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THE PILLAR OF FIRE
Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

With an Introduction to Biblical Holiness
and the Holiness Movement

THE PILLAR OF FIRE: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Masters degree in Theological Studies from
Asbury Theological Seminary

By

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Wilmore, Kentucky

April 1, 1992

To my parents who have consistently and lovingly shown me what it means to be a servant of Jesus Christ. And, to the many faithful who have labored -- humbly and fervently -- within the Pillar of Fire Church for our Lord.

May God use the following pages to kindle the Pillar of Fire into a mighty, Spirit-filled blaze.

Acknowledgments:

Thanks to ...

Bill Kostlevy

Mark Nyswander

Dr. Steve Seamands

Dr. Steve O'Malley

And my wife, Debra, for all of her love and typing

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a small step toward helping myself and others gain insight into some of the workings of God through history. It will focus on the history of the holiness movement and concentrate more specifically on a small Wesleyan Holiness Denomination known as the Pillar of Fire.

The Pillar of Fire was founded by a woman named Alma White, the wife of Kent White -- an ordained elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church. This was but one of many groups which broke off from the Holiness movement in Methodism during the late 19th and early 20th Century. The Holiness movement represented a renewed emphasis on the doctrine of Christian holiness or "Christian Perfection" as it was taught by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism.

The Pillar of Fire was formally organized as a church at Denver, Colorado on December 29, 1901¹ and was initially called the "Pentecostal Union Church". It was incorporated on March 20, 1902.² The name was officially changed to the "Pillar of Fire" on May 7, 1917.

I have deep generational roots within the Pillar of Fire Church. My mother was born and raised in England where, at the age of nine, she and her two younger sisters were adopted by young Pillar of Fire missionaries in London during World War II. My (adoptive) grandfather, Rev. Wilbur Konkell, D.D. is a bishop in the Pillar of Fire Church and director of our

church's overseas missions. My mother has now been teaching in the Pillar of Fire schools for over thirty years and has been active in many other capacities.

When my father was a young boy, a Pillar of Fire minister visited their home on a Sunday and found my grandfather mowing the lawn. The minister was A. K. White (the son of Alma White). He promised that he would provide help to mow the lawn during the week if my grandfather would bring his family to church. From that time on, my grandparents were faithful members and raised their children in the Pillar of Fire Church and School. My father has now been teaching in Pillar of Fire schools for over 40 years. He is also an ordained elder and minister of the Church and has functioned in a variety of ways through the years.

I had a wonderful childhood growing up in Zarephath, New Jersey -- the international headquarters of the Pillar of Fire Church. My five older sisters and I were not raised with a typical one or two day visit to the church. With parents faithfully committed to full-time work in the Pillar of Fire Church, a great deal of our lives were connected to the church. Although there were many good years, there were some difficult years as well for our church. During this time, many people left the movement disillusioned and broken-hearted.

My faith was strongly nurtured at home as well as by many of the faithful witnesses I saw around me. I cannot remember a time in my childhood when I did not believe that Jesus was

God and that He was my Savior. It was during high school that I reached another crisis point in my faith and surrendered all to Jesus as my Lord. My faith in God continued to grow, but my faith in the church was shattered. When I left for college, I had no intentions of ever becoming a member of the Pillar of Fire Church.

My opinion soon changed. With new leadership came new life and hope in the Church. I saw God working and felt Him leading me back into the Pillar of Fire. Many great things have happened since then and the Spirit of God continues to breathe new life into this small part of His body. I believe much greater works of God lie ahead if we are faithful and do not stand in His way.

I write this thesis with two groups and one individual in mind. First, for those within the Pillar of Fire who have forgotten, never understood, or never have had the opportunity to learn the foundational "roots" of the Pillar of Fire. This includes the many wonderful people who continue to join this movement in recent years.

Second, I write for anyone outside of the Pillar of Fire who has heard this "strange" name and is curious about its role in the Body of Christ.

Finally, I write this for myself. When I was in high school my limited eyes could not see enough life within the movement to justify its existence as an institution. I was touched, however, by the deep commitment and love for God in many of

its members. I viewed many of their practices and doctrine as outdated and irrelevant. I have gone through much in my spiritual pilgrimage since then and am grateful that God continues to teach me. As I have studied the Bible and the history of this church, I have become convinced that the Biblical message of holiness is desperately needed today.

It is my conviction that no individual or movement can blossom without a clear understanding of its roots. If we do not know where we have come from and what we have come through, we will likely lose sight of where we are headed and what we are called to do.

I hope that this writing will turn us back to our roots. There is much good and some bad to be found there. We have not always held a proper balance and many mistakes have been made. At times we have been sidetracked on issues less important while the more critical issues gather dust and the desperate needs of this world have been avoided. I also pray that this writing will help us to understand the "radical" character of our roots within the holiness movement. There is great fire and energy in our past which I strongly believe we are being called to recapture. We cannot accomplish this on our own -- it is from beginning to end a work of God -- anything less would be in vain.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
--Acts 1:8 NIV

FOOTNOTES

1. White, Alma The Story of My Life Vol.2 (Zarephath: Pillar of Fire, 1929). p.203.
2. IBID p.229.

CHAPTER 1: THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT IN PERSPECTIVE

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the church on the subject of holiness.¹ This is exciting. For too long the modern Western church has suffered from its lack of a proper understanding of the holiness of God and the calling of holiness for the believer. Where holiness has been an emphasis it has been stripped of its power and narrowly defined in only moralistic terms with a list of do's and don'ts. Our understanding must not continue to be so restricted. Holiness is much more than ethical purity; it is also power and love. Holiness is really the sum of all that God is. As Christians we are called to be holy (I Peter 1:15,16) so it is important that we understand what this means.

In order to understand the Pillar of Fire or the holiness movement in America, we must begin by tracing the Bible's teaching on holiness and briefly see how it was carried through the centuries giving rise to the holiness movement in the mid 1800's. This chapter will attempt to do just that and then conclude with the emergence of the American holiness movement.

HOLINESS DEFINED

In the English language the word "holy" comes from the old English word "hal" which means "whole".² This is a good place for us to begin -- "holiness" in our language refers to a state of being whole and complete. This involves every part

of our being. But there is more implied in the word than this. The words "holy" or "holiness" are generally interchangeable with the words "sanctification", "sanctify" and "sanctified".³ To sanctify means to "to set apart to a sacred purpose"; "to free from sin."⁴

It is most important, of course, to understand what the Bible means when it speaks of holiness. The Hebrew word for holy or holiness is "quodesh".⁵ The forms of this Hebrew word occur more than 830 times in the Old Testament.⁶ This word first of all implies a distinction or a separation. It does not mean to separate just for the sake of doing it or just to make a statement. It means a separation from things which are not sacred because of a dedication to God.⁷ God is holy and objects or persons which are in some way connected with God receive holiness from their connection with Him.⁸ It is only in our relationship with God that we become holy not by living a certain kind of "holy life." The term for holy can also mean a radiance and purity.⁹ This, again, primarily refers to God as well as what He can do in us. In the second chapter of Genesis we are told that God created man and woman in His image. God is holy and we are called to reflect this through our relationship with Him.

The New Testament contains three different word forms for holy. The word "hieros" refers to God or things consecrated to Him. "Hagios" is the word most frequently used and it has an ethical element which emphasizes the duty of all to worship

God. The final word used is "hosios." This word goes even further in emphasizing human obligations of morality and obedience to God's commands.¹⁰

A final word of importance for us in this section is the Greek word "teleios." This word is translated as "perfection" in English and is very significant in understanding the teachings of John Wesley and the movements influenced by him. This word has a two-fold meaning of 1) completeness and 2) without wavering to the end.¹¹ Only God is complete and perfect, but in "human perfection", we can experience a perfect love where all obstacles are removed and we love God in all of our affections, understanding and energy.¹²

HOLINESS OF GOD

In exploring holiness we must always begin with God. In the Judeo Christian faith, God is the "Wholly Other" who is distinguished above all other things.¹³ The Bible is clear in teaching that there is no holiness outside of God.¹⁴ Only God is perfect, complete and unblemished in Himself. Everything else is a holiness which is derived from God.¹⁵

God's holiness is beautifully displayed by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah's favorite phrase for God was "the Holy One of Israel".¹⁶ In Isaiah 6:3 we read of his vision when the seraphs are calling out to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." (NIV) God in His holiness is high above mankind and all the rest of His Creation. This is a clear view of what is called His

transcendence (otherness and independence). But God does not leave us alone. He loves His creation and remains intimately involved with us.¹⁷

Isaiah expresses God's transcendence and His immanence (intimacy) in proper balance in this passage:

For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble. (Isaiah 57:15 NRSV)

The good news of the gospel is that God's love and holiness are intimately related and in harmony. It is not that God's holiness brings wrath and His love brings grace. Love is an expression of God's holiness. All of the wonderful characteristics of God are a part of His holiness.¹⁸ This relationship is expressed beautifully by R.A. Finlayson:

As the sun's rays, containing all the colors of the spectrum, come together and blend into light, so all the attributes of God come together in His self manifestation and blend into holiness.

The Old Testament firmly establishes the holiness of God. The New Testament continues this and builds upon it by establishing the holiness of God the Son and God the Spirit. The primary form is found in the Greek word "hagios". This word form is almost exclusively used in a personal sense for one who has a relationship with God.²⁰

Jesus Christ is described as holy in the following New Testament passages: Mark 1:24; Luke 1:35, 4:34; John 6:69; Acts 2:27, 3:14, 4:27,30, 13:5; Hebrews 7:26; John 2:20 and

Revelation 3:7.²¹ Many other passages describe His holy nature by other characteristics. Jesus aligns Himself with God in all ways including His holiness when He tells his disciples that to see Him and know Him is to see and know God the Father. (John 14:7,9) We are also told by the author of Hebrews that Jesus represents God in all of His attributes (ie. holiness).

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word... (Hebrews 1:1-3)

The Spirit of God is specifically called the Holy Spirit 91 times in the New Testament.²² This is the most frequently occurring name for the Spirit of God in the Bible. This word, "hagio" (holy), not only sets the Holy Spirit apart from other spirits but it also gives a personal emphasis showing that the Spirit is a person and not just an influence.²³

The role of the Holy Spirit is crucial in the understanding and receiving of holiness. It is the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promises will come and live within his followers, those who love Him and obey Him. (John 14:15-17) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who guides us into all truth and who testifies of Jesus, convicts the world of guilt, sin, righteousness and judgement. (John 15:26, 16:8-15)

John testified that he baptized with water but that Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Matthew

3:11) Jesus proclaimed this baptism in Acts 1:5 and promised that those filled with the Holy Spirit would receive power to witness to the world and serve him faithfully. (Acts 1:8)

We have so far attempted a definition of holiness and discussed briefly the holy nature of God in both the Old and New Testaments. This holiness is attributed to the Father, Son and Spirit -- the entire Godhead. Holiness which is derived from God is often used as a description for other things such as institutions or people. In the Christian tradition, the emphasis has been placed on the holiness of the Church and the holiness of individuals. It is important to briefly explore these emphases.

HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH

The holiness of the Church has been a particular emphasis of the Roman Catholic Church and certain high church Anglicans.²⁴ In many ways this is appropriate and Biblical. The Old Testament's portrayal of Israel as God's holy people is very similar to the New Testament's portrayal of the Church.²⁵ In Exodus 19:6 God instructs Moses to tell the Israelites: "You will be for me a **kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**" (NIV, emphasis mine) The Apostle Peter takes this passage and applies it to the New Testament Church in stating, "But you are chosen people, a **royal priesthood, a holy nation,** a people belonging to God..." (I Peter 2:9 NIV, emphasis mine)

It is the covenant between God and Israel which is the basis for Israel's holiness described in the Old Testament.

Israel is called holy because of their association with God and the covenant He has made with them (ie. Exodus 19:5,6; Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 7:6)²⁶

In the New Testament, the Church (the body of believers in Christ) are proclaimed holy on the basis of the new covenant in Christ's blood shed on the cross (ie. John 17:19; Romans 15:16; I Corinthians 1:2, 6:11; Ephesians 5:26)²⁷

Generally, in the Catholic and high church Anglican traditions, the focus is on the Church as an institution which is seen as holy in contrast to the Church as a body of committed believers. It is through the Church (institution) in which God is seen as working and relating His grace to the individual. To state it another way,

The Holy Spirit, working through the Church and the ministry of the sacraments conveys grace and cleanses believers from unrighteousness, making them holy, though not perfectly so.²⁸

HOLINESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Beyond the emphasis of the Church as a whole being called holy, the Bible emphasizes this as part of the call and privilege of each believer in Christ. Once again, the Apostle Peter stated, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" (I Peter 1:15,16) Here, Peter quotes from Leviticus. We are also told by the author of Hebrews that we are to be holy for "without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14)

The understanding of a personal call to holiness has never been absent from the Church. It was not a teaching initiated by John Wesley or the 19th Century holiness movement although it did find a renewed emphasis here. In the following sections, I will highlight certain figures in the period between the 2nd Century and emergence of the holiness movement in America in the 19th Century. This is in no way meant to be comprehensive as that would require an extensive volume.

THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

Irenaeus (130-202 AD) is one of the earliest defenders of the Christian faith from the 2nd Century whose works have survived. He was bishop of the church in Lyon.²⁹ In Irenaeus we begin to see a doctrine of Christian holiness or perfection: "God is mighty to make that perfect which the willing spirit desires," and, "the Apostle calls them perfect who present body, soul, and spirit without blame before God; who not only have the Holy Spirit abiding in them, but also preserve faultless their souls and bodies, keeping their fidelity to God and fulfilling their duties to their neighbors."³⁰ In this quotation, Irenaeus stressed both the personal and corporate elements of holiness.

THE MONASTIC MOVEMENT

The followers of Christ from the very beginning of the Christian Church experienced various degrees of persecution.

This was at its worst with the Roman emperor Nero in A.D. 64 and continued on and off through the 3rd Century. To be a Christian during this time period was not a popular thing and it often resulted in martyrdom or great suffering. All of this changed in the 4th Century when the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. During this time Christianity was not only tolerated but came to be favored as the official religion of the empire. This carried the price of making Christianity a popular and even profitable decision for the individual and many aligned themselves with the Church without having a true faith and commitment to Christ. It was primarily in response to this that the great monastic movement began.³¹

R. Newton Flew describes monasticism as "the boldest organized attempt to attain Christian perfection in all the long history of the Church."³² This movement emphasized the "contemplative life" where one spent much time daily in rigid devotion, prayer and meditation. The goal of this was to have one's heart purified and to fully embrace the Kingdom of God. Writings such as the "Homilies of Macarius the Egyptian" present a doctrine of Christian perfection (holiness) based on the victory through Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. John Wesley was greatly influenced by such writings as these.³³

It is important to note that the monastic life did not always mean cutting oneself off from any contact or influence upon society. Paul Tillich states this well.

Monasticism represents the uncompromising negation of the world, but this negation was not a quietistic one. It was a negation coupled with activity directed toward transforming the world -- in labor, science, and other forms of culture, church, architecture and building, poetry and music. It was a very interesting phenomena and has little to do with the deteriorated monasticism against which the Reformers and humanists were fighting. On the one hand, it was a radical movement of resignation from the world. On the other hand, it did not fall merely into a mystical form of asceticism; or into a ritualistic form as the Eastern Church was in danger of doing; it applied itself to the transformation of reality.³⁴

AUGUSTINE (354-430 A.D.)

It is important that we include Augustine in our discussion because he was the primary figure not only of medieval Catholic scholasticism, but also his teachings greatly shaped the theology of the 16th Century Protestant Reform movement.³⁵ Augustine was a brilliant thinker who was greatly influenced by the writings and thought of the Greek philosopher Plato. Following Augustine's conversion to Christ, he became a great champion of the faith and leader of the Church.³⁶

Augustine is well known for his doctrine of original sin and for what has been called the "two nature theory". This view holds that we are given a new nature at conversion which is holy and righteous. This new nature lives within us in addition to the remaining old nature. The born again believer thus has two natures, a new sinless nature (the redeemed spirit) and an old corrupt nature (the body or flesh). These two natures co-exist in battle until death.³⁷

Augustine did hold to a doctrine of relative Perfection. This was to be found in enjoying the presence and love of God in our hearts as well as a consuming social love to live our faith and share this love with all. Through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, a Christian could grow in love and relationship with God and continually be transformed more and more into God's Image. Sanctification was seen as a gradual process where the new nature came to dominate more and more over the old nature. This sanctification then became complete at death when the old nature was destroyed.³⁸

THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274)

Thomas Aquinas is probably the most influential Catholic theologian who ever lived. His thinking and writing shapes Catholic doctrine to this day. He, unlike Augustine, was a systematic theologian. He lived during a time of rediscovery of the philosophy of Aristotle. The writings of Aristotle greatly influenced his world view and theology. This is in contrast to Augustine who was greatly influenced by the thought of Plato.³⁹

Aquinas gave much consideration to the view of Christian perfection. He placed great emphasis on meditation, prayer and the contemplative life (ie. life in a monastery) but did not disregard the need for living an active life of love for others. Love for others was to flow out of a deep love and daily experience in the presence of God.⁴⁰ Aquinas associated

Christian perfection with love as did John Wesley. In discussing the life of contemplation in his great work "Summa Theologiae" (The Sum of Theology) he says, "This is the ultimate perfection of the contemplative life, that the Divine truth be not only seen but also loved." Aquinas, like Augustine, accepted the Platonic view that the body and its desires were fundamentally evil and perfection meant an elimination of bodily desires.⁴¹

THE FRANCISCANS

Aquinas' teaching offered the attainment of Christian perfection for all. His view of the contemplative life, however, was more directed toward a monastic life of seclusion.⁴² Others, such as Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) and what came to be known as the "Franciscan Order" emphasized a life of perfection for all Christians.⁴³ Their aim was:

...to awaken in Christian souls everywhere a striving after holiness and perfection, to keep the example of a direct following of Christ before the eyes of the world as a continuous living spectacle, and by self-sacrificing devotion to become all things to those who were spiritually abandoned and physically destitute.⁴⁴

THE REFORMED TRADITION

The Reformed tradition, represented by Martin Luther and John Calvin, has tended to emphasize "positional holiness" for the believer.⁴⁵ This Reformed doctrine, in agreement with Augustine, emphasizes that we are saved by faith and considered righteous by God. We are holy because of what Jesus has done

for us. His blood covers our sin. The Holy Spirit then begins a life long work of transformation in the believer but there always must be struggle with the sin nature. There were other important figures in the Reformation such as Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), but only the two most prominent leaders will be discussed.

MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)

Luther struggled greatly with his emotions and his faith throughout his life. He was often overwhelmed with guilt even as an Augustinian monk and theologian.⁴⁶ In the midst of the turmoil, Luther was studying Romans and wrote of his experience:

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'" there I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith ... Here I felt I was altogether born-again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.⁴⁷

Luther embraced Christ's gift of forgiveness as we all must. In contrast to the medieval Catholic teaching of finding and loving God through contemplation, Luther saw that salvation was a gift of love revealed through Jesus Christ. Luther focused on forgiveness of sins in Christ, not on perfect love of God and neighbor.⁴⁸

Luther taught that we were to pursue a life of holiness through piety and sacrifice, but this pursuit could not be completed until death. Until then, however, the Holy Spirit would continue to do a work of sanctification in our hearts. He was greatly influenced by Augustine's view of original sin and "two nature theory" in this regard.⁴⁹

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

The Protestant Reformation was well under way before Calvin entered the picture. He was 25 years old when he had a conversion experience which caused him to turn away from Roman Catholicism and embrace Reform thinking.⁵⁰ Calvin is well-known for his teachings on absolute predestination although his emphasis of this doctrine was placed out of proportion later by his followers.⁵¹ In this area, as well as many others, he differed from Martin Luther (whom he never met). Along with Augustine and Luther, however, Calvin felt that believers could never be delivered from the "flesh." He agrees with Augustine's assessment of Paul's writing in Romans 7 that the state of all believers is a constant conflict between the flesh and the spirit.⁵²

Calvin did not mean that believers were to rest only in their salvation and not press on. Calvin states:

...it is not very sound theology to confine a man's thoughts so much to himself, and not to set before him as the prime motive of his existence zeal to show for the glory of God.

For we are born first of all for God, and not for ourselves... It certainly is the duty of a Christian man to ascend higher than merely to seek and secure the salvation of his own soul.⁵³

The restoration of the doctrine of salvation by faith was the most significant theological achievement of the Reformation. This is the foundation of the gospel and the overwhelming testimony of the Bible. Many believe, however, that these Reformers over reacted against the "works" religion of Medieval Catholicism and failed to do justice to the distinctive person and work of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴

There were many groups which were to follow in the traditions of Calvin and Luther. Some would regain an emphasis on the Spiritfilled life. These groups included the German Pietists, the Quakers and the Moravians -- all of whom would have a great impact on the reform movement in England and the founding and religious thought of America.

THE ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT

This movement began shortly after the Reformed movement of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. They were not satisfied with purifying the theology but were convinced the the actual lives of Christians in regard to the social and political must also be addressed.⁵⁵

They were called "Anabaptists" (rebaptizers) because they felt a person should be baptized only after being converted to Christ -- not as an infant as was the tradition. They were

he published a short book entitled "Pia desideria" (Pious desires) which had a profound influence.⁵⁹

In this book, Spener outlined six steps toward bringing the Church back to life. The first step was the formation of small study groups within the churches where people would gather and earnestly study the Word of God. Secondly, Spener wished to restore the emphasis of the universal priesthood of all believers. This was done by giving lay persons leadership within these small groups. The third desire was to regain an emphasis on personal faith and experience with Christ. This was not to take the place of believing correct doctrine but Spener was emphatic that correct theology is not enough. Spener's fourth desire was that all controversies within the church be handled in love. The next desire was that the training of pastors go beyond logic and cold theology and include the reading of devotional writings and real experience in working with people. The final desire which Spener proposed was that sermons become more practical and relevant to the lives of the people and not just cold lectures.⁶⁰

Spener's book and leadership was met with much opposition, but also sparked renewal within the church. One man who was greatly affected by the German Pietist movement was Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760). He studied at the University of Halle which was a Pietist school. Zinzendorf went on to found a community which was the beginning of the Moravian movement. The Moravians were strict orthodox Lutherans, but

emphasized a life of morality and a personal faith and devotion to Christ. It was the Moravian movement and the desires proposed by Philipp Jakob Spener that so greatly impacted John Wesley and the entire Methodist movement.⁶¹

THE WESLEYAN HOLINESS TRADITION

This tradition acknowledges the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith and the "positional holiness" of the believer in Christ. It then goes further and acknowledges the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Through the work of the Spirit of God a believer is brought to "personal holiness." In other words, our sinful nature is not just **covered** by the blood of Christ, but can further be **transformed** by the Holy Spirit into a state of "perfect love" toward God.⁶²

In this section, the focus will be on John Wesley -- the founder of Methodism (from whom the Wesleyan tradition receives its name). John's brother, Charles, also played a significant role in the Methodist movement and is most known for the multitude of hymns he wrote that have deeply affected the movement through the centuries.

JOHN WESLEY (1703-1791)

Wesley emerges two centuries after the Reform movement under Luther and Calvin and one and one-half centuries after the Reformation in Great Britain which produced the Church of England (Anglican Church). Wesley was educated at Oxford along with his brother, Charles. While at Oxford, he took over a

small, intense study group which included his brother, Charles, and George Whitefield.⁶³

They were so strict and regimented in their studies, devotions, communion, etc. that they were mockingly called names such as the "Holy Club". The name that stuck was "Methodists".⁶⁴ Wesley was eventually ordained as an Anglican priest. He remained an Anglican all of his life.

After returning from a devastating experience as a missionary in Georgia with Charles, John continued to have deep unrest in his soul. He was extremely disciplined in his life and an avid reader greatly affected by the writings of the Catholic mystics. He was very "high church" in his orientation toward liturgy and in seeing salvation as mediated through the church. At that time, however, he was impacted by a group of Moravians who emphasized salvation by faith in Christ and the possibility of assurance that sins were forgiven. Wesley describes his famous Aldersgate Experience:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine,⁶⁵ and saved me from the law of sin and death...

The summer following Wesley's Aldersgate Experience, he travelled to Germany and visited with the Moravian leader Zinzerdorf. He gained much insight from this which would help

form the future shape of Methodism. Wesley was uncomfortable, however, with such things as their lack of emphasis on living a Christian life of good works, focusing only on personal saving faith.⁶⁶

Wesley had read wonderful reports regarding the revival in New England under the preaching of the first great American revivalist, Jonathan Edwards. He soon received a letter from his old friend, George Whitefield -- an original "Holy Club" member. Whitefield's preaching in Bristol, England was having the same results as that of Edwards in America. He wished to visit Edwards in America and asked Wesley to take over for him. With some reluctance, Wesley agreed and traveled to Bristol on March 29, 1739. On April 2, he preached his first sermon using the text from Luke 4:18,19:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.⁶⁷

Just as these words were spoken by Jesus to launch his ministry, so these words marked the beginning of the Methodist movement that would sweep through much of Europe and America.

