

THE 'CLASSIC FAITH' ROOTS OF THE MODERN 'WORD OF FAITH' MOVEMENT

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Abstract

Some proponents of the 'modern faith movement' claim that their faith teachings are fresh revelation or newly-revealed truths from God; others believe they are heretical or cultic because of apparent similarities of teaching to New Thought metaphysics. In this article: the evangelical roots of some of the faith teachings will be identified. Some criticisms of their opponents will be evaluated and the possibility of bringing the opposing viewpoints nearer to each other will be investigated. Not all principles taught by the faith teachers are found to be suspect. However, many of the controversies could have been prevented if the principles at stake had been communicated in a better way. A more discerning understanding of the evangelical faith heritage common to both polarities should be accentuated.

1 INTRODUCTION

A popular and controversial movement in today's Christian milieu is the modern faith movement, sometimes known as the Word Movement, Word of Faith, Health, Wealth and Prosperity Gospel or, more pejoratively, Name It and Claim It. As one major stream of the American charismatic movement, it developed predominately out of the teachings of Baptist minister E W Kenyon (1867-1948) (especially his publications *Two kinds of righteousness; two kinds of knowledge; two kinds of faith*), coming into prominence in the latter half of the 20th

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century. The chief leaders and publications of the modern faith movement have been Kenneth Hagin (*The art of prayer; The believer's authority; How to turn your faith loose; How to write your own ticket with God; The real faith; Right and wrong thinking; You can have what you say*), Kenneth Copeland (*The force of faith; Our covenant with God; The laws of prosperity*), Frederick K C Price, and Charles Capps (*God's creative power will work for you; Releasing the ability of God; The tongue - a creative force*), among many others.

The major criticisms of the modern faith movement have been voiced by Hank Hanegraaff in *Christianity in crisis* (1993), Dave Hunt in *Seduction of Christianity* (1985) and *Beyond seduction* (1987), Dan R McConnell in *A different gospel* (1988), John MacArthur in *Charismatic chaos* (1992), Bruce Barron in *The health and wealth gospel* (1987), Gordon Fee in *The disease of the health and wealth gospel* (1979), as well as others.

In South Africa the movement is to be found in some of the so-called 'independent churches', the Rhema churches, Pentecostal and Charismatic groups and others who preach a promise of wealth and health to Christians who are prepared to exercise their faith in the proper way (cf Horn 1989).

2 THE PROBLEM

Proponents claim that faith teachings such as revelation knowledge and the power of positive faith confessions are fresh revelation or newly-revealed truths from God; others believe they are heretical or cultic because of apparent similarities of teaching to New Thought metaphysics. This is where the controversy lies. While the modern faith movement has presented a distinct theory of faith praxis, which proponents often consider as revelation from God, its antagonists have labelled it as 'hyper-faith', and presented, often in polemic and diatribe fashion, an opposing theory. This has resulted in two seemingly irreconcilable ends of a continuum.

While *some* of the criticisms of anti-faith writers have a legitimate base, one finishes reading many of their denunciations wondering if

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there is such a thing as a 'walk of faith'. With so much emphasis on the negative, there is little room left for positive principles to guide a person to exercising faith soundly and confidently.

3 THE PURPOSE

The purpose of this article is to:

- (a) identify and to analyse the roots of the modern faith movement - especially in relation to some 'classic faith' authors;
- (b) evaluate the criticism levelled by some of its opponents;
- (c) investigate the possibility of bringing the two poles nearer to each other by laying the foundations for a dialogue between the two opposing poles.

The envisaged aim is that a creative dialogue between the two will bring about a better developed practical theological theory for actions based on faith.²

In order to accomplish these goals the evangelical roots of the Faith Movement will need to be highlighted first. Concepts used in the writings of both the Faith Movement and in evangelical circles of the last 200 years will be listed and discussed. At the same time criticisms of the Faith Movement will be evaluated against this background. Conclusions will be drawn from the relevant data.

4 EVANGELICAL ROOTS OF THE 'FAITH MOVEMENT'

E W Kenyon (1867-1948) is generally recognised as the chief originator of the modern faith movement. Simmons (1997:x), in his doctoral thesis on Kenyon, avows, "Kenyon is the *primary* source of the health and wealth gospel of the independent Charismatic movement." The core of the controversy is found in the purported origins of Kenyon's teachings. McConnell's pivotal and influential book entitled *A different gospel* (1988) made a case for extensive

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influence from 'New Thought'³ metaphysics upon the thinking of Kenyon, detailing noticeable parallels between Kenyon's writings and New Thought writers. He thus concluded that Kenyon's thought, and therefore modern faith teaching, is derived from non-Christian cultic sources and is thus suspicious. Hanegraaff, in *Christianity in crisis* (1993), built on McConnell's research and conclusions to avow further that the modern faith teaching is heretical and cultic. Both books have made a significant impact on the evangelical Christian community in labelling the word of faith movement as heterodox and even sacrilegious.

