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Wesleyan Holiness Studies Center

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Wesleyan/Holiness Studies Center
AT ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Bulletin

David E. Harrell Comments at the Opening of the John Carver Collection

Subject to public ridicule and harassment for much of the twentieth century, pentecostals, by the end of the millennium, had earned the begrudging attention, sometimes even the admiration, of their more staid religious neighbors. No one could have predicted such a transformation in the 1920s. In the early twentieth century, those religious observers who were aware that pentecostals existed labeled them "holy rollers," pictured them as faintly berserk, and presumed that their bizarre rituals would remain confined to the oak thickets of the outback and slum missions in the cities. Who would have believed that these "holy rollers" would be the grandparents of sophisticated charismatics and that tongues speaking (upgraded, to be sure, to glossolalia) would reverberate through the ballrooms of Hilton hotels?

Of course, history is filled with ironies. It is the calling of historians to explain how it came to pass that the curious became commonplace and the meek inherited the earth. The growth of pentecostal churches, and even more striking, the spread of pentecostal theology is probably the most important Protestant story of the twentieth century. Counting religious heads is a tricky business, and the most exuberant numerical claims of all religious communities,

including charismatics, are often exaggerations. At best, popular estimates of the numbers of pentecostals/charismatics stretch the meaning of theological categories beyond recognition. At worst, the numbers are pure boosterism. Nonetheless, from time-to-time, any casual observer in the United States will pass a new multi-million dollar, space-age sanctuary housing a bulging pentecostal or independent charismatic congregation. Outside the United States, the pentecostal stirring

Manila. The pentecostal claim that their movement is now the largest Protestant family of churches in the world, based on the monumental World Christian Encyclopedia edited by David Barrett, is less triumphal breast-beating than proven fact. No one can doubt that the Holy Spirit is moving powerfully in developing countries in Asia, South America, and Africa. It is clear that the growth of pentecostal/charismatic churches around the world is a phenomenon that demands study

The first dramatic spark for postwar revival came from a series of healing revivals conducted largely among Oneness Pentecostal Churches by an unconventional and mystical independent Baptist preacher from Jeffersonville, Indiana, who had embraced the supernaturalism of pentecostalism, William Marrion Branham. In an electrifying series of healing meetings in St. Louis and Arkansas in 1946, thousands of people came to witness Branham lay hands on the sick and reputedly raise the dead. By the spring of 1947 Branham had attracted the attention and support of several veteran pentecostal promoters and managers, including Gordon Lindsay, subsequently the editor of the Voice of Healing magazine (1948) and head of Christ for the Nations, and the postwar healing revival began to take form. The word of Branham's extraordinary gifts spread like wildfire through the pentecostal world, and by 1947 the healing revival had momentarily broken the bitterest theological barrier separating pentecostal denominations—a contentious debate on the Trinity.

William Branham was an enigmatic, almost surreal personality and in early 1948, to the astonishment of his handlers, Branham announced that he was withdrawing from the revival scene because of exhaustion. Although

Who would have believed that these "holy rollers" would be the grandparents of sophisticated charismatics, and that tongues speaking would reverberate through the ballrooms of Hilton Hotels?

is changing the religious demography of the Christian world. A recent listing of the twenty-five largest Protestant churches in the world included twelve pentecostal congregations in South Korea. The largest Protestant church in the world is Pastor Paul Y. Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul. In the top ten were two other churches in Seoul; one in Incheon, and the Jesus Is Lord Fellowship in

and explanation.

There was nothing substantially new about the independent healing revival that broke out in the pentecostal subculture in 1947. The postwar evangelists knew about and borrowed from an earlier generation of healing evangelists that included Aimee Semple McPherson, Smith Wigglesworth, and Charles Price. The demand of the hour was new gifted leaders.