Wesley has been called the "Completer of the Reformation." In his teaching on Christian Perfection, he did not pronounce anything new. He simply brought together the great truths of the Scripture separated by the Catholic and Protestant traditions. The Protestant movement had rightly embraced the

grace of God and salvation (justification) by faith. The Catholic tradition emphasized holiness through piety and good works. Wesley saw the truth in both of these and in bringing both together, he restored the balance which is present in the New Testament.⁶⁸

Wesley fully acknowledged that we can only be saved through a personal faith in Jesus Christ. He agrees wholeheartedly with the Reformers and St. Paul,

For it is by grace you have been saved,
through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it
is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one
can boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9)

Wesley went further in recognizing that it is not just our salvation which comes through Jesus Christ but also our holiness (sanctification, Christian perfection). This is critical to understand. To Wesley, holiness is not something we do or obtain by living a certain kind of moral lifestyle. Holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and flows from an unbroken relationship with Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ Holiness (Christian Perfection) is loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Even this love is a gift from God.⁷⁰

Wesley's most thorough development of the doctrine of Christian Perfection is found in his book "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection." In this book, he outlines the influences over the years which led him to this doctrine of Christian Perfection. He uses the term "perfect" because it is Biblical. Christ said, "Be ye perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father

is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) See also Matthew 19:21; Colossians 1:28; II Corinthians 7:1, 13:9 and 13:11. Wesley's use of the term "Christian Perfection" has been greatly misunderstood and was a source of severe attack. In a general summary of Christian Perfection he writes:

- 1) There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
- 2) It is not so early as justification, for justified persons are to "go on unto perfection." (Hebrews 6:1)
- 3) It is not so late as death, for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect. (Philippians 3:15)
- 4) It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.
- 5) It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body.
- 6) Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is "salvation from sin."
- 7) It is "perfect love" (I John 4:18). This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, are rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks. (I Thessalonians 5:16, etc.)
- 8) It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.
- 9) It is amissable, capable of being lost; of which we have numerous instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this till five or six years ago.
- 10) It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.
- 11) But is it in itself instantaneous or not? In examining this, let us go step by step.

An instantaneous change has been wrought in some believers; none can deny this⁷¹. But in some this change was not instantaneous.

The teachings of John Wesley and the literal explosion of the Methodist movement into America laid the groundwork for the emergence of the Holiness Movement in 19th Century America.

"Wesley's emphasis on 'holiness of heart and life' was readily received and embodied in the Holiness movement which was to sweep across American Christianity."⁷²

19th CENTURY HOLINESS MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN CONTEXT

There were many ingredients in 19th Century America which, when mixed with the expanding Methodist movement, produced the Holiness Movement. One of these was the American idealism. From the time of its founding, America saw itself as the "New Israel" with a divine destiny.⁷³ This had been infused into the American mind from the founding Puritan fathers and had remained a consistent theme greatly renewed during and after the American Revolution.⁷⁴ Americans believed they were called to be a light to the world and God had great plans and blessings in store for the nation.

The Holiness Movement was preceded by great revivalism. This had begun with Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the New England Congregational preacher whose ministry fruits had stirred Wesley in England. Edwards stressed repentance "as the immediate duty of every sinner," and his ministry resulted in what has been called the First Great Awakening.⁷⁵

Edwards was an "old school" Calvinist who believed in predestination. This view did not lend itself well to revivalism. The Arminian view of the free will of man became increasingly accepted as the mode of evangelism and was embraced

by Methodists and Baptists. This produced splits in such churches as Congregationalists and Presbyterians.⁷⁶

Part of the beginning of this can be traced to the "Great Kentucky Revival" which began about the year 1800. It was at this time "Camp Meetings" first began in America as thousands of people converged in frontier areas for protracted meetings. It was also following this that organized revivals were adopted by denominations such as Baptists and Methodists as a major tool of expanding the Church. The Methodist Episcopal movement experienced a rapid growth at this time as they blazed trails into the South and West.⁷⁷

American revivalism has always been represented in both Arminian and Calvinist camps. It was not until the "Methodization of the Calvinist wing of the revival tradition" which produced "new school" Calvinism with the rejection of the doctrine of election and predestination. The greatest example of this new school Calvinism was the revivalist Charles Finney. Finney emphasized the free will of man and an individual's role in personal salvation.⁷⁸ He argued in accordance with Peter (II Peter 3:9) that it was God's will that everyone be saved and turn from their sin.⁷⁹

Finney used many new measures in revivalism that raised a lot of eyebrows. He preached forcefully and showed his background as a lawyer by using much logic to show people the truth. The area of most controversy was perhaps his support

and encouragement of women to pray and speak during mixed (male/female) assemblies. This was quite rare at this time.⁸⁰

Finney was a mighty evangelist but also a great activist for social reform. He strongly challenged all people that claimed to know Christ to be faithful and to live the full Christian life. If someone was truly converted, their life would show it by love and commitment for the welfare of others. God has called us, male and female, to be co-laborers with Him in bringing about justice on this earth and in building His Kingdom. Such preaching ignited a movement of social reform which, among other things, helped defeat slavery in this country.⁸¹

Oberlin College was one significant Christian institution which was founded as a result of revivalism and the social reform movement. Oberlin was founded in the early 1830's. Many of its early students were participants in the so-called "Lane Rebellion." Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio was a revivalist and reform-oriented school. They were one of the first institutions in America to drop the color code and admit blacks. The school was in favor of gradual abolition but many of the students were pushing for immediate abolition. The students went into the black community educating them, assisting them with their financial and social needs, and living and eating with them. They correctly insisted that there is no place for prejudice in Christianity -- all races are equal.⁸²

The action of the students caused quite a stir. They were supported by Asa Mahan, a Presbyterian pastor in Cincinnati and John Morgan, a faculty member at Lane Seminary. The students were commanded to cease their activities and John Morgan was fired. AT this time, Mahan and Morgan were approached by John Shepherd (a founder of Oberlin). Oberlin College agreed to maintain absolute freedom of speech on reform issues and equal admittance to blacks and whites. With this pledge, Asa Mahan became the school's first President and John Morgan and Finney joined the faculty.⁸³

Hundreds of students from all over the country -- who were radically committed to social reform -- enrolled at Oberlin. They took strong stands on many important political and social issues and refused to separate their Christian faith from the crucial public issues of their time. Oberlin wa the first co-educational college in the world and graduated many feminists of that era. It is perhaps most well-known for its civil disobedience. It became a critical site for the Underground Railroad which housed escaped slaves en route to freedom in Canada. They openly disobeyed the federal fugitive slave laws proclaiming a doctrine of civil disobedience which appealed to "higher" or "divine law." Finney was very influential in the development of this doctrine.⁸⁴

It was also while at Oberlin that Finney, along with Mahan, began to more seriously look at the possibility of a second spiritual blessing (ie. sanctification and Christian Perfection

as taught by Wesley and proclaimed, with some modification, by many American Methodists). Finney and Mahan professed to having this second crisis spiritual experience in 1836.⁸⁵ They began teaching the need of this second spiritual experience of cleansing and empowerment. This was the beginning synthesis of American Revivalism and Wesleyan Perfectionism.

America, in many ways, was ripe for this merger. Its Puritan roots emphasized a moral and disciplined life while its Pietistic influence emphasized personal experience. These two came together in the Wesleyan holiness message. The "optimism of perfectionism in the holiness movement" mixed well with the "inherent optimism" in the American dream.⁸⁶ It is also in the American context that Wesley's teaching on Christian Perfection underwent some alteration. Wesley did speak of a "second blessing" and "crisis experience" but he saw this crisis as preceded and followed by a growing process. The movement in America in keeping with the American mentality emphasized the crisis nature of the experience over the process.

EMERGENCE OF THE HOLINESS REVIVAL

In spite of the message of Christian Perfection now being proclaimed by such non-Methodists as Charles Finney, Methodism as a whole was giving less and less attention to this doctrine.⁸⁷ It was during this time that the holiness revival emerged. In the period between 1835 and 1858, the promotion of the

doctrine and those who claimed to experience it grew tremendously.⁸⁸

PHOEBE PALMER

The most significant figure in the beginnings and leadership of the Holiness movement was a woman from New York City by the name of Phoebe Palmer. She was the daughter of a prominent Methodist family and wife of a successful homeopathic physician.⁸⁹ Phoebe's father was a direct convert under John Wesley's ministry in England. She and her sister, Sarah Lankford, experienced "sanctification" in 1835. From then on they were both key figures in the holiness movement although Phoebe was more prominent.

Phoebe and Sarah led meetings each Tuesday in their parlor. These meetings became known as "Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness". They met regularly for over 60 years and attracted prominent people from all different denominational backgrounds. While maintaining its Methodist origins, the Tuesday meetings were open to all and was a great vehicle in breaking down denominational barriers and giving wide promotion to Perfectionist doctrine. These meetings came to be replicated by many people in various areas who had come to the parlor meeting and had a deep spiritual experience.⁹⁰

It is significant to note that the leadership of Phoebe and Sarah came at a time when the woman's leadership role was being hotly debated. The holiness movement gave great freedom

to women to witness and exercise their spiritual gifts. It was the ministry of Phoebe Palmer which encouraged Catherine Booth, wife of the founder of the Salvation Army, to begin her public preaching ministry. The holiness churches which were to emerge in the closing decades of the 19th Century were among the first to give full ministerial rights to women.⁹¹

It is also under Phoebe Palmer's teaching and leadership that some further alterations took place on Wesley's doctrine of holiness. Palmer believed, with Wesley, that the pathway to holiness is not through strict asceticism or limited to the few. She also understood that holiness was promised to all and was a command of God. Holiness, like salvation, was by grace through faith in Christ. Phoebe, however, understood holiness as an entire consecration. The "altar theology" which she developed came to be widely accepted in the Holiness movement. It held a rational progression:

- 1) The altar consecrates the gift -- so we need to put all of ourselves onto the altar
- 2) Christ is the altar
- 3) If you wholly bring yourself to the altar (Christ) then you can claim with confidence that you are sanctified.⁹²

This is an area where she differed from Wesley for she removed all mystery of the working of God and His grace. This shows the prevailing influences of rationalism and American revivalism upon her view. She basically believed, in regard to sanctification, that if you claim it and believe it you will

receive it. Wesley had never gone this far in removing the mystery of God's workings.

Phoebe also adopted the revivalistic pattern that in order to maintain your experience, you must testify of it publicly. If you could not or would not, your sanctification was in danger of being lost. Wesley never held this view and he never made a personal public profession of sanctification. He did not discourage someone doing so, but believed it must be done carefully.⁹³

Phoebe mixed Wesleyan Perfectionist doctrine with revivalism just as Finney had. Both of these leaders had influence beyond their denominations but Palmer remained a Methodist and Finney a Presbyterian/Congregationalist. They both believed full sanctification was the call for all believers and could be experienced by an individual's full consecration to God. Both also stressed that sanctification must be expressed in a life lived in proclamation of the gospel and in reaching out to meet the needs of others. Sanctification for Palmer was an instantaneous "second conversion" while for Finney it was more of a gradual ethical process. In spite of some differences, both of these Perfectionist groups mixed well and a growing Holiness Movement was in process just prior to the Civil War.⁹⁴

DIRECT PRE-CIVIL WAR PERIOD

As America approached the Civil War period, Methodism began to experience real trouble. Among other things, it was being

torn apart over the issue of slavery. Wesley had been bitterly opposed to the slave trade right to the point of his death and so was the early Methodist movement. As Methodism grew, however, it gradually softened its stance -- especially in light of the large slave trade in the South where there was a large population of Methodists. However, in the 1830's, the abolition movement was growing and division was taking place in Methodism. After repeated attempts to reform the Methodist movement, a split occurred in the early 1840's and the Wesleyan Methodist Connection was formed. This denomination was strictly an "anti-slavery, anti-intemperance, anti-everything-wrong church organization."⁹⁵

The bitter opposition to slavery and Methodism's softening stance on it continued to grow. In the 1840's the controversy grew so strong that the Methodist church had a furious split into North (Methodist Episcople North) and South (Methodist Episcople South) bodies.⁹⁶ Soon the Civil War began and sparks of revivalism were snuffed out.