However, neither McConnell nor Hanegraaff took into consideration that some of those very teachings are surprisingly similar to orthodox Christianity and the teaching of classic evangelical writers of faith. The more recent and more thorough scholarship of Dale Simmons (1997), Joe McIntyre (1997) and others (DeArteaga 1996; Lie 1994; Vreeland 2001; Hyatt 1991), has disproven many of their claims, demonstrating that the primary influence upon Kenyon was *not* New Thought Metaphysics, but rather leaders of the evangelical Wesleyan, Higher Life⁴ and Keswick⁵ holiness movements, such as A J Gordon, A B Simpson, A T Pierson, Oswald Chambers, and others.⁶ Hyatt (1991:1, 2), a church historian, comments,

These critics ... display a lack of knowledge concerning the historical development of the twentieth century Pentecostal movement from its nineteenth century antecedents and its influence on the modern movement. It is in the religious milieu [sic] out of the Holiness and Healing movements of the nineteenth century that the modern 'Faith Movement' finds its primary emphasis.

Similarly, Simmons' doctoral thesis (1997:304) concludes,

As for Kenyon himself, it would appear that he is best placed within the Keswickian/Higher Christian Life tradition ... This is not to say that there are not aspects of Kenyon's teaching - specifically those centering on one's confession - that he stresses to a point that is only comparable to that of New Thought ... It would be going too

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far to conclude that New Thought was *the* major contributing factor in the initial development of Kenyon's thought.

In other words, the majority of Kenyon's thought remained in the realm of orthodox evangelical teaching represented by the 'Higher Life' movement, although he developed some ideas that would be considered abnormal, stretching the bounds of orthodoxy.⁷ Kenneth Hagin, who is considered the most widespread populariser of modern faith teaching, draws the majority of his teaching from Kenyon, but also acknowledges the influence of evangelical and Higher Life/Keswick leaders Müller, Spurgeon, Simpson, T J McCrossan, J A MacMillan and Pentecostal leaders John G Lake and Smith Wigglesworth.

The teachings of these evangelical leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century holiness and healing movements, that for the purposes of this article are called the 'classic faith' movement, emphasise many principles of faith similar to the 'modern faith' movement, though there are significant differences as well.⁸ In particular, the healing and holiness movements of the nineteenth century have been recognised by scholars as forerunners to the Pentecostal and modern faith movements (cf Dayton 1987:15-33, 87-141; Chappell 1988:353-374; Synan [1971] 1997:14-83, 143-145; Lederle 1988:1-36). For example, Chappell (1988:357) claims, "The Holiness movement provided the theological environment for faith healing in America."

A study of church history shows that seeds of faith were planted which germinated and grew into greater movements of faith (King 2001:14-29). What began with a few individuals continued to mushroom in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a revival of faith (King 2001:29-56). The nineteenth-century 'Higher Life' holiness movement was sometimes called 'the life of faith' (Smith 1942:20, 25, 32, 47, 96, 101, 104, 121, 132, 134, 140). This classic faith movement was interdenominational in scope and included people of a wide variety of theological persuasions - Presbyterian (Simpson, Boardman, Pierson), Lutheran (Francke, Blumhardt, Stockmayer), Baptist (A J Gordon, Spurgeon, Meyer, Oswald

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Chambers), Methodist (Palmer, Bounds), Quaker (Hannah Whitall Smith), Congregational (Upham, Finney, Torrey, Bushnell), Plymouth Brethren (Müller, Nee), Dutch Reformed (Murray), Episcopalian (Cullis, Montgomery). The classic faith movement was also international, beginning in mainland Europe (emerging out of Pietism - Blumhardt, Trudel, Stockmayer) and spreading to England (Müller, Spurgeon, Taylor, Meyer, Penn-Lewis, Chambers), South Africa (Murray), Asia (Taylor, Carmichael, Nee) and America (Moody, Gordon, Simpson, Torrey).

