

An Evaluation of the Wakening Interest in the Holy Spirit Among Denominational Groups

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn to Acts, the 2nd Chapter. I read just a few verses, beginning with the 14th verse. Our theme this evening, An Evaluation of the Wakening Interest in the Holy Spirit Among Denominational Groups;

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, all yet that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸And on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: ¹⁹And I will shew wonders in the heaven above, signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: ²⁰The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord shall come: ²¹And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved” (Act. 2:14-21).

You understand that the book of Acts sets forth the presence of Christ in the midst of His church in glory, and in power. You realize that during first two decades of the church it spread from Jerusalem by means of the multitude that were there on the day of Pentecost, and the faithful ministry of those that followed, until the subcontinent of India was visited by the Apostle Thomas, and there was established there in that southern part of that land the work that is still known, where our Brothers Thomas have come, the Church of Marthoma. Others went, until finally it could be said that the world as it was known had been visited just after two generations.

But, as Satan sought to destroy the church by persecution and failed, he sought to infiltrate it and was more successful, so that during the centuries that followed there was a gradual erosion of truth, a burial of the truth, simple as it is, under the rubbish of ceremonialism and tradition, and there was an invading of the church by the cults, by those heretics whose pagan philosophies had been rejected by the Jews under Judaism, and yet they somehow were able to subtly accommodate their heresy to the terminology of the New Testament, and so we find a gradual infiltration of the church in those early centuries. About the beginning of the fourth century you find that the organized church has been driven into hiding. People known as the Montanists, had the presence of Christ in their midst and the glory of Christ upon them, because they would not submit to papal authority. They were branded as heretics, hunted, hounded, hurt, bruised and abused; they nonetheless continued. And so, parallel to the church established, the church in power, the church in control, was the church hidden, and the church abused and beaten. There has never been a time when God has not had His people. You must recognize this. You must realize that the writings of the church fathers under Romanism concerning the Montanists were slanted, twisted and warped, and presented only a portion and that in complete distortion. And so we find that the very things for which they were assassinated, even killed by more cruel means than clear assassination were the truths that characterized the early church, truths which had been lost for the most part during the passage of centuries. How our hearts thrill at the testimony of those who across those dark years called the dark ages found anew the Lord. You cannot read of Francis of Assisi without stopping to praise God for a man who in simplicity and childlike faith knew the Lord and walked with Him, until the stigmata was a fact in his life and his hands actually shared the testimony of the crucifixion of Christ. Saint Francis of Assisi knew and loved our Lord.

You come to John of Ruysbroeck¹. This man that I have mentioned so many times, ones whose little booklet, The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage, is one of the most exquisite testimonies to the sweetness of Christ that has ever been put into the English language and that by translation from the French. You find Meister Eckhart², and Tauler³ and Julian of Norwich⁴; down

1 John of Ruysbroeck (1293-4-1381)

2 Eckhart von Hochheim (1260-1327) Commonly known as Meister Eckhart

3 Johannes Tauler (1300-1361)

4 Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)

across these years were those who even in the midst of Romanism nonetheless knew and loved our Lord Jesus and lived in beautiful fellowship with Him. Not the least among these and to be mentioned in such a category is Archbishop Fenelon⁵, and one of the disciples whom he tutored in the things of the Lord. This woman that had such tremendous testimony, born into royalty, and yet Madam Guyon was able to endure all that the Lord brought into her life through suffering, and when she was spat upon by members of her family she could kiss the spittle that fell upon her body and thank God that He had given her the privilege of suffering for Him.

We realize, therefore, that even in the midst of gross darkness God still found those who loved Him. We rejoice also as we contemplate history that there came a time and hour when Martin Luther⁶ dared to brook the anger and the wrath of the church in power and started the protestant reformation. We are grateful that a hundred years afterwards a group which had gone into decay and spiritual powerlessness, who were the descendants of Huss, the Hussites, now driven from their native land of Czechoslovakia, found succor and provision and place in the estate of Count Zinzendorf at Herrnhut. They were prepared and able to seek the Lord until He should come and bless them.