POST-CIVIL WAR HOLINESS REVIVAL

Following the devastations of the Civil War, two movements can be noted. One was a growing materialistic and humanistic mindset. This was due in part to the work of Charles Darwin and his increasingly popular view of evolution as opposed to the Biblical account of God's creation. It was also due to great industrial growth in the urban regions. The other movement

was a deep renewal in religious convictions. Now that the great evil of slavery had been conquered, there was a call for the revival of holiness and restoration of the dream of America's destiny to be a light to the nations. The holiness movement tended to look more and more to the soon-coming return of Christ and increasingly adopted a pre-millennial view which had not always been a part of the movement. Signs of revival soon began to show itself all around the North. Holiness magazines increased in circulation and organized meetings for the promotion of holiness were springing up everywhere. Fuel was also added to this flame by reports of revival in England under the ministry of Phoebe Palmer who had traveled there during the Civil War period.⁹⁷

NATIONAL CAMP MEETING ASSOCIATION

In 1867, a group of ministers met together in Philadelphia to discuss holding a ten day camp for the purpose of preaching the doctrine of holiness and to call the church to unity and prayer for the revival of holiness. The Methodist Church, while embracing this doctrine was lacking in the proclamation of it. In the summer of 1867, the first great holiness Camp Meeting was held in the southern New Jersey town of Vineland. Thousands of people flooded the town for ten days of meetings. The response was so overwhelming that the decision was made to create the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness.⁹⁸

The following summer, the second National Camp Meeting was held in Manheim, Pennsylvania with over 300 ministers and 25,000 other people in attendance. The great significance here other than the large crowd was the incredible interdenominational influences of these meetings even though the leadership was strictly Methodist.

"In one of the meeting tents Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Dutch Reformed, Congregationalists, and Quakers all gave testimony to a common experience of a work of God in their hearts which knew no denominational distinction."⁹⁹

These meetings were known to be very spirited and emotional accompanied with such things as shouting and marching.

The Camp Meeting movement continued to grow and bring great revival and renewal of the doctrine of holiness. In 1872, it made its first move into the South. The Methodist Episcopal Church South -- since its split from the North in 1844 -- had looked down upon the promotion of holiness as a device of the Northern Church to gain power and control. Nonetheless, the National Camp Meeting Association did have a measure of success and the promotion of the holiness doctrine spread into the South.¹⁰⁰

Toward the end of the 19th Century, many things were taking place which would alter the relationship between the Holiness Movement and Methodism. The holiness revival, both in England and America, had seen much growth -- especially around 1875. The National Camp Meeting Association was the predominant leader of this holiness revival.¹⁰¹

During this time period, America was experiencing great economic prosperity and industrial expansion. There was a rapid growth in cities due to migration from rural areas as well as from Europe. The Methodist denomination was increasingly becoming a middle and upper class denomination far removed from its original frontier churches who reached out to the poor and needy and social non-elites.¹⁰²

There was a whole new wave of young ministers entering the Methodist movement. These ministers had been trained with German critical theology and had little to no knowledge of Wesley or his teachings on Holiness doctrine. The Methodist churches were becoming increasingly liberal in their theology. They were often naive or bitterly opposed to the message of holiness. This was also evident in their relaxing views against such things as worldly amusement, fine dress, dancing, etc. which the Holiness Movement bitterly opposed. The small group "class meetings" which had been present in the Methodist movement since its founding by Wesley, were also rapidly moving into extinction. The foundation of the life of Methodism had been through the nurturing, discipleship and accountability found in these groups.¹⁰³

The Methodist Conferences during this time were becoming increasingly hostile toward the National Camp Meeting Association, seeing it as something which was dividing the Church.¹⁰⁴ All of the factors mentioned here, in turn, began to create alienation between Holiness advocates and mainstream

denominations including Methodism. It was during the 1880's that the Holiness Movement really began losing unity. Many small groups were formed between 1880 and 1910 after which there was a period of consolidation of some groups and then another spurt of new sect formation.

One of the outgrowths of the Holiness movement in the early 1900's was Pentecostalism. During the latter half of the 19th Century some within the Holiness Movement began to refer to sanctification as a "baptism of the Holy Spirit." In the early 1900's this baptism came to be associated by some with the speaking of tongues. This teaching brought further division to the Holiness Movement, especially following the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. This event is usually regarded as the beginning of the modern Pentecostal Movement.¹⁰⁵ There are numerous groups which splintered off from the mainline Wesleyan Holiness Movement between 1880 and 1910. (For a listing of most of these groups see Appendix 1.) The movement of primary concern in the remainder of this writing is the Pillar of Fire Church which will be focused on in Chapter 2 and 3.

In concluding this chapter, it is important again to mention the National Camp Meeting Association. This has remained as the largest and most influential holiness association. It came to be popularly known as the National Holiness Association (NHA) and in 1971 was officially named the Christian Holiness Association (CHA). A smaller and more conservative group was

organized in 1952 known as the Inter-Church Holiness
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CHAPTER 2: ALMA WHITE AND THE PILLAR OF FIRE CHURCH

THE EARLY YEARS

Alma White was born Mollie Alma Bridwell on June 16, 1862 in Lewis County Kentucky. She was the seventh of eleven children born to Mary Ann and William Moncure Bridwell.¹ At the time of her birth it had been a little over half a century since the Great Kentucky Revival had swept through this area. The largest revival meeting had occurred in 1801 at Cane Ridge in Bourbon County with estimates from 10,000 to 25,000 people in attendance.² This is not far from where Alma would spend much of her childhood.

Alma's mother had been raised in a Methodist Episcopal congregation called Bethel Methodist. This church had experienced many wonderful revivals. Prior to the Civil War, this church had struggled with which direction to go as the Methodist church split into Methodist Episcopal Church North (M.E. North) and Methodist Episcopal Church South (M.E. South) over the issue of slavery. Under the influence of Alma's grandfather, the church sided with M.E. South.

Alma's mother was known to be religious. She had a conversion experience as a child and remained a member of the Methodist church. Alma describes her mother as devoted to her children and to the principles of the Christian religion but not a "spiritual" woman.³

Alma's father was raised a Baptist by a devoted mother. He knew the Scriptures well and would often argue doctrine with his friends. After many doctrinal arguments with the followers of Alexander Campbell, he became opposed to the doctrine of immersion baptism as necessary for salvation. He was convinced that a person could only become a Christian through a personal experience with Christ. It was at some point after this conviction that Mr. Bridwell joined the Methodist church. Both of Alma's parents were known for their religious orthodoxy and Alma was raised to believe in the Christian new birth and the literalness of hell.⁴

As a young girl, Alma was very sensitive to spiritual things. She became deeply convicted of her sin and separation from God at the age of nine. This occurred while listening to her parents and some relatives in conversation about hell and eternal punishment. Her conviction was strengthened each time she would hear her mother sing one of the old Methodist hymns, many which had been penned by Charles Wesley. Alma regularly memorized hymns and Bible verses but had increasing unrest in her soul. She also had a continual struggle at home where she never felt like she received enough love or attention. In comparison to her siblings, she was considered homely in appearance and also tended to be a very large girl. This tendency would stay with her throughout her life.⁵

One day when she was ten years old, one of her uncles came to visit. He spent some time observing and commenting on the

children. After watching Alma, he commented to her mother, "Mary, much depends on the turn this girl takes in life. If she gets started right, she will make her mark in the world and succeed as no other child you have."⁶ Alma was very encouraged when she heard this and was determined to "get started right" and sought to become a Christian.⁷

SALVATION EXPERIENCE AND CALLING

Her earnest seeking to become a Christian would continue for many years. Even after joining the Church and being baptized at the age of twelve, she found no peace or change in her heart. This all changed when in November of 1878 a Methodist minister name W. B. Godbey began meetings in her neighborhood.⁸ Rev. Godbey was a holiness preacher who became a well known revivalist preacher and holiness author.⁹

During the first service Alma attended she went forward to pray when an invitation to receive Christ was given. She was in the midst of great inner anguish but found no relief that night. The next night Alma listened to a sermon on Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (KJV)

There was great power in this message and many people were convicted of their sin and need for Christ. Alma sank to the floor in great distress crying out to God. Rev. Godbey came over to assist her. Alma describes what took place next as he spoke with her:

"Daughter, will you take Jesus for your Prophet, Priest and King; your Prophet to teach you, your Priest to forgive you, and your King to rule over you?" I told him that this was the desire of my heart. He asked me then to rise to my feet. I said, "I must be saved tonight, and I cannot leave the bench until the work is done, if I have to stay until morning." "But you have taken Jesus, have you not?" I hesitated, but finally said, "Yes." He helped me rise to my feet. Instantly my burden rolled away, my heart opened, and heaven came down and filled and thrilled me until my whole being was tremulous with new life.¹⁰

Her conversion experience occurred on November 7, 1878. After seven years of carrying a great spiritual burden, Alma was born again at the age of sixteen.

Alma had a great desire to share with others what the Lord had done for her. She also felt strongly called by God to be a proclaimer of the gospel. At this point in time she didn't think this was a possibility because female preachers were not accepted within Methodism. In her great desire to preach and teach others of the gospel of Jesus, Alma decided she could be used of God as a school teacher. Even this would be difficult because she had received little formal education and had to pass exams to qualify for her teaching certificate.¹¹

TEACHING CERTIFICATION AND FAMILY MOVE

Alma attended the district school until the following January. The opportunity then arose for her to attend a boarding school for females in Vanceburg, Kentucky with two of her sisters. The following summer, Alma tested and qualified for a second class, first grade teaching certificate. She soon

began teaching in a small country schoolhouse about four miles from her home. She enjoyed teaching the children as well as reading the Bible and praying with them every day. This was also a growing time in her spiritual life where she became more convinced of the power of prayer and felt the leading of the Holy Spirit.¹²

In March of 1880 Alma left her first teaching position and moved with her family 70 miles away to Bourbon County, Kentucky near Millersburg. This move was primarily a result of Rev. W. B. Godbey's encouragement so the family could attend the Methodist college in Millersburg. Rev. Godbey had a house built in this area for his family. They were planning on living here while their son attended Kentucky Wesleyan College (now located in Owensboro, Kentucky). Their son, however, died suddenly while in his first semester. The Godbey's moved away and gave the house to Alma's family in exchange for their home back in Lewis County. After attending college in Millersburg for close to a year, Alma again took the teachers' examination and received a first class certification.¹³

Alma then secured a teaching job in the best school district in the county. During the summer months prior to beginning her new position she continued having struggles at home which were but a continuation of her younger childhood. Alma often felt in the way at home and in conflict with her sisters. She also could not afford new clothing and felt like a social outcast

whenever she attended the Methodist church. Inside, her heart continued to burn with the desire to preach the gospel.¹⁴

THE MOVE TO MONTANA AND MEETING KENT WHITE

One day her aunt Eliza arrived from Montana to visit the family. She desired to take Lida or Nora, two of Alma's sisters, back to Montana with her to live. Alma's mother said that neither of them would be interested but Alma might be persuaded. Alma saw this as a great opportunity and felt called by God to leave her home and family just as God had called Abraham to do so. She also felt she was being prepared for this departure by her conflicts at home. After completing her Fall and Winter teaching terms, she prepared to move. This brought great pain to her parents and was a difficult decision but she was determined. On March 20, 1882, Alma began her long journey to Montana.¹⁵

It was an eventful journey but Alma safely arrived in Bannack, Montana. Here she began a teaching position which her aunt had secured for her. She soon met with opposition over her practice of daily prayer and Scripture reading in the classroom. With much reluctance, Alma stopped this practice. This greatly grieved her and she felt she had been unfaithful to her Lord. As it turned out, she was not re-hired for the Winter teaching term and she committed never again to back down from her convictions.