5 CONCEPTS USED IN MODERN FAITH TEACHING

In this brief study we will look at five of the modern faith concepts considered illegitimate by their critics, and demonstrate their roots in classic faith teaching:

- (1) The covenant blessings of Deuteronomy 28 applied to the believer;
- (2) faith as a law;
- (3) faith as a force;
- (4) the faith of God; and
- (5) revelation and sense knowledge.

5.1 Blessings of Deuteronomy 28 for the believer

Modern faith leaders take the blessings and curses of the covenant in Deuteronomy 28 in a literal, physical sense as applied to believers today, citing Galatians 3:13 as the New Testament support for this belief (Copeland 1976). Hanegraaff (1993:251) argues that this is 'another example of text abuse'. However, he does not realise that classic evangelical leaders also make this connection. Based on Deuteronomy 28:13 some classic writers teach that believers are "the head and not the tail, above and not beneath". This concept finds its roots before the 19th century classic faith movement in Puritanism, in 17th century Puritan leader Thomas Brooks ([1652, 1866]; 1968:131), who claimed this Scripture, asserting, "There will come a time, even in this life, in this world, when the reproach and contempt that is now

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cast on the ways of God, by reason of poverty and paucity of those that walk in those ways, shall be quite taken away, *by his making them the head that have days without number been the tail*, and by his raising them up to much outward riches, prosperity, and glory, who have been as the outcast because of their poverty and paucity” (italics ours). If we did not know that this statement came from Puritanism, we might logically think that it came from the pen of one of the modern faith leaders.

This belief carried over into 19th century evangelical teaching, as Spurgeon (n.d.:4), known as ‘the last of the Puritans’, also claimed this Scripture: “Though this be a promise of the law, yet it stands good to the people of God; for Jesus has removed the curse, but He has established the blessing. It is for saints to lead the way among men by holy influence; they are not to be the tail, to be dragged hither and thither by others ... Are we not in Christ made kings to reign upon the earth?”

Classic faith leaders cite Galatians 3:13 in reference to the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28. As cited earlier, Spurgeon, (n.d.:4), related these two Scriptures together. Penn-Lewis ([1989] 1995:105, see also pp 109, 114-115) likewise quoted Murray in connecting redemption from the curse in Galatians 3:13 with the curses of Deuteronomy: “The cross and the curse are inseparable” (cf Carter 1897:62-63; Montgomery 1921:11). Although some take the blessings and curses of the covenant in Deuteronomy 28 in a literal, physical sense as applied to believers, Simpson (1992:1:358) stressed that they primarily apply to the church as spiritual Israel spiritually, not materially. Further, they belong to the Mosaic covenant, and are only types of the New Covenant.

It is true that some modern faith teaching at times confuses what belongs to the Mosaic covenant and what belongs to the Abrahamic covenant, thus, mistakenly identifying the material blessings in this Scripture with the Abrahamic covenant (cf Copeland 1976:20-21). Nonetheless, Spurgeon, Murray, Montgomery, Carter, Simpson and Penn-Lewis all related these two Scriptures together. By so casually rejecting the interpretative connection between Deuteronomy 28 and Galatians 3:13 understood by other older evangelical commentators,

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Hanegraaff, who attacks modern faith teachers on this point, finds himself in the questionable position of calling it text abuse. Hanegraaff fails to understand that the problem with modern faith teaching is not in textual abuse of the verses, but in misapplication, by over-emphasising the 'already' to the neglect of the 'not yet'. While some exegetes would question this interpretation, the interpretative connection between the verses is validated by many classic faith leaders as a logical corollary of Reformed Covenant theology.⁹

5.2 Faith as a law

Modern faith leaders teach that faith is a law, like the law of gravity. Hanegraaff (1993:73-85) and McConnell (1988:172-173) claim that the idea of a law of faith is of secular metaphysical origin. McConnell (ibid) declares, "the prosperity of both the metaphysical cults and the Faith theology is based on personal knowledge of how to manipulate spiritual laws rather than personal trust in the provision of a sovereign God." The practical concern expressed by McConnell and Hanegraaff involves the proverbial "tail wagging the dog" - the tendency to manipulate for one's own purposes and the danger of deflating God's sovereign will and inflating man's sovereignty (Hanegraaff 1993:105-127).