Recent Articles on Wesleyan/Holiness Themes

- Bendroth, Margaret.** "Rum, Romanism and Evangelicalism: Protestants and Catholics in Late Nineteenth-Century Boston." *Church History* 68 (September 1999): 627-647.
- Bohlman, Rachael E.** "Our House Beautiful: The Women's Temple and the WCTU Effort to Establish Place and Identity in Downtown Chicago, 1887-1898." *Journal of Women's History* 11 (Summer 1999): 110-134.
- Borgen, Ole E.** "John Wesley and early Swedish Pietism: Carl Magnus Wrangel and Johan Hinric Liden." *Methodist History* 38 (January 2000): 82-101.
- Bundy, David.** "Pentecostalism as an Ecumenical and Missiological Challenge to the Other Churches: A Review Essay Focusing on Latin America and Italy." *Encounter* 60 (1999): 307-338.
- Bundy, David.** "Song of Ascents: Autobiographical Reflection and the Development of the Mission Theory of E. Stanley Jones." *Missiology* 27 (October 1999): 467-473.
- Collins, Kenneth J.** "Recent Trends in Wesleyan /Holiness." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35 (Spring 2000): 67-98. (Includes a response by Randy Maddox)
- Daniel, W. Harrison.** "To Strengthen the Ties that Bind: John L. Nuelson and German-American Connectionalism in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1912-1940." *Methodist History* 38 (April 2000): 160-175.
- Davis, Morris L.** "From Gospel Circuit to the War Circuit: Bishop Matthew Simpson and Upwardly Mobile Methodism." *Methodist History* 38 (April 2000): 199-209.
- Dieter, Melvin E.** "Wesleyan/Holiness Churches" In Bill J. Leonard, *Christianity in Appalachia: Profiles in Regional Pluralism*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999.
- Evans, Christopher H.** "From Militant Methodism to Secular Christianity: The Social Gospel in American Methodist Historical Narratives." *Methodist History* 38 (April 2000): 147-159.
- Evensen, Bruce J.** "It is a Marvel to Many People: Dwight Moody, Mass Media, and the Revival of 1877." *New England Quarterly* 72 (June 1999): 251-274.
- Hamilton, Barry W.** "Preaching the Narrow Way: William B. Godbey's Homiletical Agenda for the Early Holiness Movement." *Methodist History* 38 (October 1999): 40-52.
- Hardt, Philip F.** "The Evangelistic and Catechetical Role of the Class Meeting in Early New York Methodism." *Methodist History* 38 (October 1999): 14-26.
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- Lecleric, Dianne.** "Two Women Speaking 'Woman': The Strategic Essentialism of Luce Irigaray and Phoebe Palmer." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35 (Spring 2000): 182-199.
- Oliver, John W.** "Emma Brown Malone: A Mother of Feminism?" *Quaker History* 88 (Spring 1999): 4-21.
- Parker, Alison M.** "Hearts Uplifted and Minds Refreshed: The Woman's Temperance Union and the Pure Culture in the United States, 1880-1930." *Journal of Women's History* 10 (Winter 1999): 135-158.
- Sider, E. Morris.** "Lafayette Shoalts: A Modern Caleb." *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 23 (April 2000): 5-56.
- Spencer, Carole D.** "The American Holiness Movement: Why Did It Captivate Nineteenth Century Quakers?" *Quaker Religious Thought* 28 (January 1998): 19-30.
- Strong, Douglas M.** "Sanctified Eccentricity: Continuing Relevance of the Nineteenth-Century Holiness Paradigm." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35 (Spring 2000): 9-21.
- Warner, Lacey.** "Wesley Deaconess-Evangelists: Exploring Remnants of Revivalism in Late Nineteenth Century British Methodism." *Methodist History* 38 (April 2000): 176-190.

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Branham again began holding healing revivals six months later, his decision opened the floodgates for others who had heard God's call to launch independent ministries. Scores of aspiring men of God begged and borrowed enough money to buy a rig and night after night tested their gifts in the sultry incandescent haze under their tents. Gordon Lindsay's *Voice of Healing* magazine and organization became more or less handlers for a circle of talented evangelists who regaled pentecostals around the world with a torrent of reported healings and miracles. Oral Roberts launched his independent ministry in the summer of 1947, and in the absence of Branham, he quickly became the most respected, as well as the most theologically moderate, of the independent healing evangelists. Roberts occupied the right wing of the free-flowing revival—carefully remaining theologically correct, demanding decorum in his meetings, maintaining good relations with the pentecostal denominations and local churches, and proving himself to be a shrewd and careful organizer. His position at the head of the pan-pentecostal healing revival was confirmed when he was invited to deliver the concluding address at the inaugural meeting of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America in October 1948.

Triple A, as Asa A. Allen was dubbed by his peers, blazed through the revival like a comet until he died in a San Francisco hotel in 1970. His

life ended in controversy, as it had been lived in controversy. By the end of his life, Allen had achieved a degree of national fame. In 1969 he was featured in a story in *Look* magazine. The healing revival had changed dramatically by 1970. Oral Roberts stopped holding healing revivals in 1967 and increasingly the superstars of the pentecostal/charismatic revival were teachers and entertainers rather than gifted evangelists. The last of the old-timers who still assembled the masses under his tent to heal the sick and cast out devils in 1970, Allen left behind a generation of evangelists who viewed him as a model and mentor.