It was also at this time that Alma first met a young Methodist minister named Kent White. Their meeting was very brief but Alma was convinced that someday this would be her husband.¹⁶

Alma soon took a teaching position in the Montana town of Dillon. She resumed her practice of daily prayer and Scripture. During the school year she kept in contact with Kent through occasional letters and saw him again while attending a Methodist Conference in Butte, Montana. He was preparing to attend seminary at the University of Denver and they did not see each other again for about two years.¹⁷

EXPOSURE TO THE NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE AND LIBERAL METHODISM

The following Fall and Winter Alma taught in a school north of Dillon. While there she stayed with the family of F. J. Bishop. Bishop was a member of the newly formed Republican Party and he was the first real association Alma had with a "Northerner." They had many long and insightful conversations. Alma had been raised in the war torn South not long after the end of the Civil War. Although the state of Kentucky remained neutral in its allegiance during the war, Alma had been raised with a strong Southern bias. This included a degree of prejudice toward black people. It was during her stay in Dillon that her eyes were opened and her prejudices faded. She came to respect Abraham Lincoln as a good man and believed that "it was the hand of God that had broken the shackles from four

millions of slaves and preserved the Union, even though at great cost to the South."¹⁸

The area where Alma was living was typical of a small Western town with its social activities. Churches were few and card playing, gambling, dancing and drinking were the popular amusements. This was all very new to Alma and greatly distressed her. She was especially saddened to see the laxity of the Church and church members which participated in such activities. Although much pressure was placed on her to engage in some of these things her convictions and faith gave her the strength to overcome.¹⁹

After two years away, Alma returned home to Millersburg, Kentucky to visit her family. She remained for the Autumn term, taking classes at the female college in Millersburg before returning to Montana. A brief stay in Denver allowed her to visit with Kent White as well as see the city which would become her home in the future.²⁰

EARLY SEEKING FOR SANCTIFICATION AND MOVE TO SALT LAKE CITY

Upon her return to Montana, Alma attended a Methodist conference. Over the past year she had learned of the experience of sanctification as proclaimed by John Wesley and later by the Methodist holiness movement which was now well under way in America. She was earnestly seeking this experience but had not yet received it. She had, however, received great blessing from God to which she testified at this conference.

Alma was unable to find an available teaching position for the school term. She also found that her sister, Nora, had come to stay at her aunt and uncle's house and she no longer felt welcome.

An offer was given for Alma to teach at a Methodist school in Salt Lake City, Utah which she accepted. Her stay in Utah was not overly pleasant. She received much antagonism about her Southern background by the local Methodist pastor who focused his sermons on the Civil War. Her relationship with the pastor and school's head master was strained and things were made difficult for Alma.

She was continuing to seek the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in her life and was troubled that she heard very little preaching about this. She was also greatly disturbed by the church's indifference to the many poor and needy in the city. It was while here in Salt Lake City that Alma came face to face with Mormonism which she correctly saw as a false and empty religious system.²²

THE MOVE TO COLORADO AND MARRIAGE TO KENT WHITE

In the summer of 1887, Alma traveled to Colorado to join Kent White in his studies at the University of Denver. They were married on December 21, 1887 in the Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church. Kent continued in his ministerial training while Alma studied English and Music. Alma was again very troubled by the lifestyles in the prosperous city of Denver

and the liberal state of the Methodist church. She was also saddened by what she saw as a lack of true spirituality in her husband. She was more and more convinced that Methodism was an apostate church where higher critical learning had strangled the vital experience of the heart. While reading a booklet written by her friend, Rev. W. B. Godbey, called "Victory", she was more deeply convinced of her need for sanctification.²³

In the summer of 1888, Alma had a conversation with a black preacher known as Uncle John. He quoted to her from Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are in Christ Jesus."(NIV)

Alma was greatly inspired by their talk and was reminded that God had called her to preach the gospel. She was convinced that the Bible taught no gender distinctions when it came to the call of preaching the gospel or any role within the Church. She had been held down by the cultural and ecclesiastical norms but in the future, she would break free of this.²⁴

BEGINNING A FAMILY AND EARLY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

On March 18, 1889 Alma White gave birth to their first child, Arthur Kent. During the pregnancy and continuing for years, Alma went through much physical suffering. She was never very specific in describing her condition but she received no relief for many years even from her extended medical care.

Shortly after their son's birth, Kent was ordained a deacon at the Colorado Annual Conference of the M.E. Church (North).

He then received a pastorate at the Methodist church in Lamar, Colorado. They arrived to find much strife in the church especially among the women. During a meeting called by Kent a small revival occurred and many hearts were broken and relationships restored. More meetings were held during which Alma felt strongly led to speak out but found herself unable to.

In the past, she had been called upon to pray and felt the Holy Spirit come upon her and use her. Her husband had encouraged her to speak whenever she felt moved to. She felt restrained, however, by her own inadequacies and the Methodist church's stance of women speaking. She was broken hearted after not responding this time.²⁵

A period of months after this their son, Arthur, became very ill but recovered. Alma also became very ill. In spite of good medical care, she came close to death. In her prayerful cries to the Lord, she received assurance that she would live in order to preach the gospel. Serious illness also affected Kent at this time but eventually all recovered.²⁶

Kent retained the pastorate at Lamar for two years while he completed his ministerial courses. Following this he was ordained an elder into the M.E. Church. They received an appointment in a little mountain town called Morrison which was 17 miles from Denver. Here they found continued problems with some of the liberal practices of the Methodist church.

The Whites met much opposition here in trying to end the practice of church socials, fairs and dances.²⁷

On August 24, 1892 Alma gave birth to their second son, Ray. During this time Alma's health continued to be poor yet her heart's desire was to preach the gospel. Every day brought a deeper desire for sanctification. Her husband had claimed to receive this experience but Alma had difficulty seeing evidence of it in his life. During the Christmas season of 1892, Ray became very ill. Alma and Kent both cried out to God to renew covenants and promises.²⁸ Alma promised God that if He would spare her son she would, by His help, be faithful in preaching the gospel. She took her son's remarkable recovery as God's answer and was determined to be faithful to her promise in spite of opposition.²⁹

SANCTIFICATION EXPERIENCE

In March of 1893 Alma was spending much time in prayer and fasting. She had now been a Christian for fourteen years but was filled with unrest in seeking a deeper work of God in her life.

On March 16 she read a book by M. W. Knapp entitled "Out of Egypt into Canaan." This book compared sanctification as the "promised land" for the believer. Two days later, on March 18, Alma remained under deep conviction and tried to surrender all of herself to her Savior. Her husband knew of her struggle

and encouraged her by reminding her of Jesus' love and that His everlasting arms were beneath her. Alma writes,

At that moment I could see Jesus on the cross looking at me with great pity and compassion. His head was crowned with thorns and blood dropped from His brow. Never had I seen such a picture. Only for a moment were my eyes fixed upon Him when I was enabled to say, "His blood cleanses me from all sin, and underneath are the everlasting arms." In the twinkling of an eye my feet were placed on holy ground, the struggle was over. There was no particular manifestation of God's power, but I had great soul rest. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!³⁰

After struggling for so long to earn her sanctification, she had laid her heart out before God and received it by faith.

Alma's sanctification experience brought yet another major turning point in her life. From this point on she was conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence in her life. She was empowered as never before to serve Christ boldly and overcome her fears and anxieties. No longer did she feel intimidated by restrictions placed upon her as a woman not to preach. Alma could now be faithful to her call. In keeping with the predominant holiness teachings by such leaders as Phoebe Palmer, Alma believed she would lose her sanctification if she did not proclaim the gospel and tell others what God had done for her.³¹

THE FOUNDING OF COLORADO HOLINESS ASSOCIATION AND MOVE TO DENVER

Up to this point in her life, Alma had little to no association with any holiness groups. She had known of the movement in Methodism through such people as Rev. Godbey and others. Alma came to see that the teaching of holiness had

been at the heart of the teaching of John Wesley and the Methodist movement. Her experience with Methodism in the North, however, convinced her of a serious lacking of holiness as taught and exemplified in Methodism. She became increasingly involved in revival meetings with wonderful responses to her ministry. While never overlooking the gospel message of salvation, she increasingly emphasized sanctification and holiness in her preaching.

With her obvious success, Alma was also met with great opposition. The message of holiness was not popular in this area of mainstream Methodism much less coming from the mouth of a woman. During this period of time, Alma primarily worked in association with her husband. Because Kent was an ordained Methodist minister he also received much pressure over he and his wife's involvement. Alma was increasingly disillusioned with the state of Methodism. As more and more people responded during revival meetings, especially young people, Alma longed for a place where they could be trained to live victorious and faithful Christian lives.³²

In the summer of 1893 the Colorado Holiness Association was formed. The holiness movement which had been very active in the Northeast, Midwest and South had not penetrated very far to the West. This was the first emergence of a holiness association in Colorado and Alma and Kent were largely responsible for its formation. Kent was elected as treasurer. Shortly after the association's founding, Alma wrote to Rev.

Godbey and he agreed to come to Colorado to lead a holiness camp meeting. This was the first of the annual meetings which would be held and there was a very good response.³³

The White family moved to Denver in the Spring of 1896. The year prior to this Kent had declined pastoral placement and ended his membership with the Colorado annual conference. A few months prior to the move Alma had begun the writing of her first book, "Looking Back from Beulah." This writing was much inspired by Phoebe Palmer's articles in "Guide to Holiness."³⁴ Alma had already become convinced, by this point, that her connection with the Methodist church was behind her.³⁵

FOUNDING OF THE PENTECOSTAL MISSIONS

Two weeks after their move to Denver, the Whites began holding Thursday afternoon holiness meetings in their home. These proved to be very fruitful. Here again we see Alma following a pattern well established by Phoebe Palmer and other leaders within the holiness movement who held weekly meetings in their home for the promotion of holiness. Alma also immediately began holding street meetings and preaching to thousands in the open air. They were unable to secure a building for meetings but were given a large tent to hold summer revival meetings near the center of the city.³⁶ This was another widely used revivalist method. They held their first tent meeting on June 16 -- Alma's 34th birthday.

The meetings were generally well-attended and many came to Christ. Quite a few workers had joined with Alma and the "Pentecostal Mission" was formed. They were given the second floor of a building to use to open a mission. This was just in time -- before winter's cold hit. The mission was placed under the supervision of a woman named Miranda Vorn Holz, an experienced evangelist and mission worker who had aligned herself with Alma. Within seven weeks, 225 people had professed salvation in these meetings.³⁸

The mission functioned daily in preaching, prayer meetings and outreach. Clothing was also distributed especially to the needy children.³⁹ Here again we see a familiar pattern emerge where individuals progressed from taking part in ecumenical revival meetings and then emerging with their own mission.

Alma's mission joined the ranks of a large number of urban holiness missions throughout the country which were established during the 1880's and 1890's.⁴⁰

Alma saw an increasing need to have a mission home and training school for both the missionaries joining the small movement and the many new converts. She was very concerned that so many young converts had no option but to join a local church where, more than likely, their faith would be strangled. Alma wanted to provide a place for them to be trained and nurtured. There were many who desired to devote themselves full time to serving God but could not afford to do so. Much prayer and effort went into this and soon enough money was raised

to pay one month's rent of a building on 22nd Street in Denver. Within three months this was moved to Champa Street. This home could provide for forty people. Students were given free room, board and tuition if they were willing to do their share of the work.⁴¹

This mission continued to operate while the Whites traveled to Butte, Montana to open another mission. They were able to rent a large room and seats were donated to them by a nearby Methodist church which was remodeling. Regular meetings were begun in the hall and on the street. After six weeks of preaching the gospel, hearts began to surrender. A home for missionaries and staff was put together with the help of many donations.⁴²

After six months of labor in Butte, Alma returned to Denver with her children. Against her wishes, Kent had decided to stay on at the mission for a few more months. This was not their first disagreement nor would it be their last. While preaching at the mission, Kent had openly disagreed with Alma over some of her views. Kent was also apparently struggling with personal depression and feeling neglected while Alma got so much attention in regard to the ministry.⁴³

The ministry work continued to grow and prosper though not without much trial and resistance. It was now the year 1900 and since 1896, Alma had personally held more than three thousand services as well as training missionaries and supervising five regularly organized missions.⁴⁴ The missions

and homes required constant supervision and fund raising with resistance continuing to be waged from various city officials as well as Methodist and other church leaders.

In November of 1900, Alma received a visit from Miranda Vorn Holz. Miranda shared with Alma a vision which she recently had of a new religious movement. Rev. Godbey was also visiting at that time and holding services from the mission. One morning they gathered together in a prayer room. Rev. Godbey led in prayer for God's blessings upon Alma and the new movement. This prayer was already being answered.⁴⁵

In the Spring of 1901, Alma and her mother traveled to Chicago to attend the International Holiness Convention. Alma found the convention disappointing but while there she was able to attend a meeting of the Metropolitan Church Association (later known as "Burning Bush"). Here she listened to Rev. M. W. Knapp. (It was Knapp's book, "Out of Egypt into Canaan", which had impacted Alma just prior to her sanctification experience.) Knapp was telling the audience that they would have to leave the old established denominations because of their hopeless compromises with the world. Seth C. Rees was also involved in these meetings. Rees went on to become the founder of the Pilgrim Holiness Church (now the Wesleyan Church).⁴⁶

This was a period of time in the American holiness movement when group after group was breaking away from the large denominations and forming their own movements. This is one of the reasons for the increased denouncing of the holiness

movement from the mainstream denominations. Knapp's message was well-received by Alma and the founding of a new denomination was not far off.