McConnell presupposes that because of the similarity between metaphysical New Thought and modern faith teaching regarding spiritual laws such teaching is *ipso facto* metaphysical. On the contrary, many evangelical holiness leaders from the 19th and early 20th centuries also taught a law of faith. The idea of spiritual laws corresponding to natural laws was a common theme in 19th century theological writing, such as Henry Drummond's *Natural law in the spiritual world* (1884) and Horace Bushnell's *Nature and the supernatural* (1885). As a result of Sir Isaac Newton's studies of natural law and his discovery of the law of gravitation, it became common in religious circles to speak of the existence of spiritual laws as well.

As early as the 17th century, French mystic Grou (1952b:592) wrote of love as a law. Prefiguring modern faith teaching by more than a century, Palmer, in the Methodist tradition, indicated there are "laws

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which govern God's 'moral universe' just as there are laws governing the physical universe" (Raser 1987:185; see also Simmons (1997:290); H W Smith (1987:190; 1985:252) and Spurgeon (1993b:168). Spurgeon (Spurgeon 1993a:114), in fact, suggested, "Perhaps there are other forces and laws that He has arranged to bring into action just at the times when prayer also acts - laws just as fixed and forces just as natural as those that our learned theorists have been able to discover. The wisest men do not know all the laws that govern the universe" Classic faith leaders such as Thomas Upham ([1845] 1984:238) and Hannah Whitall Smith (1985:252) compared the law of faith to magnetism or the law of gravity. Simmon's research (1997:155-156) demonstrated that holiness leaders also often spoke of laws in the sense of universal principles, rather than fixed mechanical laws. Examples of this occur in the writings of Simpson (1915:68; 1988:10-11, 137), Murray (1982:30), Spurgeon (1993a:110), and Pierson (1980:100). These evangelical leaders did not accept metaphysical teaching, yet they used the terminology of faith as a law. Hunt (1995:2) appropriately criticises modern faith leaders for teaching that unbelievers can tap into this law of faith and do great miracles. Most classic faith leaders, on the contrary, do not teach this (cf Simpson (1988:10), Upham ([1845] 1984:238)). Rather than tapping into the law of faith, it would be better to concur with Penn-Lewis (1910:62; n.d. b:62, 68-70, 77-79), who believed that unbelievers (and sometimes believers) exercise what she called 'soul force', and with Nee (1972) who called it 'the latent power of the soul'.

None of these classic faith writers were in any way associated with metaphysical cults. These writers speak of spiritual laws, not metaphysically or deistically, but of spiritual principles of life by which God operates or consistent spiritual patterns of working that are designated as laws. On the other hand, God is not controlled by these laws as metaphysical laws as some modern faith teachers seem to imply, but God controls these laws. Modern faith teachers need to be careful of the language they use and the practical implications they draw when they speak of faith as a law. Anti-faith critics need to understand that the concept of faith as a law can be validly taught without implying a deistic or metaphysical connection.

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5.3 Faith as a force

As an extension of faith as a law, modern faith teachers also teach that faith is a force that must be exercised. McConnell (1988:143; see also pp 141-145) considers the concept heretical:

In describing faith as a 'force' with which the believer can 'move things', the Faith theology depersonalises God. It renders him an impersonal force that must do man's bidding because it is capable of doing nothing else. The 'Force of Faith' is, in reality, 'Faith in the force.' Just as Luke Skywalker in the Star Wars trilogy learns how to manipulate 'the good side of the force' with his mind control, so also the faith theology teaches how to manipulate the faith god with positive confession.

Hanegraaff (1993:65-71), drawing upon McConnell, also condemns this concept as metaphysical and cultic, claiming that it is "deadly error", derived from New Thought metaphysics. To Hanegraaff and McConnell, the idea of forces that correspond to laws, like 'the law of attraction', is anti-biblical metaphysics. They view the idea of faith as a force as an impersonal force that manipulates and binds God, making man sovereign by his words of faith.

However, the 19th century evangelical idea of forces in the spiritual realm is derived additionally from an understanding of spiritual laws. Where there are spiritual laws, they believed, there are spiritual forces corresponding to those laws. Spurgeon (1976:443) and his interim successor Pierson [n.d.:61] wrote of spiritual forces likened to an electric current.

