

**WAVES OF THE SPIRIT AGAINST A
RATIONAL ROCK: THE IMPACT OF THE
PENTECOSTAL, CHARISMATIC, AND THIRD
WAVE MOVEMENTS ON AMERICAN
CHURCHES OF CHRIST ***

DOUGLAS A. FOSTER

Abilene Christian University

Throughout its history the church has had problems knowing exactly how to understand the Holy Spirit. The earliest creeds give the Holy Spirit only passing mention as Christians struggled to articulate an understanding of God's nature.¹ One of the chief theological differences between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches revolves around the question of whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father through the Son or equally from the Father and the Son.²

In general, two tendencies surface in church history regarding the place and work of the Spirit. One leans toward the ecstatic and irrational, the other toward the calm and rational. The first sees the Holy Spirit active in the conversion of sinners and in the life of Christians directly, apart from other means. The other sees the Spirit's work inseparably and uniquely linked to the words and ideas

* Ian Fair was dean of ACU's College of Biblical Studies when I moved to Abilene to teach in 1991. He was a constant encouragement to me and all the faculty, supporting excellence in both scholarship and teaching and standing by us in difficult times. During his tenure he was key to the formation of a team of teachers and a remarkable program of undergraduate and graduate religious instruction that remains among the strongest in the country. I will be forever grateful to him for his personal example of love for Christ's church and for people who need to hear the good news of salvation. It is a privilege to contribute to this Festschrift honoring him.

¹ The Nicene (A.D. 325) and Constantinopolitan (A.D. 381) Creeds reflect rudimentary notions of the existence and activity of the Spirit.

² The famous *filioque* clause, "and the Son," was added to the Nicene Creed in Spain and became widespread in the West. See Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 69–72.

conveyed by the written word—the Bible. One generally sees a literal personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christians; the other may see only a figurative indwelling as Christians take the words and ideas of Scripture into their mind and draw spiritual strength from them.

The extremes of these two positions have squared off against each other in practically every age. The Montanists of the second century elicited strong opposition to their ecstatic, anti-institutional message. Joachim of Fiore in the twelfth century and the pietists Philip Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke in the seventeenth and eighteenth agitated upholders of orthodoxy in their day. Rationalists were pitted against mystics, revivalists against anti-revivalists, holiness advocates against older mainstream denominations.³

In its beginnings in the early nineteenth century, the Stone-Campbell Movement embodied both tendencies. Although some danger exists in caricaturing the differences between the two most important thought shapers of the early movement, Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, no one can dispute that Stone tended toward the more active, irrational view of the Spirit and Campbell toward the rationalist understanding.

Campbell's beliefs about of the work of the Holy Spirit were greatly affected by what he viewed as the excesses of the emotional camp meetings and revivals of his day. He readily admitted that the Spirit must move persons toward salvation, but the Spirit does that in the same way any person moves another—by persuasion with words and ideas:

Now we cannot separate the Spirit and the Word of God, and ascribe so much power to the one and so much to the other; for so did not the Apostles. Whatever the word does, the Spirit does, and whatever the Spirit does in the work of converting, the word does. We neither believe nor teach abstract Spirit nor abstract word, but word and Spirit, Spirit and word. But the Spirit is not promised to any persons outside of Christ. It is promised only to them who believe and obey him.⁴

This statement sums up Campbell's teaching: the Holy Spirit works only through the word in the conversion of sinners and at baptism is given to the Christian as a gift.⁵ The precise nature of that gift of the Holy Spirit is not always clear in Campbell, however. At times he seems to indicate a literal personal indwelling in the Christian, while at others he seems to say that the

³ See Stanley M. Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1984); Stanley M. Burgess, ed., *Reaching Beyond: Chapters in the History of Perfectionism* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986); Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

⁴ Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (6th ed.; Cincinnati: Standard, 1850), 64.

⁵ Pat Brooks, "Alexander Campbell, the Holy Spirit, and the New Birth," *ResQ* 31 (July 1, 1989): 163.