So I would say that in church history, the first blessing of God with New Testament power of which we have record was the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon the Moravian Brethren there at Herrnhut in Germany. This was the first time that God was able to encompass an entire group of people with blessings similar in some degree at least, and in some kind as well, to that which took place at Pentecost. And from that group, the wholesomeness of His presence caused that in just about forty years fifteen hundred were to go forth as missionaries of the Cross, invading almost every area where the Gospel had not come. We recall also that the writings that they gave and the ministry that they presented started a true apostolic secession of blessing. It is not strange, therefore, that when John Wesley⁷ was on his way to Savannah, Georgia, that there should be on that same ship a company of Moravian missionaries, and while Wesley and his companion crouched in terror in the inner cabin trying to close their eyes to the storm that was driving the mast and the spars and the sails of their little ship, the Moravians were out on deck with the rain in their faces, and looking out into the raging sea, realizing that it could be that within the providence of God that within just hours by means of a watery grave they should be in the presence of the Lord they loved. And having seen the glow of heaven upon the face of these Moravians as against the cries of terror of his own company, John Wesley knew that there was something more to religion than that which had been exported with him when he had been sent as a missionary to Georgia. So it is not surprising either that after two years there, in futile attempt to serve, he should write back to the Bishop that had posted him, saying, I came to convert the Indians, but alas who will convert me. Returning from Georgia to England, he went back to Oxford. There he found that a company, including his brother, and George Whitfield⁸ and others, had begun becoming greatly concerned about the things of God. They had begun to meet in a class for the single purpose of studying God's Word, claiming its promises in mutual faith, and receiving from God all that He was prepared to give. He attended with them for several months, and thus it was one night at Aldersgate Street that he was listening to Pastor Burkhart, a Moravian, reading Luther's Introduction to the Book of Romans, that he saw that justification is by grace through faith, and not a baptism or ceremonial works, and he said his heart was strangely warmed as the truth illuminated his sin darkened heart, and he knew that the shackles and chains of sin had fallen away. But this he understood to be regeneration, and it was shortly thereafter that he saw that, in addition to being pardoned of past sins and being born of the Spirit, it was necessary for him to be filled with the Spirit. And he bears testimony to a subsequent meeting with the Lord in which his life became filled with the fullness of God. This was both a satisfaction to his own heart relationship with Christ but also an anointing for ministry, and an unfolding of God's plan. And so we find that God's movement continued with Wesley for twenty years and even more confined himself to the starting of class meetings. He would go into a community, preach, and gather those that responded together in groups of twelve, one being appointed as a leader. It was the multiplication of class meetings that gave the cell movement, that was able to hold the truth, to nurture it, to sustain it and to propagate it intelligently and effectively. It was this cell movement, this institution of the class meeting, that the English historian, Macaulay, said, was the invention that was of God given to the nation to save it from the abyss and the destruction into which France fell. We

5 Francois Fenelon (1651-1715)

6 Martin Luther (1483-1546) German monk, former Catholic priest, who wrote the Ninety-Five Theses.

7 John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founding the Methodist movement

8 George Whitefield (1714-1770) Also known as George Whitfield was an English Anglican Preacher.

understand that at the end of these 22 years, 23 years, of faithful work, God began to open the ministry into new dimensions. And it was the last 25 years of his 45 year ministry that was marked by such glorious outpouring of the Spirit of God where tens of thousands would gather in the open air and listen to him preach with anointing upon his preaching so that hundreds would drop as though shot through the heart by the arrows of the revelation of God's holiness and His righteousness. And so it was that there was now added to the Moravian movement the Wesleyan movement.

We find that this was carried around the world into this land. We find that the influence of it was instrumental in bringing into New Haven the ministry of John Wesley Redfield⁹, of which I spoke some days past, saying that the same phenomena attended his ministry as had attended that of John Wesley in England, namely, that as he preached, exalting the holiness and majesty of God, men hearing him fell as though shot through the heart, and would lie unconscious sometimes for hours, but upon their recovery would be praising God for sins forgiven and new life in Christ. We also remember that in our land there was the great awakening under Jonathan Edwards¹⁰ where God began to move in Massachusetts, and so the earliest days of our land were marked by invasion by God. In the last, the middle of the 19th century, beginning with 1831, God used His honored servant, Charles G. Finney¹¹, for revival ministry. And we find that here again the same phenomena attended the preaching of the Word as had characterized the Moravian and the Wesleyan movement, namely, that everyone in the geographical area was aware of the presence of God, just as those who were nearer the place where the Spirit of God was poured out on Pentecost were aware of His presence and came seeking the phenomena.

During this time, you have already seen that we have the growth of denominations, the Lutheran, the Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Baptist—for I have referred to them through their roots in the Albigenses and the Montanists. And so you see in this the rise of the denominations, at least these four major groups.