A. A. Allen's life story is filled with ironies and tantalizing twists and turns. It is a story that begs to be told, and this collection will do much to make that telling possible. From his earliest days as an independent minister in 1951, through the years he was associated with the Voice of Healing group, Allen careened along the radical fringe of the healing revival, reporting ever more dramatic miracles and making more and more extravagant claims. Always controversial, in 1955 Allen was arrested in Knoxville, Tennessee, for drunken driving. He later insisted that he had been kidnapped and had awakened in a "smoke-filled room and somebody was pouring liquor down his throat." But his explanation was regarded as less than satisfactory by pentecostal denominational leaders

who were already backing away from the healing revival that they believed had spun completely out of control. Allen was estranged from both the Assemblies of God and the Voice of Healing. In 1956 he launched his own magazine, *Miracle Magazine*, to promote his own brand of radical healing revival.

Allen's contributions to the shape of the healing revival were many, far outlasting the direct influence of his revival ministry. The healing revival was probably the most striking interracial movement in America in the 1950s and 1960s, and no one did more to foster that atmosphere than Allen. Allen introduced Black musical styles and Black musicians, including the talented Gene Martin, into his meetings. Ever ready to see what new thing God was doing, Allen welcomed musical innovations in his services. Allen also had a life-long interest in the Native Americans of the Southwest. After he moved his headquarters to Miracle Valley, Arizona, in the 1960s, his annual camp meetings featured an "Indian night" that attracted thousands of supporters from the reservations. In addition, Allen claimed to have originated, and he unquestionably contributed to, several new ideas that became important in the broadening pentecostal/charismatic revival of the 1970s. He was certainly one of the first of the evangelists to latch on to the gospel of prosperity which became so central to the suc-

cess of independent ministries after 1970.

The legacy most celebrated by the Carver collection, however, is that of the populist, democratic, anti-establishment religious creativity which surfaces from time to time in American history when the poor and the lowly dared to seize control of their own religious destiny. The legacy of William Branham and A. A. Allen survives at the end of the twentieth century in the careers of those who knew them and admired them. Don Stewart fell heir to Allen's ministry when he died and has continued off and on to use the methods and techniques he learned from his mentor. R.W. Schambach was the truest replica of Allen into the 1990s, long continuing the tradition of tent healing and preaching with a flamboyance reminiscent of the early days of the healing revival. And scores of other evangelists, like H. Richard Hall, continued to roam the American countryside proclaiming the message of the radical pentecostal revival in the pockets of poverty and need that remain in every nook and cranny of the nation, remembering the likes of Branham and Allen and believing that something greater lay ahead. ☞

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Recent Books on Wesleyan/Holiness Themes

- Andrews, Dee.** *The Methodists and Revolutionary America: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Balmer, Randall.** *Blessed Assurance: A History of Evangelicalism in America.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1999. \$23.00
- Burrow, Jr., Rufus.** *Personalism: A Critical Introduction.* St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999. \$29.99.
- Callen, Barry,** editor. *Following the Light: Teaching, Testimonies, Trials, Triumphs of the Church of God Movement, Anderson: A Documentary History.* Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2000.
- Fudge, Daniel.** *Daniel Warner and the Paradox of Religious Democracy in Nineteenth Century America.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1998. \$99.95.
- Hamilton, Barry W.** *William Baxter Godbey: Itinerant Apostle of the Holiness Movement.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2000. \$99.95.
- Hattersley, Roy.** *Blood and Fire: William and Catherine Booth and the Salvation Army.* New York: Doubleday, 1999.
- Kaufman, Paul Leslie.** *Logical Luther Lee and the Methodist War against Slavery.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000.
- Kinghorn, Kenneth Cain.** *The Heritage of American Methodism.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Knudson, Newell P.** *Adventure in Faith: A History of the California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1968-1998.* Order from Cokesbury, 2907 West Capitol St., Sacramento, CA 95691. \$8.00.
- Mathews, James K.** *As I See It: the Autobiography of James K. Mathews.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Oldstone-Moore, Christopher.** *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a New Nonconformity.* Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999.
- Reasoner, Vic.** *The Hope of the Gospel: An Introduction to Wesleyan Eschatology.* Evansville, IN: Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers, 1999.
- Schmidt, June Miller.** *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodism, 1760-1939.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Taves, Ann.** *Rites, Trances and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Wacker, Grant.** *Religion in 19th Century America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

B. L. Fisher Library Announces the Addition of the Carver Healing Collection

On April 16, 1999 the B. L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary formally opened the John W. Carver Healing Collection.

This multi-media collection documents the twentieth century healing revival focusing upon the ministries of **A. A. Allen, F. F. Bosworth, William Branham, Jack Coe, Charles Price, Oral Roberts, R. W. Schambach and Don Stewart.**

This issue of the Wesleyan/Holiness Studies Center Bulletin is primarily an introduction to the collection. A 45-page introduction to the collection including essays by David Bundy, David E. Harrell (see excerpt) and a response by John W. Carver is available postpaid for \$5.00.

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