Spirit works only through the word. An article from a series on the Holy Spirit in 1831 is characteristic of his statements:

[T]he Spirit of God puts forth all its converting *and* sanctifying power in the words which it fills with its ideas. . . . If the Spirit of God has spoken all its arguments; or, if the Old and New Testament contain all the arguments which can be offered to reconcile man to God, and to purify them who are reconciled, then all the power of the Holy Spirit which can operate on the human mind is spent.⁶

Many of his later followers would certainly understand him to mean that the Spirit operated now only through the written word.

Barton W. Stone, on the other hand, rejected the notion that the Spirit worked only through the words and ideas of Scripture. He never repudiated his belief that the Holy Spirit was at work in the activities of the Cane Ridge meeting of 1801 and other such revival meetings, and he insisted all his life that the union of Christians sought by the movement he helped begin would never happen until Christians were filled with the Spirit. Near the end of his life he wrote concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 2:38 “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” This is the ancient gospel. For the first part of Acts 2:38–39 we strenuously contend, why not for the second also? Was not this spirit to abide with the apostles forever? and also with all Christians, who are the temple of the Holy Ghost? If the temple be destitute of the Spirit, it has ceased to be the temple of God; but if the Spirit yet dwells in his temple, is its power diminished? Which of the divine writers says so?⁷

After the union of many of the churches from the Stone and Campbell Movements beginning in 1832, Stone’s views were largely eclipsed by Campbell’s. Some historians have said that Stone finally accepted Campbell’s more rationalistic teachings, while others insist that until his death in 1844 Stone believed the Holy Spirit was active in the conversion of sinners and the life of the Christian.⁸ In either case, the understanding of an active role of the Holy Spirit before or after conversion apart from Scripture was increasingly a minority position in the movement as the nineteenth century progressed.

Churches of Christ in Reaction to the Three Waves of the Spirit

⁶ Alexander Campbell, “Dialogue on the Holy Spirit—Part 1,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 1st series 2 (July 4, 1831): 295.

⁷ Barton W. Stone, “Missionaries to Pagans,” *Christian Messenger* 14 (April 1845): 363–64.

⁸ See C. G. Caldwell III, “Controversy Concerning the Holy Spirit within the Restoration Movement I. The Early Period,” *Vanguard* 1 (March 27, 1975): 22; Leonard Allen, *Distant Voices* (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1993), 12–13.

The Holiness and Pentecostal Movements

Just as Churches of Christ were emerging as congregations distinct from the Christian Churches or Disciples in the late nineteenth century, another major movement in American church history was taking shape. Since the 1830s certain persons in the Methodist Church had become increasingly concerned about the lack of emphasis on the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection, or holiness. John Wesley had taught that Christians should seek what was often called in the nineteenth century a “second blessing” subsequent to conversion that produced “entire sanctification” in the Christian. Some at least understood Wesley to mean an instantaneous event that resulted in Christian perfection.⁹

After the Civil War advocates of the Wesleyan holiness doctrine established the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, later called the National Holiness Association. Though initially not wishing to split from Methodism and the other established denominations, many holiness advocates began to “come out” and form their own churches in the 1880s and 1890s. The Church of the Nazarene (itself a merger of several smaller bodies) is one of the most important of these Holiness churches.

In some late nineteenth-century Holiness circles the second blessing was increasingly referred to as “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” A few Holiness preachers began to adopt the doctrine, attributed to Charles Fox Parham and his students at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901, that the invariable evidence one had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit was speaking in tongues. Many other holiness advocates, however, rejected the glossolalia doctrine. Those who accepted it became known after 1906 as Pentecostals.¹⁰

Churches of Christ seem to have taken relatively little notice of the Holiness and Pentecostal movements in their journal literature. That is especially surprising since the strongholds of those movements were often the same as those of Churches of Christ. For example, the New Testament Church of Christ, a holiness body that later became part of the Church of the Nazarene, began at Milan, Tennessee, near Nashville, a center of numerical strength for Churches of Christ.¹¹

Churches of Christ at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, were very much involved with their own problems. The internal fights with the Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ still demanded a tremendous amount of energy. Furthermore, Churches of Christ were turning more strongly than ever toward the rational aspects of their heritage, feeling increasingly at home with

⁹ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1–21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84–112.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

assumptions of modern thought and rejecting what Richard Hughes has called the apocalyptic strain in their heritage.¹²

Not that Churches of Christ were not challenged by the Holiness and Pentecostal movements. When, however, the claims of Holiness and Pentecostal advocates did confront them, they had a ready response from the most rationalistic part of the earlier movement, especially Alexander Campbell's reactions to the excesses of the camp meetings and revivals of his day. In the weekly question and answer section of the *Gospel Advocate*, David Lipscomb and others responded to periodic inquiries about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, and the continuation of miracles—all questions probably sparked by the Holiness/Pentecostal fervor of the day.