About the early part, at that same time that God was raising up Finney in America, He was raising up a man in England that you must understand if you are to see what is taking place today. This man's name was George Müller¹². George Müller was a German. He migrated to England, was trained there, and opened the Word of God, studied it, was gloriously converted, took it as His rule of faith and practice, and established in Bristol, England, a fellowship along simple, primitive New Testament lines. In this fellowship there were all of the gifts of the Spirit, there was the recognition of the baptizing, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. There was freedom of worship and of fellowship. God was in the midst of this company. But we find at the same time that there was this movement that was taken down to Plymouth. There a group of intellectual young men were greatly influenced by certain of Müller's teachings, but they were a little bit disturbed by the emphasis on the supernatural; and so, through a gradual process of teaching, they were able to establish to their satisfaction a doctrine that all of the supernatural ceased at the conclusion of God's witness to Israel at 70 A.D. And ultradispensationalism had its birth there at Plymouth in England at that time. But while there was at this time a movement that was set in motion, as it were, to check the rise of the supernatural, the movement under George Müller continued. He found hearts hungry in such individuals as J. Hudson Taylor¹³, and through his influence Andrew Murray¹⁴ came into an experience of the fullness of Christ. And through the influence of Hudson Taylor and Andrew Murray, F. B. Meyer¹⁵ came into the experience of the life of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the anointed life. And thus God was moving, greatly moving.

Just at somewhat this same time He touched one who, through the testimony of two simple little godly women there in Chicago who saw in this young shoe salesman great potential for God, and after the meetings when he would be praying with those that had come for forgiveness they would disturb him greatly by saying, Mr. Moody¹⁶, we are praying for you that you would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. After his work was burned in the Chicago fire and he was in New York, raising funds with which to rebuild, he had to give up his solicitation because every time his carriage went over the cobbles of New York

9 John Wesley Redfield (1810-1863) Helped start the Free Methodist Church

10 Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) A Christian preacher. America's most important and original philosophical theologian.

11 Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) An American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States.

12 George Müller (Born Johann Georg Ferdinand Müller) (1805-1898) Christian Evangelist and Director of the Ashley Down Orphanage

13 James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) A British Protestant Christian Missionary to China and founder of China Inland Mission

14 Andrew Murray (1828-1917) He has authored over 240 Books

15 Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847-1929) A Baptist Pastor

16 Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

streets, all he could hear was the refrain, We are praying for you, we are praying for you that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit. So, alone in a friend's room, he shut the door and stayed there for some thirty hours, seeking God, until he could come to the end of himself and know the fullness of Christ. There was joined to him shortly one by the name of Reuben A. Torrey¹⁷, whose little booklet entitled The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a classic and ought to be received and read and understood by all. And whenever Torrey would go out in meetings, Moody would say to him, "Oh, Torrey, give them one of two sermons, the one on the Bible, or the one on the baptism of the Holy Spirit." And thus at the close of the 19th century there were men of God who stood like giants in the land whose hearts were united; not least among these and sharing in the blessing was one who as a Presbyterian Pastor, great dignity and intelligence attending his ministry, had nonetheless broken down under the weight of service. Physically exhausted at the end of himself, through the testimony of George Pentecost, and Major W. D. Wittel, the son-in-law of Moody, he was brought to the realization that Jesus Christ is able to touch mortal flesh, and heal the body. Through the testimony of Reuben Torrey, he was brought to the place where he realize that, in addition to being born of the Spirit, God had intended His children to be filled with the Spirit. And so, in his need and in his exhaustion, in his heart broken defeat, he opened his heart to the fullness of Christ, and Albert Benjamin Simpson¹⁸ was wonderfully healed of physical weakness and sickness, and was filled with the Spirit. With this filling of the Spirit came new liberty in preaching, and a new burden for the lost. Seeking to implement his vision through the 13th Presbyterian Church where he was pastor, he found he was thwarted on every side, for the people there had their traditions and their programs, and they were not the least concerned about the burdens that motivated the heart of this young man, this pastor who had seen something they had not seen, and had been where they had not been. And so it was with mutual satisfaction that he left to begin the Gospel Tabernacle Church which has in two weeks its 80th annual meeting, and this then was the first church of which we have knowledge on the American continent, other than those of the denominations which was formed with its foundation as what we call the fourfold Gospel, that is, Christ our Savior, our Sanctifier, Healer, and our coming King.