TENSIONS WITH COLORADO HOLINESS ASSOCIATION AND

TRIP TO THE PACIFIC COAST

Alma returned to Denver in June. The missions were running well but she found she had been omitted from participation in the annual state holiness convention which was to be held on July 4. There had been growing tensions between Alma and this group which she was instrumental in founding. A complete separation was near.

It was also at this time that a significant change occurred in the services held by the mission. While attending services in Chicago and Kentucky in the Spring, Alma saw a lot of excitement and freedom in worship. She became convinced that the services of her missions were too formal. Alma encouraged people to allow themselves liberty in worshiping God. "Old formalities were broken up and saints praised the Lord and leaped for joy."⁴⁷ As a result of this, people flocked to the meetings as never before. The Denver newspapers took an interest in this movement and, because of the mission's worship style, nicknamed them the "Jumpers."⁴⁸

The mission work was growing and Alma was convinced of the need to expand in order to prevent stagnation. In the Fall of 1901, she traveled to the West Coast where she visited San

Francisco, Oakland, San Jose and Los Angeles. She held many revival services in missions in these areas before returning to Denver in December. Her visit to the Pacific Coast had expanded her vision. When she returned she cautiously began speaking to those working with her, as well as the meeting's regular attenders, about forming an independent church. There was good support given to this proposal although she did not mention it to her husband.⁴⁹

FOUNDING OF THE PENTECOSTAL UNION CHURCH AND ORDINATION

On December 21, 1901 the "Pentecostal Union Church" was formed and communion was administered for the first time. This was done in the absence of Kent. The term "Pentecostal" referred to the gift of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost as recorded in the books of Acts. The holiness movement identified this as the experience of sanctification. There were originally only fifty charter members in the newly formed church. In addition to this, however, missions were operating in four different states and about forty mission pastors and evangelists were connected with the movement.⁵⁰

It should be noted once again that the process and formation of the Pentecostal Union Church was commonplace in the holiness movement. During this era, dozens of new groups were formed and many of these (like the Pentecostal Union) were breaking off from the Methodist Episcopal denomination. These groups included the Pilgrim Holiness Church and the church of the

Nazarene. In this particular situation there were many influences which had led up to this decision.

One of these was the continued opposition Alma met as a woman involved in ministry. This opposition perhaps came strongest from the M.E. Church. Another concern to Alma was that those converted through her ministry be properly nurtured and trained. She could not accept the liberalism she found within Methodism (especially in Colorado) and was convinced it would destroy the faith of any new believer. This liberalism included such things as allowing smoking, drinking and dancing as well as denying the inspiration of Scripture and the doctrine of holiness. Another point which becomes clear in studying Alma is that she was very independent and a gifted leader. She could not be restrained by the status quo and refused to work within a system that had lost its passion for the full gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵¹ It was also very important to her to be ordained and be allowed to function before the state in the full capacity of a minister.⁵²

The early months of the newly-organized church were rocky. Kent, from the beginning, had been opposed to the church's formation.⁵³ Later, however, he chose to withdraw his clergy credentials from Methodism just prior to the new church's incorporation in March 1902.⁵⁴ Some of the original 50 charter members also changed their minds and withdrew from the church. Nonetheless, on March 16 Alma and four others underwent ordination by five ordained ministers including Kent.⁵⁵ A few

days after this, the official incorporation papers were submitted to the state.⁵⁶

Expansion of the Pentecostal Union Church soon began. Alma was offered a mission building in Victor, Colorado, which she accepted after the church was officially organized. In July, the church held a large convention in Denver's Coliseum Hall for 10 days. During this convention, enough funds were raised to look into purchasing some property for the church. Up to this point all of their facilities were rented with payments made month to month according to what was brought in through mission work. Soon after this, in late September of 1902, two lots with buildings were purchased on Champa Street in Denver just across from where the Coliseum Hall was. Three days later a storeroom was rented where they could now hold their own church service.⁵⁷

The early years of any movement are a critical period and it was no exception for the Pentecostal Union Church organized under the leadership of Alma White. The following pages will discuss three prominent issues which Alma faced in the early years of this independent movement.⁵⁸

ASSOCIATION AND CONFLICT WITH THE BURNING BUSH

The Burning Bush was a group with which the Pentecostal Union had many similarities. They were both strong in their holiness doctrine and both had split off from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Alma had come in contact with the Burning

Bush while in Chicago in 1901, prior to incorporating the Pentecostal Union. It was from them that she adopted the lively style of worship that gave them the nickname "Jumpers." (These were not the only groups engaged in jumping. Other groups included the Salvation Army, Nazarenes and Free Methodists.) Together, the two groups co-sponsored revivals in both the United States and England between 1902 and 1905.⁵⁹

The services held by Alma and Kent as well as those jointly held with the Burning Bush were known for their aggressive and animated preaching and worship. There was much laughing, shouting, jumping and even dancing. This often caused quite a stir with newspapers and onlookers, but was done without apology. It is refreshing to note that racial barriers and prejudice were not evident at these holiness meetings where white and black worshipped together and preached from the same pulpit.⁶⁰

The two organizations worked so closely together that even some joint fundraising was performed to help fund the building of an auditorium on Champa Street for the Pentecostal Union in Denver. This new building, which had a 1,000 seat auditorium, Bible School and mission home, was completed and occupied in December 1903.

Distinction between the groups was often blurred by the press in newspaper coverage but Alma always worked hard to maintain the separate identity of the two groups as well as her clear leadership of the Pentecostal Union.⁶¹

The close affiliation between these two groups was severed in November of 1905. This division was due to a conflict over land located near Bound Brook, New Jersey which was owned by a widow named Caroline Garretson. Mrs. Garretson had mentioned in a letter her intentions of donating the property to the Burning Bush. After a visit by Alma in 1905, Mrs. Garretson changed her mind and gave the land to the Pentecostal Union. This land eventually became the movement's international headquarters.⁶²

The decision to give the land to the Pentecostal Union outraged the Burning Bush and resulted in heated verbal and written accusations between the two religious groups. Both groups relied heavily on their holiness periodicals for spreading the gospel, expanding memberships and raising funds. Both magazines still exist today. The Burning Bush's periodical (entitled by the same name) and the Pentecostal Union's periodical (entitled the Pillar of Fire) were the main vehicles of attack and rebuttal. In studying the situation, it would seem that there was fault on both sides as is so often the case. These two groups which had worked so closely together would never again have friendly affiliation during Alma White's lifetime.⁶³

THE EMERGENCE AND DENOUNCEMENT OF THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

In the Spring of 1906, a black holiness minister by the name of William Seymour visited the Pentecostal Union Bible

School in Denver. He was on his way to pastor a Nazarene church in Los Angeles. Alma was hospitable to him, inviting him to share in their meal and to pray. It was unknown to Alma at the time that Rev. Seymour believed in and practiced the gift of tongues.⁶⁴

Rev. Seymour had studied under Rev. Charles Fox Parham at his Bible Training School in Houston, Texas. Parham taught what came to be known as the "three blessings" of salvation, sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit -- which was accompanied by the gift and speaking in tongues (glossolalia). Sanctification was seen as the work of the Holy Spirit in cleansing and purifying the believer while the baptism in the Holy Spirit empowered the believer for service. Parham's teaching was in contrast to the teaching of Wesley and the holiness movement which taught that sanctification and baptism in the Holy Spirit occurred at the same time. It was Parham's teaching which became the foundation of the Pentecostal (Tongues) movement.⁶⁵

Rev. Seymour was promptly removed from the Nazarene church in Los Angeles when he began encouraging its members to seek the gift of tongues. He was soon holding services in a building on Azusa Street in Los Angeles. It was under the teaching and leadership of Rev. Seymour that the Azusa Street Pentecostal Revival broke out in April of 1906. This was the birth of the Pentecostal movement which has grown to be a strong international influence.⁶⁶

Alma immediately took a harsh stance against the Pentecostal movement as did most of the Holiness churches and associations. She travelled to Los Angeles in March of 1907 and denounced the movement. In 1910 she published a book entitled "Demons and Tongues." As the title suggests, she believed the tongues movement to be a work of the devil and she heavily criticized it.⁶⁷

Alma's opposition to the Pentecostal Movement was stronger than most of those within the holiness movement. It was charged that racism was at the root of Alma's denouncement of Rev. Seymour and the Azusa Street revival. The evidence, however, does not support this claim. Some degree of prejudice, while not excusable, could be understood due to Alma's upbringing in the Southern culture in the late 19th Century. God had done a great work in her life since then, however, and she had worked very closely with black evangelists whom she held in high regard and affection. She had also been very kind and hospitable to Rev. Seymour during his stay in Denver. It is clear that her opposition was much more on theological terms and a fear that this movement would be destructive to the holiness revival.⁶⁸

NAME CHANGED TO THE PILLAR OF FIRE

As the Pentecostal movement grew, Alma did all she could to distance the Pentecostal Union Church from it. In 1917 the name of the Pentecostal Union was officially changed to the "Pillar of Fire." There were two reasons given for this. First,

the Pillar of Fire was the name of the church's magazine and this was a name already widely associated with them. The second reason was because the word "Pentecostal" had come to be associated with the Pentecostal movement which Alma denounced. The Pillar of Fire was not the only group to remove "Pentecostal" from their name. In 1919 the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene became The Church of the Nazarene.⁶⁹

MARITAL TROUBLES AND SEPARATION FROM KENT WHITE

The marriage between Kent and Alma had many struggles. Even from the beginning, Alma was disappointed from what she saw as a lack of spiritual leadership and vitality in her husband.⁷⁰ Another problem emerged early in their marriage when Kent's mother came to Denver for an extended visit with them. Kent's mother did not look favorably upon Alma and often criticized her. Much to Alma's dismay, Kent often sided with his mother.⁷¹

Trouble deepened over the issue of leadership and Alma's preaching. Kent was a seminary trained minister who often disagreed with Alma's biblical interpretations in her sermons. Alma regarded his opposition to be a result of jealousy over her growing success as an evangelist. There were numerous occasions during their early years of Alma's ministry that Kent threatened to leave the family.⁷² This threat was realized in the future.

Kent assisted in Alma's ordination but he had been opposed to the formation of a new church from the beginning and made this clear.⁷³ The formation of the Pentecostal Union against his will did nothing but add to the marital tensions already present. The tension grew over who should be recognized as the leader of the movement. Alma stated,

But he not only insisted that he was the head of the home government (which was not disputed), but that he should be the head of the movement which God had used me to launch out, whether he merited the place or not. He persisted in confusing the home government with that of the church. He acknowledged in private and public that the Church was started as the result of my labors, but this did not change him in his desire to be at the head of it.

His attitude was that on account of his sex, he should be the head, that it was his wife's duty to submit to a place of subordination, and that our people should accept his leadership; but they would not pass the reins over into his hands.⁷⁴

The break point of their marriage came over the issue of Pentecostalism. Kent had begun attending Pentecostal meetings in Denver during the Fall of 1908 and became convinced it was a work of God. He returned to Zarephath, New Jersey (the new headquarters of the Pillar of Fire Church) five months later.⁷⁵ Kent soon took issue over an editorial Alma had written against the Pentecostal movement. On August 11, he handed in his resignation from the editorial staff of the church's weekly publication and severed his seven year relationship with the Pillar of Fire. Two days later, Kent left Alma and their children to visit his mother in West Virginia. There was never

a legal separation or divorce but this break after twenty-one years of marriage was permanent.⁷⁶

Alma's heart was broken and she worked hard to reconcile the marriage. Letters were written to express her undying love for her husband. The critical barrier was the issue of speaking in tongues from which neither Alma nor Kent would back down from their position.⁷⁷ Kent went on to join the Apostolic Faith Church and visited the church's headquarters in Bournemouth, England. It was on July 7, 1910 while in Bournemouth that Kent received the gift of tongues.⁷⁸

Alma visited Kent on numerous occasions in unsuccessful attempts to reconcile their marriage. Kent also visited Alma and the children on a number of occasions. He remained a minister within the Apostolic Faith Church spending most of his remaining life in England. It does seem that Alma and Kent reconciled shortly before his death. In July of 1940 Kent went to visit Alma who was then living in Denver. He stayed there until he died three months later of a throat ailment. Alma's diary records that she stayed at his side until his death.⁷⁹

THE PILLAR OF FIRE AND SEPARATION FROM THE "WORLD"

Alma always emphasized the her followers must remain separated from the world and its influences. This emphasis is a consistent element within any sect and was very common within the holiness church associations.⁸⁰ In Chapter One of this paper, the word "sanctification" was defined as "separated."