Though leading teachers in Churches of Christ in the 1890s took different positions on specifics, all agreed that the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were no longer valid. David Lipscomb, for example, insisted that “[f]rom the days of the completion of scripture until this day, no human being has received the gift of the Spirit, or has been able to know truths without learning them in the ordinary way or been able to work a miracle.”¹³ Also, “[t]he gifts were the miraculous powers bestowed by the Holy Spirit on the individuals for their own preaching and confirming the gospel. When God had revealed his perfect will, these gifts were all to vanish.”¹⁴ Lipscomb equated the “gift of the Holy Spirit” with miraculous manifestations and rejected any modern gifts. He asserted that the way people today receive the Spirit is by receiving the word of God (the ideas and precepts of Scripture) into their heart. When they take the word of God into their heart, they receive the Spirit into their heart, “just as we place the germinal principle of the wheat into the soil. . . . When the word of God is cherished in the heart, then the Spirit of God dwells there. . . .”¹⁵

As for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Lipscomb explained:

When the soul of man is completely overwhelmed by the Spirit of God he is baptized by the Spirit regardless of whether it was done by direct and miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, or by the gradual bringing of the man's spirit under the influence of God's Spirit.¹⁶

¹² Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The History of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 117–67; see also “The Apocalyptic Origins of Churches of Christ and the Triumph of Modernism,” *Religion and American Culture* 2 (summer 1992): 181–214.

¹³ [David Lipscomb], “Gifts of the Spirit,” *Gospel Advocate* 40 (10 March 1898): 148. *Gospel Advocate* is hereinafter referred to as *GA*.

¹⁴ David Lipscomb, “Queries,” *GA* 30/7 (15 February 1888): 2.

¹⁵ David Lipscomb, “The Holy Spirit,” *GA* 38 (20 August 1896): 532.

¹⁶ [David] Lipscomb, “The Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” *GA* 41 (31 August 1899): 553.

He taught that in these times humans are under the scriptural laws of the Spirit that require a lifetime to effect the complete submission of the human spirit to God's.

T. R. Burnett, longtime contributing editor for the *Gospel Advocate*, challenged Lipscomb's idea of the Spirit's inseparable connection to the word: "If the Spirit was in the word, then the Spirit entered into persons who were neither saved nor in the body. If the Spirit is in the word, then persons in disobedience have the Spirit given to them."¹⁷

Lipscomb defended his views in a long article in June 1898 in which he again used the image of the seed. Just as the spirit of the father is imparted to a child in the act of begetting—in the seed—the Holy Spirit enters the heart with the word of God—the seed of the kingdom. He implied that this is not merely taking in facts, but accepting the truth and believing in the word.

It is a contradiction of the laws of God in nature and grace to say that the spirit of the father is imparted to the child after the birth of the child. The unborn child is just as much the child of the father as it is after its birth. The person who believes is just as much the begotten of the father, the child of God, before it is baptized as it is afterwards.¹⁸

He hastened to add that the child must continue the process and be born or it will perish. His point here was not about baptism. He was trying to be consistent with his logic that the Spirit dwells in the word of God.

Another idea advanced by Burnett and C. E. W. Dorris was that the Spirit resided in the spiritual body, the church—a kind of corporate or institutional indwelling. When people were added to the church through baptism, they received the Holy Spirit in the sense that they were then part of the spiritual body in which the Holy Spirit dwelt.¹⁹ E. G. Sewell taught that the gift of the Holy Spirit was the Spirit itself, given to all who obey the gospel to dwell in them. He explained that different measures of the Spirit were given in different eras. The miraculous spiritual manifestations were only for the age before the written word was completed.²⁰

Perhaps the classic statement of the idea that the Spirit operates only through the written word came from the pen of longtime preacher Z. T. (Zachary Taylor) Sweeney. His book *The Spirit and the Word: A Treatise on the Holy Spirit in the Light of a Rational Interpretation of the Word of God* was

¹⁷ T. R. Burnett, "Not A Success," *GA* 40 (24 February 1898): 119.