With a kaleidoscopic understanding of spiritual forces among classic faith leaders, it becomes a natural progression to view faith as a force. If God himself is a force, then as Simpson (1988:13) described it, faith emanates as a force from the character of God, from his omnipotence, as "one of the attributes of God Himself." See also Boardman ([1858] 1984:256), Spurgeon (1994:36, 43, 89; 1984:253); H W Smith (1984b:261; 1942:55), Murray (1981b:119); Simpson (1988:13; 1989:60-62; 1992:4:199); Cowman ([1925] 1972: July 7),

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MacMillan (1980a:67-68), Charles Price (1946b:13). The metaphors used to describe spiritual forces abound among these classic leaders. Classic evangelical writers conceived of the laws of spiritual forces as: an electric current, force of gravity, magnetic force, an energy force, an initiating force like a spring or as a creative force, life forces, a water current, a wind, an overcoming or controlling force, spirit force, centripetal force. Faith, in particular, is viewed as the force of an electric current (Spurgeon, Simpson), a creative force (Spurgeon, Smith, Simpson), the force of a water current (Murray), an energy force (Smith), and the force of a spring (Spurgeon, Charles Price) (cf King 2001:142-143).

It is obvious that modern teaching on faith as a force is derived from classic evangelical faith teaching. Thus McConnell's and Hanegraaff's claim that the concept of faith as a force is derived from New Thought metaphysics, and is thus heretical and cultic, is clearly in error. This does not mean, however, that everything taught by modern faith teachers about faith as a force is valid. It should be noted that there are dissimilarities as well as similarities between classic and modern faith teaching.

It should also be noted that in contrast to modern faith teachers, classic faith writers do not believe that words are the containers of the force of faith, nor that those words can create reality (cf Boardman [1858] 1984:254, Wigglesworth 1924:141, Chambers [1935] 1963:150, Tozer 1960:85-88). The classic leaders make it clear that it is faith imparted by God that creates, not man's faith or his words of faith. It is important to note that the classic faith writers did not believe God is an impersonal force, but a 'living force', a force *who* is a living personality. Although modern faith leaders would probably claim they do not believe God is an impersonal force, their language makes the force of faith appear mechanistic. So if faith originates in God, and faith is a force from a law to which God is bound, then faith and God appear to become impersonal forces.

5.4 The faith of God

On the basis of absence of the preposition 'in' in the Greek construction of Mark 11:22, modern faith leaders interpret the clause 'Have faith in God' as 'have the faith of God' or the 'God kind of faith'.

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McConnell (1988:145) and Hanegraaff (1993:87-95, 390) declare the 'faith of God' or the 'God kind of faith' concept to be false teaching and a 'perversion', asserting that interpreting the phrase in Mark 11:22 as a subjective genitive is not accepted by scholars. McConnell ignores the fact that his own mentor and critic of the modern faith movement, Oral Roberts University professor Charles Farah (n.d.:100-103), validates this interpretation from the Greek New Testament, also citing Pentecostal evangelist Charles Price, who himself was knowledgeable of Greek grammar (cf Charles Price [1940] 1968:52-60).

Though 'faith in God' as an objective genitive may generally seem to be the favoured interpretation today, the idea of 'faith of God' as a secondary or alternative translation is by no means uncommon among evangelical leaders and scholars, and is found in several early 18th and 19th century commentaries.¹⁰ Contrary to McConnell and Hanegraaff's claims, this apparently was an acceptable interpretation among many scholarly evangelical circles by the nineteenth century. The 'faith of God' translation of Mark 11:22 was interpreted in five ways among classic faith leaders: (1) God as the source or author of faith, (2) the faithfulness of God, (3) the faith of Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), (4) special mountain-moving faith, not everyday faith, (5) God's own faith - the faith that God possesses and exercises as a part of his nature. Sometimes they combined these meanings, so that the faith imparted by God is God's own faith or faithfulness or that the supernatural faith was the very faith of God himself, part of His omnipotent character.¹¹

The last interpretation, God's own faith, though the most controversial (Can God have faith?), was explained theologically by several classic leaders that if 'the faith of God' is given by God it must be an attribute that God himself exhibits as part of his divine nature, and that Jesus Christ manifested that faith of God on earth through his human nature. They appear to have connected this with the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*, the mutual communication of the attributes of the divine and human natures of Christ. This concept was established out of the Christological formulations of the Calcedonian Definition of AD 451 regarding the inseparableness of the divine and human natures of Christ and the Trinitarian concept of

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perichoresis, the mutual interpenetration and reciprocal interrelation of the two natures and attributes.

One may argue interpretations of grammar, but for Hanegraaff to say that the 'faith of God' interpretation held by Alexander, Spurgeon, Murray, Chambers, Taylor, Meyer, Price, McCrossan, and a host of other evangelical scholars and leaders is a 'perversion' obviously goes too far. Either all these respected evangelical leaders teach a perversion, or Hanegraaff is mistaken. McIntyre (1997:257) exposes the fact that Hanegraaff actually interprets Greek scholar A T Robertson's comments on Mark 11:22 incorrectly: "Now here is the irony. Robertson was quoted correctly, but incompletely. The whole quote was not given because it would prove embarrassing to the argument."