This separation requires a total surrender and commitment to God as well as a detachment from anything which stands in the way of one's relationship and commitment to Him. The difficulty is always in determining where this line of detachment should be drawn.

Alma and the Pillar of Fire correctly emphasized a passionate love for God and a vital prayer life. They were opposed to many things which were culturally popular but which were felt to be detrimental to a person's pure love for God. These included such things as attending movies, plays or dances as well as the playing of cards or drinking. Keeping consistent with the general holiness movement, the Pillar of Fire also opposed the wearing of fashionable clothing. This included jewelry.⁸¹

The Pillar of Fire followed the example of the Salvation Army and adopted the wearing of uniforms.⁸² While there is no Scriptural basis for this, it did have many positive benefits. The wearing of uniforms helped to keep clothing costs down as well as be faithful to the admonitions of Paul (I Timothy 2:9,10) and Peter (I Peter 3:3) to dress modestly. Uniforms were also a way of developing and showing a distinction from the values of the world. They also served an important and protective role in helping the missionaries be identified while on the street spreading the gospel and selling magazines. The uniform styles changed through the years. Moderate dress remains a proper

emphasis within the Pillar of Fire but wearing a uniform is no longer emphasized.

Alma further developed distinction between the Pillar of Fire and the "world" by urging its members to resign from any secular employment. Members were called to full time evangelistic work and earned money primarily through donations and the selling of Pillar of Fire literature. They were allowed to keep 35% of what they received for personal and travel expenses.⁸³

The Pillar of Fire moved increasingly into a communal type organization where all things were to be shared in common. Full time members applied themselves to working within the organization. This could involve primarily working as a missionary, evangelist, teacher, farmer, builder, printer, engineer, radio broadcaster, cook or any combination of these as well as a host of other possibilities. In exchange for the efforts of full time members they were provided with housing, food and small financial stipends. Alma also believed strongly in Christian education. Pillar of Fire schools were started at church branches throughout the country including primary and secondary schools and two accredited colleges.⁸⁴

In spite of the Pillar of Fire's emphasis on separation, Alma never distanced herself from political agendas. She was determined to be used of God as an agent in transforming the world. Under her leadership the church was very active in such things as the temperance movement and the women's liberation

movement. Regular periodicals were produced regarding both of these issues. The Pillar of Fire was the first church to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment after it was proposed in December of 1923.⁸⁵

It is important to note that the women's liberation movement that Alma supported was very different during this period than it is today. Alma joined the ranks of many within the holiness movement who supported what they understood to be the Biblical position on gender equality. They believed the prophecy of Joel, which Peter quoted in Acts chapter 2, showed that gender distinctions were broken in the New Testament church:

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."
(Joel 2:28,29)

The words of Paul further fueled their conviction that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) Alma believed that God called both men and women to preach. Ordination of women was common in the Pillar of Fire Church. Alma was ordained at the time the church was first incorporated. She went on to become the first woman bishop in the United States in 1918. Alma was convinced that much of the Church's traditional stance toward women in ministry was cultural and not Biblical. Her convictions, however, show a clear distinction between the equal rights she stood for and the current agenda

of the women's liberation movement. She was very concerned for children and maintaining the traditional family unit which God had instituted.⁸⁶

ALMA WHITE AND THE KU KLUX KLAN

Alma's zeal for political reform brought her into at least one unholy alliance which is most regrettable. This alliance was with the Ku Klux Klan and is perhaps the most embarrassing and notorious part of the Pillar of Fire's past. Certainly it is one that we would like to forget. It is important, however, that it be briefly explored.

There were many things which caused Alma to initially support the KKK. None of these were racism. Alma distanced herself from the racism and anti-semitism associated with the Klan and stated early that she had nothing against the black or Jewish race. She further stated that "racial prejudice was never allowed to be fostered within the Pillar of Fire."⁸⁷ It was because the Klan claimed to promote the same "old fashioned religion" which she embraced that gave Alma her initial interest. She was fooled into believing that the Klan embraced and followed the teachings of Scriptures.⁸⁸ She was not the only holiness leader fooled in this way.

Alma, like so many others during this era, was swept into an extreme American patriotism. This patriotism was very pro-Protestant and anti-Catholic. It was, in part, a result of fears due to the millions of Catholic immigrants flooding America

at this time. Many were concerned that America would soon be under the control of the Pope. This nativism also brought with it an opposition to many of the liberal intellectual currents of that day.⁸⁹

Alma, along with many other Protestant clergy, strongly endorsed the Klan during their renewal in the 1920's. Alma went further than many and even felt the Klan was an instrument of God. The Church was never officially linked with the Klan, but it is clear that some of its members were involved in some of their meetings in the North. This was a sad day for the Pillar of Fire and for Americans. Many Christians were fooled into supporting a group based on bigotry and hatred.⁹⁰

THE THEOLOGY OF ALMA WHITE AND THE PILLAR OF FIRE

Alma never introduced any new or original doctrine into the Pillar of Fire. Her beliefs were quite orthodox and in full agreement with the teachings of the Wesleyan holiness movement. Her goal was to return the church to embrace the teachings of Scripture especially as understood and taught by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. She was not alone in this endeavor. Most of the founders of independent Wesleyan holiness churches had begun by trying to bring reform to the Methodist Episcopal Church. When it became evident that this would not happen, they founded independent movements based on John Wesley's teachings and early Methodism.⁹¹

In 1929, Alma published a book entitled The New Testament Church. Chapter three of the book contains the "Doctrines of the Pillar of Fire Church." The church's doctrine has remained essentially unchanged through the decades. The Pillar of Fire creed is as follows:

1. We believe that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God and that they are "the only sufficient rule of faith and practice."
2. We believe in "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
3. We believe in justificatoin by faith and in Christian perfection as a second definite work of grace.
4. We believe in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.
5. We believe in water baptism, giving candidate preference as to mode.
6. We believe in the judgements as taught in the Scriptures.
7. We believe in the sacrament of the Lord's supper.
8. We believe that marriage is a divine institution.
9. We believe in divine healing for the body.
10. We believe in the pre-millennial coming of Christ and the restoration of the Jews.
11. We believe that the wicked will go into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life everlasting.⁹²

PILLAR OF FIRE EXPANSIONS AND ALMA WHITE'S DEATH

The Pillar of Fire continued to expand its ministries during the first half of the 20th Century. Christian primary and secondary schools were begun at various locations throughout the country. Two fully-accredited colleges were also begun. Between the years of 1959 and 1966, approximately forty schools were founded by the Pillar of Fire. Christian education through Pillar of Fire schools had been one of the most powerful and effective means of the church's ministry through the years.⁹³

Alma also had great vision in regard to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ over the airwaves. In 1927, the Pillar of Fire received a license to operate an AM radio station in Denver with the call letters KPOF. In 1931 the church purchased a second AM radio station (WAWZ) in Zarephath, New Jersey. Radio outreach was expanded to include WAWZ-FM in Zarephath in 1954 and WAKW-AM in Cincinnati in 1961.⁹⁴

The Pillar of Fire was the first church to own and operate a Christian radio Network. These radio stations are all still operating with the exception of WAWZ-AM which has since been sold. The stations are non-commercial, listener supported. They have a combined potential to reach millions of people in these three regions of the United States and have been a tremendous means of Christian outreach for the church.⁹⁵

The Pillar of Fire has also been active in overseas mission programs. The first mission was begun in London England in 1911 -- the only site of overseas missions for many years. Our second mission was opened in the country of Liberia in 1960 under the work of Rev. Wilbur Konkell. Under his leadership, the missions program has expanded to include eight countries: England, Yugoslavia, Spain, the Philippines, India, Liberia, Malawi and Nigeria.⁹⁶

Alma also founded missionary homes and urban branches of the Pillar of Fire throughout the country. The church continued to hold revivals and street meetings as well as purchasing printing facilities and equipment to publish books and

periodicals to spread the gospel. Throughout her life, Alma remained active as a preacher, writer, traveler and administrator. She maintained her role as the authoritative leader of the Pillar of Fire until her death at the age of 84 in 1946.⁹⁷

THE PILLAR OF FIRE -- 1946 TO THE PRESENT

The church had blossomed under the leadership of Alma White. She was truly a woman of God but far from infallible. Her dictator-like authority was successful in holding together a fledgling movement but not without some poor judgments that hurt some lives along the way.

Alma's son, Ray, also died in 1946. Her first-born son, Arthur, assumed the leadership as the second President and General Superintendent of the Pillar of Fire. He remained the head of the church until 1978. At this point, his daughter, Arlene White Lawrence, assumed control along with the aid of her husband, E. Jerry Lawrence. Alma's granddaughter remained in leadership until 1984. From this time to the present, Dr. Donald Wolfram has been the President and General Superintendent and Dr. Robert Dallenbach the Vice President and Assistant Superintendent.⁹⁸

The years between 1946 and 1984 were not nearly as bright for the Pillar of Fire as the years preceding. The leadership of Alma's son and granddaughter was neither as strong nor as successful as that of the founder's. Membership gradually

declined. During the 1970's and early 1980's, the Pillar of Fire saw its hardest times. Many members chose to leave while others were forced to leave due to conflict with the leadership. The Pillar of Fire essentially lost an entire fourth generation during this period. There was much confusion mixed with broken hearts and bad church publicity.

Those who remained within the church did their best to be faithful to what God had called them to do. They continued to work diligently in the church's various ministries. The three strongest areas of outreach for the church remained to be the radio stations, school systems and mission programs. The weakest areas were the building up and nurture of the local church fellowships and consistent faithfulness in reaching out to the needs of the surrounding communities.

Many positive things have happened in the Pillar of Fire since the gaining of new leadership in 1984. Dr. Wolfram and Dr. Dallenbach have worked hard to bring stabilization and renewal of vision to the movement. Many of the local church branches have developed innovative programs of outreach and have experienced growth in membership. The church as a whole has moved further away from its sectarian roots and is trying to become more of an influence for Christ within the local communities.

In spite of many positive changes, the Pillar of Fire remains at a crossroads. Will we stand still, comfortable in our minimal effectiveness? Or will we stretch beyond our

comfort, trust a God Who has no limitations, and radically reach out to a hurting and dying world?

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50. IBID p.204.
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57. Story Vol.2 pp.231-239.
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CHAPTER 3: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The Pillar of Fire has many decisions to make. There are a number of changes which must be made in order to bring the church to a place of effectiveness and faithfulness in serving our Lord. With an understanding of our past, we must now look to the future. Where do we go from here?

A RADICAL COMMITMENT TO PRAYER

If the Pillar of Fire is to go anywhere, it must first go to its knees. This is an area of strength in our heritage. From the beginning, Alma White and her followers emphasized prayer. I have often heard stories of times when the entire church and all of its activities were put on hold. Everyone gathered together as a community of faith to pray about a critical issue. They gathered in order to get a clear word from God and they continued until God's answer came.

Prayer is one area that impacted me as a child growing up in the Pillar of Fire. Day after day, I would watch my father and mother on their knees. Sunday after Sunday, the church altars were filled with people praying for direction, renewal and revival. There have been many faithful prayer warriors within the Pillar of Fire. I have no doubts that these prayers have been answered.

The Pillar of Fire has been through some hard times and yet God has sustained this small part of His Body. But times

of mere survival are over. We must move forward by faith and in faithfulness, and we must begin with prayer. The Pillar of Fire's emphasis on prayer must find renewed vigor. We can be assured that God will hear and great things will happen when we cry out to Him as a church. Jesus tells us:

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing . . . If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. (John 14:5,7)

Jesus taught us a lot about prayer through His words and example. The author of Hebrews tells us:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. (Hebrews 5:7 NIV)

Jesus prayed passionately and so must we. James reminds us that the fervent prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective (James 5:16).

A UNIFIED VISION AND PURPOSE

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18 KJV) No organization can be effective or successful without unity within. Jesus prayed for the unity of those who would follow Him.

I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20,21)

If we are not unified, we lose our message and our witness. The Apostle Paul knew this and stated,

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5,6)

Through the years of turmoil, much of the unity within the Pillar of Fire was broken. For a period of time, all energy was focused upon mere survival. The Pillar of Fire has emerged from this crisis, but has not yet been able to find a unifying vision. Yes, we desire to serve God faithfully. But, what does this mean for our church?