But his vision was not just churches, for he saw that this that God had done for him was for all, and so those earliest meetings were on Sunday afternoon, so that folks could come from their own churches and would not have their loyalty affected nor their attendance disturbed, but they could meet together in fellowship that they might be fed and filled to return to their own people. They met in the middle of the week, sensing that they needed more than just the Sunday afternoon, but they met on Thursday so that there would be no interference with their Wednesday attendance. And in the first ten years of ministry over a thousand groups were formed across this land. He was the first one to establish it, I say, as a testimony upon which a church, a local church, a local company of believers would be begun, but you have to understand that when the missionary program was associated with the testimony of the fellowship, and the movement thus became a mission, those who had been open to the message now were closed to the ministry. And so there grew up an opposition to Dr. Simpson, not because of doctrine primarily, but because of the missionary enterprise that was upon his heart, challenging the giving of the people that had been coming. And so there was then set in motion waves of opposition to the message.

But we discover that about 1906 there was another introduction here. We find that at Nyack there was glorious pouring forth of the Spirit of God, and some of my close friends were in attendance then and testified to the Heavenly visitation that occurred. All of the gifts of the Spirit were seen. God was gloriously upon those annual councils that met there at the Hillside.

But out of this there grew up one who established for the first time in history the doctrine which had never been heard before that the only evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the gift or the speaking in tongues. And Dr. Simpson and his colleagues examined this teaching and said they could not find it in the Word of God and that they were unable to accept it, that they accepted the genuineness of the gift, but they could not see it as an evidence, and so some four hundred churches seceded from the Alliance, and formed the Assemblies of God with their headquarters at Springfield. And out of that grew the Assemblies of God. Soon there was another split, and the Foursquare Church occurred in California. There was another split and the Pentecostal Holiness Churches were formed. Still another split in the church of God. Until there are today from that some one hundred, groups, some larger, some smaller that have split off from that original group that were here.

17 Reuben Archer Torrey (1856-1928) An American evangelist, pastor, educator and writer

18 Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

And so these truths have been submerged. The Alliance has continued to hold the testimony, but some that love it most and feel its closest have rather felt that intimidated by excesses that they may have seen or supposed or probably were very much aware of, they have withdrawn somewhere from the center of the road of testimony that marked the earliest days of fellowship. But while this may have happened, or may not, be it understood by you that God has not been confined. So we have found that for some years dispensationalism in its ultra-aspects had been in great ascendancy and influence and power. But there was a phenomenon that took place after the war. I do not know just exactly with whom it began or where it began, but there was certainly a revival in evangelism, mass evangelism that began first in Philadelphia with Mervin Rosell, and the next two or three years later with Hyman Appleman, and then sometime later with Dr. Billy Graham, but at the same time there was a renewed emphasis on healing and the gifts of the Spirit.

You have had your own opinions of these movements. I personally have felt that God never intended healing to be exploited for any purpose whatsoever, but at the same time that you have had your reaction, and I have had mine, be it understood that there have been those living in denominational sterility and emptiness who have nonetheless been tuned to God in hunger, and so for the last ten years we have seen a strange thing happening. I stand before you as one who is to some degree a product of that strange thing, not moved by contact with any group, but only with my own failure and hunger, and with reading such men as Meyers, and Murray, and Müller and Moody, I had to come to that place that the teachings with which I had been indoctrinated, namely that the supernatural ceased with the conclusion of the witness to Israel, were not Scriptural and were not to be held any longer. So there came a time when I was a candidate for the fullness of Christ. I saw first the glorious teaching of union with Christ in death, and, oh, the liberty and the deliverance that comes when you experience union and identification with Him and escape the tyranny of personality, of trait, and self. But then, after some two years of joyous delight in this, I began to realize that though I had been born of the Spirit, I had not been born filled with the Spirit. And so there began a pilgrimage in the Word to find out the Scriptural foundation. And in February 9, 1953 God in His sweet grace brought me into the experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Since that time I have been observing God's working. I have seen Him move because of contact with some across the land. And I would tell you tonight that there is a greatly accelerating movement. I am not happy with all the aspects of this movement, because I believe that there are certain areas in it that do not exegetically meet the Word. I am troubled about that. But I would have you know that tonight there are many in the Baptist persuasion that are deeply hungry for God and are as this one seeking God entered into the glorious reality of His presence, and the fullness of the Spirit. It is not denominationally wide, but I find that such a man as Francis Whiting, Editor of the Adult Sunday School Quarterly for the American Baptist wrote an article published in the Alliance Witness a year or so ago, a baccalaureate address, delivered at Northern Baptist Seminary, in which he set forth the truth that we have been proclaiming here for all these many years. Out in Minnesota, in the Midwest there is a large company of Lutheran young people that, seeking God in His Word, have come to a position almost identical in every particular with that of Dr. Simpson. We discover, for instance, that among the Presbyterians today there is a desperate hunger for God. They have tried liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, organization and promotion, everything that man can do, and in the, I say, the sterility and the deadness of it their hearts has been stirred with a deep hunger for the fullness of the Holy Ghost. We find also among the Episcopalians a movement which is of such proportions now that it can no longer be viewed with amusement, but it must be recognized that God is invading that fellowship. For over at St. Bartholomew's here in our city, through the good ministry of His servant, Dr. Finley, that He brought from England by way of Canada to this city, we find that those that have been attending for years are discovering they have never been born of God, and those that have been born of God are discovering that God is willing to heal their bodies and fill them with the Holy Spirit.