There is thus great debate among scholars regarding the appropriate translation. One Greek scholar friend remarked that such passages are 'divinely ambiguous' so as to allow both interpretations. Since Alexander, Robertson, Spurgeon and Murray give both translations, it would appear that they viewed these Scriptures as intended to be a *double entendre*.

5.5 'Revelation knowledge' and 'sense knowledge'

Kenyon and the modern faith teaching commonly distinguish between 'revelation knowledge' (which comes from faith and revelation from God) and 'sense knowledge' (which comes from the five senses and reason). McConnell (1988:109) claims Kenyon's concept is a rebirth of the ancient heresy of gnosticism:

The major epistemological error of the metaphysical cults incorporated into Kenyon's doctrine of Revelation Knowledge is that of *gnosticism* ... We are not implying that there is a direct historical connection between the Faith theology and ancient gnosticism. The gnostic concept of knowledge does, however, have strong parallels in thought with the metaphysical cults. Through Kenyon, these parallels found their way into the Faith theology.

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He goes into detail, citing these parallels and errors as dualism, sensory denial, perfect knowledge of God, transcending human limitations, anti-rationalism, and classification of levels of spirituality.¹² Hanegraaff (1993:123, 124, 133, 159, 172, 173, 283), also castigates the revelation knowledge concept as a cover-up for misinterpreting Scripture by claiming revelation from God, citing examples of heretical teaching passed off as revelation knowledge.

However, the second century theologian Clement of Alexandria (paraphrased in Hazard 1995:36-38) when refuting gnosticism, distinguished between knowledge by reasoning or the senses and knowledge by revelation in an excerpt entitled 'First principles of faith':

This type of reasoning knowledge is dependent upon our senses - that is, our abilities to see, feel, hear, touch, and taste. Through sensing we are led to reasoning and understanding, from understanding, to knowledge. And then we form our opinions. But far above this way of knowing are the first principles of our knowledge - the knowledge of God, given to us by revelation. For the principles of our faith were revealed to us by God, from above, by the Spirit ... For whatever your human senses insist that you believe must be brought under the spirit.¹³

The 'first principles' are the essences or self-evident truths discussed by Aristotle (see Kreeft & Tacelli 1994:369). This citation from Clement is significant because it unmistakably demonstrates, contrary to McConnell, that the seemingly dualistic concepts of revelation and sense knowledge are not inherently Gnostic, since Clement uses the terms in refutation of gnosticism.

Jan Hus (n.d.:33) also distinguished between the senses and "the faith which comes from divine knowledge". The anonymous fourteenth century writing: *The cloud of unknowing* (Johnson 1973:138-139), similarly distinguished 'sense knowledge' and 'spiritual knowledge'. Others who made a similar distinction include: Jacob Böhme and William Law (1997), as well as Pierson (n.d.:23). Chambers ([1930] 1963:20), in language strikingly similar to (yet

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predating) Kenyon, used the terms 'revelation sense' or 'revelation facts'. Kenyon's phraseology is so similar that one may wonder if he may have borrowed it from *The cloud of unknowing* and/or Chambers. More recently, Corrie Ten Boom ([1963] 1970:23) and Tozer (1966:49-52; 1992:120-122; 1989a:39-40) used similar concepts and/or terminology.

Just because some have used the concepts of 'revelation' and 'sense knowledge' in seemingly gnostic ways, do not invalidate the concept of revelation and sense knowledge altogether. This investigation has shown that the idea has existed throughout church history in some form (see King 2001:187-198). The distinction between the two kinds of knowledge has valid theological history. Practically speaking, sense knowledge through reason, the senses, common sense, etcetera, has a valid place in the believer's life, contrary to what some modern faith teaching implies. Yet the modern faith elevation of revelation knowledge above and beyond sense knowledge has solid support from classic faith leaders, so long as sense knowledge is not denied altogether.

Some people tend to exalt revelation knowledge as equal to or above Scripture. This is not what Kenyon intended, for he understood revelation knowledge to be the Spirit's illumination of Scripture. However, there have been abuses of the revelation knowledge concept. Hanegraaff is correct that some leaders have erroneously passed off their pet (sometimes false) doctrines as revelation knowledge. There is thus a real danger of regarding revelation knowledge in an elitist, therefore gnostic, way of knowing, and hence the need for discernment of impressions and revelations from the Lord.