It is critical that communication continue to improve between leadership (Bishops and Boards) and members. True communication involves both speaking and listening. Good leadership always does both well. Decisions regarding the direction of the church should be an informed decision made by cooperation between the leadership and the church body. When this happens, they can work together in seeking God for guidance and empowerment. This will unify membership and encourage all to focus their hearts and energy upon the task that God has called us to accomplish.

The current Bishops of the Pillar of Fire have done a very admirable job. Many exciting changes have taken place over the years and their commitment and love for God is evident. Communication has improved, but it must continue to do so.

Another problem is a result of the demands and responsibilities placed upon our leaders. Their time and energy is spread so thin that many vital areas demanding attention

do not get properly addressed. There is only so much that any individual can do. Because of this, our leadership must improve in their desire and ability to delegate authority. There are many capable people within our movement who have vision to build upon existing ministries as well as initiate new outreaches. If our movement is to grow and become more effective, there will have to be better delegation of authority for ministers and laity.

REGAINING AN EMPHASIS ON THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Pillar of Fire has yet to gain a proper emphasis on the local church. Most of our local churches are under-staffed and many of them, throughout the United States, have no pastors. This is both sad and devastating. The local church fellowships are the backbone of the Pillar of Fire and in as much as they suffer, so will the organization as a whole.

If the Pillar of Fire is to grow, it must focus on staffing and developing the ministries of its local churches. We need to develop dynamic fellowships where God is worshiped and the needs of people are addressed on a personal level. We are called as a church to reach out to our communities and touch people with the love of Christ. If we hope to bring these people into our churches, then we must have a meaningful ministry there for them. We must follow the example of Jesus who met physical and emotional needs as well as spiritual needs. This requires much more than just preaching.

It is encouraging to note that some steps have already been made in this direction. Our churches in Pacifica, California and Zarephath, New Jersey are good examples of what can happen when an emphasis is placed on the ministry of the local church. Another pastorate has recently been filled in Boulder, Colorado where a dynamic ministry is beginning.

The Pillar of Fire has also recently held recruiting interviews at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. The response was, and is, overwhelming as many continue to apply for future ministry within the church. The Holy Spirit is opening doors and leading committed and anointed people to us. The Pillar of Fire must follow through with this effort (as well as continue it in future years) to bring in ministers and give increasing support to its local congregations.

THE MESSAGE OF HOLINESS FOR TODAY

The Pillar of Fire must re-evaluate its position on holiness and re-discover the proper holistic, biblical emphasis. John Wesley was correct in emphasizing holiness as love. He saw Matthew 22:37-39 as the essence of holiness and Christian Perfection. To love God with all of our heart, soul and mind and to love our neighbor as our self is the beginning and end of God's requirements.¹ This can only be accomplished through the work of God's Spirit in a surrendered heart.

Sanctification (Christian Perfection) may begin with a crisis experience, but it is preceded and followed by a process.

The holiness movement tended to emphasize the crisis above the process, but both are important. We cannot be comfortable in recalling a one-time event in the past when we "were sanctified." This experience must be something we live in as a vital and growing part of our Christian life. It is improvable as well as capable of being lost. Our love for God must be nurtured.²

One of the great tragedies of the holiness revival in America was that it became too individualized and focused only on a personal purity. In its beginnings, it had produced a strong wave of benevolence and social reform. People were called to first give themselves wholly to God and then to serve others. The message of the early leaders was consistent with Wesley in that there is no true holiness without both of these elements. The holiness movement, however, came to increasingly emphasize only personal experience. In time, the focus became so much on one's self that it led to social indifference and lacked moral relevance. Even Alma White, with her activist tendencies, led the Pillar of Fire more in the direction of communal seclusion than societal transformation. This trend must be reversed if we are to be faithful to the commission of Christ.

HOLINESS AS PURITY AND POWER

The Pillar of Fire has always emphasized that Christians are called to a life of purity. The focus, however, has often been too much on external appearance regarding such things as clothing and hair styles, jewelry and make-up. The church must

be reminded that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for this type of error (Matthew 15:1-20) The Bible does address these issues while stressing moderation and modesty (I Timothy 2:9, I Peter 3:1-4). We must be careful if we try to go beyond this and speak where the Bible is silent.

God reminds us that while people often judge according to external appearance, His concern is with the heart (I Samuel 16:7). This is where our emphasis on purity must be. It is only the pure in heart that will see God (Matthew 5:8).

Our emphasis on purity must be positive and not negative. A list of "do's and don'ts" is a far cry from Scriptural purity. John Wesley knew this well. This is why he defined Christian Perfection in terms of love. Purity is found in love which flows from an unbroken relationship with God.³ This is the great news of Christianity. We can be forgiven and freed from our sins! God promises that He will live within us and transform us. Holiness is not found in observing a man-made code. It is found in a vital, transforming relationship with our Creator, Lord and Savior.⁴

Holiness is more than purity -- it is also power. The Pillar of Fire has been called to a wonderful and tremendous task. Our goal as a church is to spread the message and love of Jesus everywhere. We cannot do this in our own strength but only through God's Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). The Bible tells us that when God's Spirit comes upon us we receive power (Acts

1:8). Power is a part of God's holiness and it is part of the holiness He is willing to work in our lives.

This is why the Pillar of Fire (and many other holiness churches) initially carried the word "Pentecostal" in their name. Alma understood that the presence of the Holy Spirit always was accompanied by power. This power is not evidence of the depth of our relationship with Christ. That evidence is found in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). The power that God gives is to enable us to be His witnesses. If our church is to be faithful and fruitful in what God has called us to do, then we must open ourselves to receive His enabling power.

There is a great need for the Pillar of Fire to re-evaluate some of its long-held beliefs in regard to Pentecostalism. Since the Pentecostal movement emerged in the early 1900's, most holiness groups, including the Pillar of Fire, have tried to distance themselves from it. Alma White's stance was extreme even among other opposition within holiness circles. The Pillar of Fire Discipline (copyrighted in 1926) continued this harsh stance. No official revision has been made of the church's discipline since that time although it is desperately needed.

I am not suggesting that we embrace all of the Pentecostal movement and its teachings. This movement has suffered historically by a lack of emphasis on purity. Error has also been present in the non-Biblical emphasis placed on speaking in tongues and the doctrine held by some that tongues are the

evidence of Baptism in the Spirit. Their error, however, is no greater than that of the Wesleyan holiness movement. The Wesleyan movement (including the Pillar of Fire) has emphasized the ethical nature of sanctification (ie. purity) and the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians. 5:22-25) while neglecting rich and equally important Scriptural teachings on the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12 and 14).⁵

Doctrinal issues cannot be altogether overlooked, but we must come to the point of realizing our many similarities with the Pentecostal movement. The Pillar of Fire and mainstream Pentecostalism share a Wesleyan heritage and emphasize salvation and sanctification.⁶ We share the same Savior and proclaim the same gospel. The Pentecostal movement is not free of its troubles, but it has been open to the power of the Holy Spirit and has been greatly used of God. The Pillar of Fire and the entire holiness movement have suffered from the distance we have placed between ourselves and our Pentecostal brothers and sisters. Our need to regain a proper and Biblical emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit is just as great as their need to regain an emphasis on personal purity.⁷

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (St. Paul I Corinthians 9:22)

The Pillar of Fire can learn an important lesson from the Apostle Paul. No one can accuse him of ever compromising his

faith or his message. Yet, wherever he went he adapted his approach according to the culture, situation and need. Paul ministered cross-culturally and he knew that different settings required different approaches.

The local churches of the Pillar of Fire must become more involved in making the gospel relevant to their respective communities. There should be no cultural barriers when it comes to Christianity. Jesus transcends all boundaries and we must not limit Him by packaging His love in restrictive cultural containers. Our churches must become "community conscious."

We must also work hard to overcome racial and ethnic barriers. The Pillar of Fire churches in America have traditionally been made up of Western white Americans. Our radio stations, schools and missions are much more involved with inter-racial ministry. Although a few of our churches have begun moving in this direction, it is time that the entire organization joins in this effort. The World must be able to see that the love of Christ can break down all prejudice and racial tensions.

Another barrier we must work to dissolve is the wall that divides generations. One immediate application of this is in regard to our praise and worship services. Worship is very powerful and pleasing to God. As our congregations grow, they will be comprised of a variety of age and backgrounds. Different generations and different cultures all enjoy different styles

of music. There is a place in worshiping God for the singing of both hymns and more modern praise choruses.

Our preferences are culturally, not Biblically based. God is the Creator of music and receives glory whenever we worship Him in song. This type of reminder should not even be necessary for a church whose worship services were known for their jumping, shouting, marching, laughing and even dancing. I am grateful for our heritage -- it encourages us to worship God freely. I am also grateful for those within our movement who lead the praise and worship time. We should encourage them.

THE CALL OF THE CHURCH

My final plea is that the Pillar of Fire continue to awaken to the true calling of the Church. We must break out of our comfort zone and go where Jesus has called us to go. What is our calling? James reminds us that "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." (James 1:27)

Our calling, as written here, is two-fold involving both reaching out to the needy and remaining pure. We will not be found pleasing to God until we do both.

One thing we must do is "GO!" Our Savior states:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded

you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

We cannot wait for people to come to our churches and fill our pews. We must go to them.

Jesus makes us even more uncomfortable in his parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). In this parable, we must remember that both groups called Him "Lord." Yet, one group is eternally rewarded while the other is eternally punished. It becomes clear that to call Jesus "Lord," is one thing, but to have his Lordship make a difference in our hearts is another. If He truly is our Lord and we love Him, then we will obey Him (John 14:15). Part of this obedience is reaching out to the needy:

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed
clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you
looked after me, I was in prison and you came to
visit me.

What kind of example did Jesus give us? He was known as a "friend of sinners." He reached out in love to lepers and prostitutes, to the high and to the low. He met peoples' physical, emotional and spiritual needs. This is how He walked while on this earth. We are reminded that if we claim to live in Him, we must walk as He did (I John 2:6).

The Pillar of Fire has been overwhelmingly blessed with facilities. The potential for outreach is incredible. If we will not use them for God's glory, then may we hope He will take them from us and give them to those who will. I am not

advocating that we begin extensive outreaches overnight. We must be wise stewards of our finances and energies. However, we cannot be content with radio stations, schools and overseas missions programs. God has given us much more to be accountable for.

I believe that God has sustained the Pillar of Fire for His glory and because of the prayers and efforts of the faithful. The days which lie before us may certainly be greater days than the Pillar of Fire has ever known. If they are not, we may be judged as he who buried the "talents" entrusted to him by his master (Matthew 25:14-30).

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?
Is not this the kind of fast I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with
shelter --
when you see the naked, to clothe him,
and not to turn away from your own flesh
and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear
guard.
Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here
am I.
If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the
hungry

and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the
noonday.

The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched
land and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations

you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

-- Isaiah 58:5-12

FOOTNOTES

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3. Harper, Steve Embrace the Spirit (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987). pp.60-61.
4. Seamands pp.53-60.
5. Dieter, Melvin E.; Hoekema, Anthony A.; Horton, Stanley M.; McQuilkin, J. Robertson; Walvoord, John F. Five Views on Sanctification (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987). pp.136-138.
6. Dayton, Donald W. Theological Roots of Pentecostalism (Peobody: Hendrickson, 1987). pp.35-54.
7. Dieter et al pp.137-138.

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APPENDIX ONE

Sectarian groups which branched off from mainline
Wesleyan Holiness Movement 1880-1910

Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) -- 1881
Church of God (Holiness) -- 1883
Holiness Church (Southern California) -- 1883
New Testament Church of Christ (South) -- 1894
Alliance of the Reformed Baptist Church of Canada -- 1888
Church of the Nazarene (West coast) -- 1894
Metropolitan Church Association -- 1894
Pentecost Bands (later the Missionary Bands of the World) --
1895
Fire Baptized Holiness Church -- 1895
Association of the Pentecostal Churches of America -- 1896
International Holiness Union and Prayer League (later the
International Apostolic Holiness Church) -- 1897
Pentecostal Alliance (later the Pentecostal Mission) -- 1898
Church of God in Christ (predominantly African American) --
1898
Missionary Church Association -- 1898
Holiness Church of North Carolina -- 1898
Independent Holiness Church -- 1901
Pillar of Fire Church -- 1901
African American Church of Christ (Holiness) -- 1907
Churches of Christ in Christian Union -- 1909

*In 1887, the Christian and Missionary Alliance was formed around Keswick Holiness thought. This stressed a second work of grace as an endowment of power rather than Wesleyanism's emphasis on purity of heart.

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