerous communities throughout the American eastern states. He became a professor of theology at Oberlin College in Ohio, but maintained his pulpit ministry in New York at the same time for several years. He and his colleague at Oberlin, President Asa Mahan, were instrumental in promoting the term “Baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Written toward the end of his life, Finney’s recollection of his conversion experience is couched in terms that describe his being overwhelmed by the presence of God.

But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul....I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. (Finney 1908:20)

This report captures the core of Finney’s appreciation of a desirable deeper experience with God that is available to believers, what he understood to be a baptism in the Spirit, as an endowment of power for service. Indeed, what became known as “Oberlin Theology” promulgated by Mahan and Finney, was a formative influence, especially among exponents of Keswick teaching. Indeed, not only did a wide range of Reformed-oriented evangelicals adopt this terminology, but Wesleyans employed the term “baptism in the Spirit” frequently to refer to the “second blessing.”

In fact, one Wesleyan body that came into existence about the time of the Pentecostal revival, the Church of the Nazarene, originally called themselves “the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene.” However, to avoid any possible confusion with the Pentecostal movement, in 1919 this body of evangelical believers quietly dropped “Pentecostal” from their title!

These brief notations are samplings of the contribution of evangelical believers from the Reformed tradition who had an important influence in the shaping of values that later were incorporated readily into the fabric of the modern Pentecostal movement. Certainly the background of the Pentecostal revival is much richer and varied than seeing it as simply an extension of Wesleyanism.

Abraham Kuyper. The prolific writings of the founder of the Free University, Amsterdam, include a major study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, published in 1900. At the heart of his scholarship was a passion to see the restoration of the purity and power of the Christian Church. In explanatory notes appended to the American edition of his monumental work, his English translator, Henri de Vries observed:

His success in this respect appears conspicuously in the reformation of the Reformed Churches in 1886, and in the subsequent development of marvellous energy and activity in Church and State which are products of revived and reconstructed Calvinism. Without the patient toil and labor of this quarter of a century, that reformation would have been impossible. (Vries 1941:15)

It is clear that Kuyper’s memorable renewal of the Dutch church and also the renewing of Dutch society, was founded squarely on a fresh articulation of historic Calvinist theology. Prominent in his teaching was his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. We may speculate on how Kuyper would have reacted, had he lived a century later. What possibility lies in his theology for accommodating a Pentecostal theology? It should be borne in mind that Kuyper, writing in the late-nineteenth century, pre-dated the eruption of the modern Pentecostal revival. What can we glean from Kuyper? How would he have responded to the Pentecostal outpouring of the twentieth century?

First, Kuyper recognized that the gifts of the Spirit were—and continue to be—important for the well-being of the Church. “The charismata or spiritual gifts are the divinely ordained means and powers whereby the King enables His Church to perform its task on the earth” (Kuyper 1941:184). However, it is true that in his careful distinctions between various classifications of gifts, given to the Church, he recognizes that the more clearly supernatural manifestations, or “extraordinary charismata,” such as speaking in tongues, are not evident in the present-day Church. Like Calvin, it appears that Kuyper sees as permanent giftings in the Church those “ordinary charismata” directly impacting the edification of believers in the Body of Christ. Other “extraordinary gifts” appear to be more dispensable. Here is a summary of his classification of supernatural gifts:

The charismata now existing in the Church are those pertaining to the ministry of the Word; the ordinary charismata of increased exercise of faith and love; those of wisdom, knowledge, and discernment of spirits; that of self-restraint; and lastly, that of healing the sick suffering from nervous and psychological diseases. The others for the present are inactive. (Kuyper 1941:189)

What is intriguing in this brief statement is the open-ended view he seems to have held about the possible future restoration of extraordinary gifts, such as speaking in tongues! Although he recognizes realistically that these gifts are currently “inactive,” is it possible that Kuyper held open the possibility of a restoration of such gifts at some in the future? Although Kuyper wanted very much to see the Church revived in his day, on balance it is clear that he, along with Calvin, and most other Calvinists in the post-Reformation period, must be classified as a cessationist.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER: CESSATIONISM

It is evident that the modern Pentecostal movement owes much to the Reformed tradition. However, the crucial issue that has dominated much of Reformed pneumatology, has been the belief that the *charismata* of the New Testament had a legitimacy for the Apostolic age only. This is known popularly as cessationism. Benjamin B. Warfield, the great apologist of the Princeton titans, placed the *charismata* outside the expectation for the present-day Church. In so doing, Warfield struck at the heart of the modern Pentecostal movement. If miracles, including the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, are not possible for the Church today, the Pentecostals are by definition illegitimate. This is certainly a central issue.

Warfield wrote the definitive volume on the issue of the cessation of the *charismata*. His avowed purpose:

My design is to state and examine the chief views which have been held favorable to the continuance of the *charismata* beyond the Apostolic age. In the process of examination occasion will offer for noting whatever is needful to convince us that the possession of the *charismata* was confined to the Apostolic age. (Warfield 1953:6)

By the 1940's, a growing number of evangelical Christian leaders, through their irenic association with Pentecostal leaders, recognized that they held much in common, and that the time had come to lay aside earlier prejudices. Twenty years later, a phenomenon that has come to be called the Charismatic movement erupted, reaching into virtually every sector of the Christian church. Presbyterians, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, and Holiness bodies, along with Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, noted that many within their ranks were reporting “baptisms in the Spirit,” including speaking in other tongues. Prophecy, remarkable

healings, and other extraordinary manifestations no longer were maintained within the province of the Pentecostal churches. The bastion of cessationism now came under serious attack.