¹⁸ David Lipscomb, "The Holy Spirit," *GA* 40 (23 June 1898): 396–97.

¹⁹ C. E. W. Dorris, "The Holy Spirit," *GA* 40 (4 August 1898): 492–93; and Burnett, "Not A Success," 119.

²⁰ E. G. Sewell, "Reply to 'Objections to Brother E. G. Sewell's Solution of the Gift of the Holy Ghost,'" *GA* 36 (27 September 1894): 606–7; idem, "Reply to 'Objections to Brother E. G. Sewell's Solution of the Gift of the Holy Ghost,' Again," *GA* 36 (18 October 1894): 654–55.

first published in 1919 by the Christian Standard Company and was later reprinted by the Gospel Advocate Company. Sweeney's succinct argument would do credit to any medieval scholastic or modern logician. First, he asserted that everything claimed to be effected by a personal indwelling of the Spirit could be accomplished by the Spirit acting through the word of God. He then proceeded to examine every Scripture that might be used by advocates of a literal personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He concluded by saying,

In the above cases we have covered all the conceivable things a direct indwelling Spirit could do for one, and have also shown that all these things the Spirit does through the word of God. It is not claimed that a direct indwelling of the Spirit makes any new revelations, adds any new reasons or offers any new motives than are found in the word of God. Of what use, then, would a direct indwelling Spirit be? God makes nothing in vain. We are necessarily, therefore, led to the conclusion that, in dealing with his children today, God deals with them in the same psychological way that he deals with men in inducing them to become children. This conclusion is strengthened by the utter absence of any test by which we could know the Spirit dwells in us, if such were the case.²¹

Sweeney's argument is in essence a restatement of Alexander Campbell's rationalistic statements on the subject and apparently became the dominant teaching in Churches of Christ. E. G. Sewell's view that the Holy Spirit literally dwells in the Christian, though without miraculous manifestations such as tongues and healing, seems to have been the other major position within Churches of Christ. Yet that idea was largely eclipsed at the turn of the century by the so-called "word-only" view.

Clearly, Churches of Christ were partly defined in the early twentieth century by their rejection of Holiness and Pentecostal understandings of the Holy Spirit. Their rational foundations stood unthreatened by what they generally ridiculed as ignorant nonsense.²² While anecdotal evidence suggests some losses to those movements, Churches of Christ in general were not menaced by them.

The Charismatic Movement

It was the second "wave of the Spirit" that began to challenge the identity and cohesion of Churches of Christ significantly. Unlike the earlier Pentecostal movement, the charismatic movement of the mid-twentieth century encouraged those who believed they had received the second blessing—again with the evidence of speaking in tongues—to remain in their religious groups. This

²¹ Z. T. Sweeney, *The Spirit and the Word* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, n.d.), 121–26.

²² See, for example, Granville Lipscomb, "Origin of the Second Blessing Idea," *GA* 38 (28 May 1896): 343.

would allow adherents to spread the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism and effect spiritual renewal in the existing denominations.

The charismatic, or Neo-Pentecostal, movement is usually said to have begun with the work of Demos Shakarian, millionaire dairyman from southern California, and a Pentecostal. In 1951 he founded the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, an organization designed to allow Pentecostal businesspeople to "witness" to non-Pentecostals. Through local prayer breakfasts and regional and national conventions, non-Pentecostals were confronted with, and often experienced, the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" as Pentecostal doctrine understood it. Converts came from practically all groups—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Southern Baptists, Roman Catholics, and members of Churches of Christ.²³

By the mid-1960s there was increasing tension in Churches of Christ over this issue. Articles began to appear in reaction to the so-called "tongues movement." But the controversy began in earnest on Churches of Christ when at the 1966 Abilene Christian College Lectureship four speakers advocated the literal, personal, indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian. Robert Oglesby, Bob D. Smith, Eddie Couch, and Duane Evans all insisted that a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit included his direct indwelling and empowering of the Christian.²⁴ While none advocated miracles or tongues, they offered a challenge to the word-only view that had been dominant since the early part of the century.