I am sure that there is no one here that will accuse the Episcopalians of being fanatic, or going to excess or wild fire. If they have had any charge levelled against them during this decade or the centuries of their ministry it might be that of ritual coldness. But we discover now that here in the beginning of this 6th decade in this 20th century that God is visiting the denominations.

Now, my time is gone, and more. And I am simply saying to you that this is the day of God's visitation. Not everything is good, and I am not delighted with all I see or learn, but I am delighted with the fact that wherever God finds hungry hearts, in whatever context He finds them, He is prepared to meet them, and to satisfy them with His fullness. This is the day of God's

moving, and the day of God's blessing. I do not feel it is necessary for you to go to any one of these groups by any means, for it all in one sense began here eighty years ago as far as church life in this land is concerned, but I believe in this 75th anniversary year of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, God is issuing to us, and especially of the Gospel Tabernacle Church, a clarion call to return to our heritage, to return to the privileges that we have had and to the prophecies that we have declared, and to the promises we have promulgated. I believe that the Holy Ghost is calling us to experience, and thus to evidence the genuine truth of that which we have held to be Biblical truth.

And so the cry of my heart tonight is this, O God, while on others Thou art calling, do not pass us by. And may somehow the mercy drops, falling upon the Baptists, the Presbyterians the Lutherans, the Methodists, and the Episcopalians, so excite your heart and stir your thirst that you will read again the foundations of the fellowship of which you are a part here, and wait before God until God can reveal Himself to you in the fullness of His blessing, and that which we have held to be tradition and true shall now become gloriously, dynamically revealed and released in our hearts and in our lives. I submit to you this, dear friends, unless we do, God will pass us by and take our candlestick from us. This is the day of God's visitation, the hour of His turning and the hour of great opportunity. Oh, may God stir us from all lethargy and apathy, and indifference, and realize that whereas He is working here and there and hither and yon, His great desire, I believe, is to return where first the testimony was heard and do again the first works that blessing may flow in measure unlimited.

Shall we bow in prayer. Our Father, we thank and praise Thee that Thou by Thy Spirit hath bid us come. Thou hast said, Let him that is athirst come and take of the water of life freely, and Thou hast said, Blessed is he, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled. O God, teach us, turn us, try us, and then fill us with Thyself. We pray, our God, for the young, for so often it is with the young, whose lives have not been marred with stereotypes and limited by tradition that Thou canst bless. We pray for the old, those who have walked so long in the way that their last years may be filled with blessing and power, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost. We pray for young and old together that Thou wilt come upon them. Thou hast said, "The old man shall dream dreams, and the young men shall see visions, and sons and daughters shall prophesy." And we cry out to Thee, Lord, that Thou wilt for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the honor of His name, will as Thou art visiting others come upon us. O God, come upon us, come upon us, until everything less than Thy best is eschewed and spurned, and we have given ourselves wholly unto Him who alone is worthy. We thank Thee for what Thou hast done for Baptists, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, and Lutherans, but O God do not forget us. Meet us. We need Thee so. Our hearts cry out to Thee. Come upon us. For Jesus Sake. Amen.

Let us stand. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost be and abide with each now and until we meet at Jesus' feet. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, January 7, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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