The monumental work of Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata*, is without doubt the most comprehensive assessment of the cessationist issue currently available. Ruthven asserts that cessationism is a concept with questionable roots. “Cessationism did not originate within orthodox Christianity but within normative Judaism and in Christian sects during the first three centuries of the Common Era.” (Ruthven 1993:24) Ruthven points out that cessationism is, curiously, actually to be attributed to Montanism. Augustine, cited by Ruthven, in his argument with the Montanists, argues that miracles did, in fact, continue after the Apostolic age. “He complains in *City of God* 22.8 that contemporary miracles are relatively unknown not because they no longer occur, but simply because of bad communication and because people are conditioned (perhaps from statements like his own, [cited previously by Ruthven]) to disbelieve them” (Ruthven 1993:30). Augustine earlier had argued for the cessation of the charismata, but later changed his view.

Ruthven, in his analysis of the writings of John Calvin, sees some ambiguity in Calvin’s teaching on the possibility of contemporary gifts of the Spirit. “Calvin popularized the restriction of miracles to the accreditation of the apostles and specifically to their Gospel, though he was less rigid about cessationism than many of his followers in that he held to the tradition that in unevangelized areas, apostles and prophetic gifts could recur to confirm the Gospel” (Ruthven 1993:34). Essentially for Calvin, the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit was a means of accrediting God’s Word. But, the door appears to be left open for manifestations of the gifts, even in a later day.

Warfield’s cessationist polemic was founded on his understanding of Calvinism, which in turn (through the “Princeton school”) was shaped by Scottish common sense philosophy. He had an overweening confidence in human reason to solve even theological issues. And, for him, appeal to the miraculous opened the door to a kind of extra-biblical revelation that threatened his system (Ruthven 1993:52,53).

Ruthven challenged Warfield on another front, as well. He believed that Warfield had an inadequate understanding of the Kingdom of God. “Its nature is essentially that of warfare against the kingdom of Satan and its ruinous effects (Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 10:6,7; 12:28....) (Ruthven 1993:195).” The Kingdom theology of G.E. Ladd, an evangelical Presbyterian, professor at Fuller

Theological Seminary for many years, is certainly very different from the eschatology of Warfield. Ladd's view emphasizes the present age as a combat zone in which disciples of Christ are empowered to wage war against the destructive forces of Satan. Although Ladd never adopted Pentecostalism, his teaching certainly opens the door for the Pentecostal understanding of Spirit-empowerment (Ladd 1993:79-211)!

Ruthven systematically destroys the cessationist teaching of Warfield. Among the several major points he makes, Ruthven states:

He also fails to account for the many explicit biblical commands directly to seek, desire and employ the very charismata he claims have ceased. How can Warfield ignore these biblically explicit conditions and commands for the continuation of the charismata, if, as he insists, the Bible continues as the normative guide to the church for its faith and praxis?

It is little wonder that the cessationist viewpoint has lost most of its following in the last generation.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have sought to demonstrate that the modern Pentecostal movement owes much to the Reformed tradition. It is an oversimplification to assert that Pentecostalism is but an extension of the Wesleyan Holiness movement. A significant portion of the Pentecostal movement, exhibited by groups such as the Assemblies of God, borrow as much, if not more, from the Reformed tradition than from the Wesleyan tradition. We Pentecostals owe an enormous debt to our forbears of the Reformed faith.

However, one stream of thought in the history of Calvinist literature has been the concept that the gifts of the Spirit, important at the outset of the Church for accrediting the apostles and their Gospel, ceased to exist shortly thereafter. In this line of reasoning, one need not expect to see these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in evidence in our world today. Once the objective Word of God, the Bible, was in place, there has been no further need for the charismata.

There is overwhelming evidence that the gifts of the Spirit never did cease entirely. The pages of Church history are punctuated with isolated and limited outpourings of the Spirit. None of these eruptions survived. Certainly the main stream of the Christian Church did not embrace such

occurrences, but the evidence remains that there has been at least a sprinkling of gifts of the Spirit throughout the centuries. One might argue that the modern Pentecostal movement is unique in the history of Charismatic revival movements—in that it has survived long enough to be given a serious hearing by the larger church world.

Now that the playing field is much more level, Pentecostals and Reformed scholars have a fresh new opportunity to think and study and pray together. We are engaged in a titanic spiritual war. We would do well to reach out to encourage one another in order to be better equipped for the challenge of present-day spiritual combat.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For vivid accounts of the lives and practices of some of the key early Pentecostal leaders in America, see Jacobsen 2003.
- ² This understanding of Pentecostal experience is spelled out in Menzies and Menzies 2000.
- ³ A good outline of standard Keswick teaching is to be found in Barabas (n.d.).
- ⁴ The “Jesus Only” issue nearly wrecked the early Pentecostal movement. This was a teaching which swept through early Pentecostal gatherings, chiefly impacting those with a Keswickian perspective, like the very young Assemblies of God. The “Jesus Only” teaching amounted to a form of Unitarianism. See Menzies 1971:111-121, for a detailed account of this issue.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*:117.
- ⁶ See also an excellent article: Elbert 1985.

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