Proponents of the word-only theory were quick to respond. Several articles and series appeared in the *Firm Foundation* through the rest of 1966 and 1967, with the paper's editor, Reuel Lemmons, and Perry B. Cotham leading the opposition. J. D. Thomas of ACC then penned an eleven-article series championing the literal indwelling position. He later published the articles as a book titled *The Spirit and Spirituality*. Rebuttals followed in editorials by Lemmons and a series by H. A. ("Buster") Dobbs, another word-only proponent. In the spring of 1967 Lemmons published still another series against the literal indwelling idea written by Foy E. Wallace Jr., which was also later published as a book, *The Mission and the Medium of the Holy Spirit*. This in turn was followed by another series by Abilene Christian College professor JW Roberts, who asserted, against Wallace and others, that the literal indwelling theory had been the most widely accepted in the nineteenth century.

Perhaps we need to take a second look at our idea of what has been "surely believed among the best minds of the Restoration Movement. . . ." I believe I know the

²³ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 223–24.

²⁴ *The Bible Today* (Abilene Christian Annual Bible Lectures; Abilene, Tex.: ACC Students Exchange, 1966).

literature of the movement as well as I know any area or body of knowledge. And this is the truth of the historical question.²⁵

This incident reflected the growing tensions in the fellowship aggravated by stories of “conversions” of leaders, including several elders and preachers in Churches of Christ, to charismatic belief and practice.²⁶ In a publication of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International titled *The Acts of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ Today*, fourteen former ministers and leaders in Churches of Christ gave their testimony of charismatic conversion. Perhaps the most spectacular event took place in 1969 when the popular actor and entertainer Pat Boone announced he had experienced a baptism of the Holy Spirit. His 1970 book *A New Song* met even stronger assertions from the word-only proponents that any other understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit would inevitably lead to what they characterized as the unbiblical and irrational beliefs and behavior evidenced by Boone and other “defectors.”

That same year James D. Bales, a professor of Bible at Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas, published *Pat Boone and the Gift of Tongues*, and Guy N. Woods, a prominent minister and debater, published several articles in the *Gospel Advocate* asserting that any view other than the word-only teaching (though he rejected the term²⁷) was an aberration in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement.

The view that the Holy Spirit exercises an influence apart from and beyond that of the word of God [Bible] is a new, novel, and dangerous doctrine, unheard of in the churches of Christ until the last decade or two. We challenge any man among us to produce a statement from any prominent writer from the inception of the Restoration Movement until 1950 who taught that there is additional guidance and direction through the Spirit, not set out in God’s word.²⁸

This was an obvious challenge to JW Roberts’s earlier assertion. Woods reasoned that since the Holy Spirit is a person, he cannot literally abide in the person of another. The relation between persons is one of influence through moral suasion. In other words, the Spirit speaks to us through the words and ideas of Scripture, and in no other way. Woods sharply attacked minister Roy H. Lanier Sr., whose negative review of a widely circulated tract by Woods on the Holy Spirit had appeared in the *Firm Foundation* in late 1973.

When Brother Lanier affirms that the Holy Spirit is *actually* in the body of the Christian, I assume that he simply means that the Holy Spirit, an intelligent person,

²⁵ JW Roberts, *Firm Foundation* 84 (31 January 1967): 74.

²⁶ See accounts in *The Acts of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ Today* (Los Angeles: Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International, 1971).

²⁷ Guy N. Woods, “The Holy Spirit’s Indwelling,” *GA* 116 (4 April 1974): 215–17.

²⁸ Guy N. Woods, “Echoes from the Past,” *GA* 112 (17 September 1970): 599.

is in direct contact with, and has his abode in the mind of, the Christian. I doubt that he thinks the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in his big toe!²⁹

In his 1976 book *Order in Reverse*, the widely known Abilene, Texas, minister E. R. Harper epitomized the real fear of those who held the word-only position. He began by identifying four positions on the Holy Spirit in the Churches of Christ of his day. The first was the word-only position that he strongly promoted. The second was, in his words,

those who believe . . . that **somehow** (they do not exactly understand how), the Holy Spirit's actual person dwells **non-miraculously** within the Christian's heart. I call this the "hibernation theory." This does no special harm to the [first] position since the Holy Spirit is said to perform no miraculous work upon the [person] in whom he dwells. The weakness of this position is not so much in the "position itself," but in its becoming the "breeding ground" . . . from which are born numbers three and four.³⁰