5.6 Additional comparisons and contrasts

Because of the limitations of this article, only a sampling of parallels has been given. Additional modern faith concepts that find their roots in classic faith teaching include: (a) the authority of the believer, (b) acting and claiming in faith, (c) logos and rhema, (d) healing in the atonement, (e) positive mental attitude and positive confession, (f)

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prosperity, (g) point of contact, (h) living a long healthy life, and (i) the problem of praying 'if it be Thy will'.¹⁴

6 CONCLUSION

First of all it has been shown that there is a strong link between the Modern Faith Movement and the Classic Faith Movement of the last two centuries. The use of verses, words, concepts, interpretations and so forth, as cited above (as well as many others not covered here) has demonstrated a close correspondence between the two. Thus, the roots of the modern faith movement are predominantly found in the classic faith teachings.

This is not to say that all modern faith teaching is derived from classic faith teaching. Classic faith leaders have not only been in agreement with modern faith teachers against faith critics, but have also sometimes been, along with anti-faith critics, in disagreement with modern faith leaders.¹⁵

Sometimes Hanegraaff and McConnell have had valid concerns about modern faith theory and praxis and some of their criticisms and conclusions are legitimate, but their basic thesis that such teaching is metaphysical in origin is mistaken. So, while certain elements of modern faith teaching may appear cultic and heretical to critics of the movement, those same critics, in effect, also attack teachings on faith that have been taught by other respected evangelical leaders of the early healing and holiness movements. Such classic faith teaching was accepted by and large by the evangelical world of the 19th and early 20th centuries and such classic teachers are still respected today. Some critics have thus rejected not only modern faith teaching, but also valid classic principles of faith that might appear similar to the excesses of modern faith teaching, and may sometimes, in fact, be precursors of modern faith teaching.

Therefore, not all principles taught by contemporary faith teachers are suspect. The Latin phrase *abusus non tollit usus* applies here: "The abuse does not bear away the use", or in other words, the abuse should not obscure or invalidate legitimate use. One of the

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prominent classic faith teachers, A B Simpson (1891:195), put it this way, "The best remedy for the abuse of anything is its wise and proper use." Similarly, a more recent advocate of the classic faith movement, A W Tozer (1995a:142), rephrased it as: "Never allow the abuse of a doctrine to cancel out its use."

The nature of truth is elliptical, that is, truth tends to revolve around distinct polarities (eg, God's sovereignty vs people's free will). Neither pole possesses the totality of truth. Rather, a divinely-designed dynamic tension exists between the two focal points.¹⁶ Tozer (1964:59) explains it as: "Truth has two wings." Both wings are needed to make truth fly properly. Modern faith teaching and its critics, therefore, represent contra-polarities. Each holds elements of truth, but also elements of error, and thus has broken the dynamic tension between the focal points of truth.¹⁷ Conversely, classic faith teaching to a great degree preserved a balance between the poles.

On one hand, many of the modern faith controversies could have been avoided if their leaders had been more careful communicators of their own evangelical/classic faith forebears. Perhaps they were blinded by prejudice against mainline traditionalism. On the other hand, their critics have been ignorant of the evangelical heritage of faith teaching and practice (especially from the last two centuries) out of which modern faith theory and praxis have sprung. This thesis entails a more discerning understanding of the evangelical faith heritage common to both polarities. It is the thesis of this article that classic evangelical leaders, particularly of the 19th and early 20th centuries, by and large taught an orthodox, balanced walk of faith that can be trusted and emulated by believers today.

Rather than accepting each side attacking the other, this paper has laid a foundation for dialogue between the two opposing poles. The result can be a sound practical theology for faith, belief and praxis.