Harper then proceeded to explain positions three and four. They are progressions that first admit the Spirit can and does do some things apart from the word—"without any assistance or help by or through any means, not even the word of God. Such is forced to be miraculous. This is what miraculous functions are." And the final fatal step was the claim of baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, performing miracles, and advocating the possibility of modern revelations. He ended his description by comparing this progression of views of the role of the Holy Spirit to the progression seen in drug users from marijuana, to pep-pills, to heroin.³¹

When the charismatic movement began, some in Churches of Christ viewed the word-only doctrine of the Holy Spirit's work as cold and sterile. The seemingly deep and spiritually satisfying experiences of the charismatics attracted many. The leading voices in Churches of Christ who continued to assert that the Spirit acted only by helping one apprehend biblical facts seemed to provide little to a spiritually hungry generation. The other view from their heritage—that the Spirit does work beyond the written word—was heard increasingly in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

The Third Wave of the Spirit

What has been characterized as a "third wave" of the Spirit began to take shape in American religion especially in the 1980s. Though similar to the first

²⁹ Guy N. Woods, "How the Holy Spirit Dwells in the Christian," *GA* 116 (7 March 1974): 146, 149–50.

³⁰ Ernest Rosenthal Harper, *Order in Reverse* (Birmingham, Ala.: Roberts & Son, 1976), xxv.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xxvi–vii.

(Pentecostal) and second (Charismatic) waves, the so-called third wave is different in several important ways.

First, those who identify with this movement believe that the gift of the Holy Spirit comes at conversion rather than as a second work of grace after the new birth. They reject tongues as the validation of a spiritual conversion experience, though accepting this as one of many legitimate spiritual gifts. Ideally they have tried to focus on ministering to others through a body of believers rather than on personal spiritual experiences. While they criticize what they see as the *self*-directing emphases in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, consciously focusing on praise and outreach, they have found it difficult to overcome the individualistic tendencies of Pentecostal and Charismatic theology.³²

This so-called third wave is varied. Two early leaders, C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber, focused on activities such as healing, casting out demons, and receiving prophecies, all understood to be activities of the Holy Spirit in them. They sometimes referred to what they were leading as the “Signs and Wonders” movement. An emphasis is on turning people toward the written word and generally insisting that any message people believe they have received from the Holy Spirit must be tested by the sword of the Spirit, the Scriptures.

Manifestations of the third wave in Churches of Christ have included the efforts of persons such as Jim Bevis, longtime minister in the charismatic Belmont Church in Nashville, Tennessee, through the Conference on Spiritual Renewal. This annual event was begun to introduce ministers in Churches of Christ to the third wave understanding of a wider role of the Spirit in the church today. For a while the Conference published *Paraclete Journal* as a renewal magazine for the various branches of the Restoration Movement.

It would be stretching things to say that belief in the indwelling and work of the Spirit apart from the written word, without accepting miraculous healing and other wonders, would qualify one as part of the third wave. To class all efforts labeled “renewal” as part of this phenomenon is certainly inappropriate. Yet the third wave is, in some aspects, an attempt to correct the extremes of both the Pentecostal/Charismatic teachings and the so-called word-only doctrine. Though the label “third wave” is problematic, current efforts at renewal in Churches of Christ are part of a much larger set of renewal efforts seen today in practically every Christian body worldwide. Much of the renewal involves reconsideration of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. This is intended only to be suggestive and to point to the need for much more investigation on the impact of the third wave on Churches of Christ.

³² C. Peter Wagner, “Third Wave,” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 843–44.

Conclusion

The rational rock of doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit created by Alexander Campbell and reinforced by his followers was assailed by repeated “waves” of the Spirit in the twentieth century. For better or worse, those who champion the so-called word-only theory no longer have a hold on the minds of the constituency of Churches of Christ. Though relatively few have adopted outright charismatic and third wave views and remained in the body, apparently the spiritual waves have begun to erode that rational rock.