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ENDNOTES

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- 1 Dr King is a faculty member of the Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA. He obtained a doctorate (DTh) from the University of South Africa (May 2002). Prof Theron teaches Practical Theology at the University of South Africa. Their e-mail addresses are pkings@oru.edu and therojpi@unisa.ac.za.
 - 2 Actually King (2001) has already made a contribution towards this goal. In contradistinction to both poles he proposed the first steps for a fully developed practical-theological theory in this regard. The research was based substantially on classic faith teachings and practice, in which some of the modern faith teachings and practices are recognised as biblically legitimate, while some of the anti-faith camp's concerns are also recognised as valid. It could also be viewed as recovering the original evangelical teachings and practices on faith without the modern deviations and modifications which have resulted in excesses and extremes on one hand, and without the scepticism and criticism which has pigeonholed all modern faith teaching as unorthodox and heretical.
 - 3 In this article 'New Thought' refers to a non-evangelical movement stressing positive thinking, mind science, and tending toward pantheistic views in which God or the divine is in some way present in everyone. Hence, each individual can tap into that divine power within.
 - 4 By 'Higher Life' is meant the 19th and early 20th century movement mainly in North American non-Wesleyan Reformed circles stressing a higher Christian life of holiness, healing, overcoming and faith.
 - 5 'Keswick' (pronounced 'kezik') is the name of the Reformed holiness revival movement related to the American Higher Life movement begun in Keswick, England in the 1870s. Wesleyan, Keswick, and Higher Life movements held differing views of sanctification.
 - 6 McConnell's error was in not recognizing the parallels and similarities between New Thought (which was unorthodox and more secular in theology) and Keswick/Higher Life teaching (which maintained evangelical orthodoxy). In a personal conversation with McConnell he admitted to Paul King that he was not aware of Kenyon's Keswick/Higher Life connections.
 - 7 In his later ministry, Kenyon became more of an individualist in his teachings. Simmons (1997:xii) comments, "In thrashing out his own teachings, Kenyon displayed an independent streak and an overwhelming need to come up with teachings that no one else had ever discovered."
 - 8 Since 'classic' is commonly used of older writings - especially the first couple of centuries of the Christian era, some might argue that in a broad sense, the nineteenth century faith movement was a 'modern' faith movement. However, for the purposes of this study this distinction is used.
 - 9 Tozer (1964:59) has discerningly declared, 'Truth has two wings'. The problem is found in the lack of balance in modern faith interpretation, trying to fly with one wing, once again breaking the dynamic tension of truth. Some modern faith leaders fail to see that redemption from the curse, though initiated and partially experienced through Christ today, is not yet fully consummated.
 - 10 See *Barnes notes on the New Testament* ([1884] 1985:372-373); Princeton scholar J A Alexander's commentary, *The Gospel according to Mark* ([1885] 1980:310); *The pulpit commentary* (Spence & Exell n.d.:36:123); *Westminster commentaries* (Rawlinson 1925:38:158); *The Bible commentary* (Cook [1871] 1981:7:270); *Ellicott's commentary on the whole Bible* (1959:6:220); Henry and Scott's *Commentary on the whole Bible* ([1710, 1792] 1979:3:192); *Clarke's commentary on the New Testament* ([1830]:1:327); *Gill's commentary* ([1852] 1980:5:377). Montgomery (1921:28) pointed out that Bibles printed in 1921 give 'faith of God' as an alternative translation, indicating that it was an acceptable interpretation by biblical scholars. For more examples including the 1599 Geneva Bible, Young's Translation, Douay-Rheims Bible, Clarke, Godbey, and Wilbur M Smith, see Troy J Edwards, "The God-kind of faith - A biblical, historical, and theological defense" [n.d.], available on the Internet at www.100megspop2.com/victoryword.
 - 11 See King 2002:160-168 for a fuller discussion.
 - 12 See Smail, Walker, and Wright (1994:57-77) for a critique of the revelation knowledge concept by British charismatic scholars.

- 13 Though a modern paraphrase of Clement, it conveys the meaning of Clement's thought. Though he does not use the specific language 'revelation knowledge', for Clement, knowledge of God can only be obtained through faith through God's illumination, and such 'faith of knowledge' is 'God-taught wisdom'. (Stromata, or Miscellanies, 2:2, 4, 11.)
- 14 For an elaborated discussion of these concepts and for illustrations of the ways in which they are used in different circles, see King's (2001) thesis.
- 15 Some of the areas in which modern faith leaders have deviated from classic faith teaching include: (a) having faith in one's self or one's own faith, (b) faith as the source of healing, (c) faith as a force that can be manipulated even by unbelievers, (d) always praying only once, (e) 'name it and claim it' theology, and many others (see King 2001). These issues and their implications will need to be discussed in a separate article.
- 16 See Heschel (1955:12-15, 336-347) for a discussion of elliptical thinking and polarities in biblical theology and philosophy, especially in Judaism.
- 17 Knight (1993:65-89) discusses the polarities of God's freedom and God's faithfulness in relationship to faith theologies of healing.