

Martin Wells Knapp: Evangelist, Activist and Theologian of Holiness “Pentecost” Christianity

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Introduction: The Importance of Knapp in World Christianity

Martin Wells Knapp (1853-1901) is a complicated figure, both for the historian and for his current admirers. He was part of the Radical Holiness Networks,¹ a spottily educated pastor, an evangelist, a significant religious publisher, a journalist, the founder of God’s Bible School in Cincinnati and of camp-meetings in Ohio and Kentucky; he worked vigorously to feed and clothe the poor and he was a promoter of divine healing while not fighting against the medical professions. He was a self-proclaimed social and religious radical. He was arrested for disturbing the peace; the worship conducted by him at the religious services was too loud.² He was censored and tried by the Methodist Episcopal Church for preaching at a camp-meeting outside his “parish.”³ He long argued for staying within one’s original denomination to work for the renewal of its spirituality and mission, but separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church just before his death because of perceived and real persecution of him and his Holiness colleagues. Knapp was influential, controversial, honored and debated in traditions that owed their existence to his ideas and influence.⁴

Knapp’s importance for World Christianity lies in his influence on his associates within the Radical Holiness Networks and upon his students at God’s Bible School in Cincinnati. This influence was enhanced by his publishing ministry. Among the early students at God’s Bible School were William Seymour, founder of the Azusa Street Mission out of which came the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Tomlinson, an Indiana Quaker, founded two Pentecostal denominations, the Church of God (Cleveland) and the Church of God of Prophecy. Walter McAlister was the primary

¹ The Radical Holiness network was a complex movement, with representatives of many ecclesiastical traditions, including Quakers, Presbyterians, Methodists, Free Methodists, Methodist Protestants, Cumberland Presbyterians, Church of God, Baptist, Congregationalist and extended to all inhabited continents. It generally used, as will be discussed below, the biblical Pentecost event from the Acts of the Apostles as paradigmatic for Christian life.

² “Brother Knapp Arrested,” *God’s Revivalist* 13, 29 (18 July 1901), 15.

³ Martin Wells Knapp, *Pentecostal Aggressiveness; or, Why I conducted the meetings of the Chesapeake Holiness Union at Bowens, Maryland* (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, 1899).

⁴ Note that this essay deals with some of the issues raised during the lifetime of Knapp. It also does not address organizational, ecclesiological or the traditional theological issues. Also, while calling attention to the Radical Holiness Networks, it also does not address these directly. These issues deserve more fulsome treatment and will be addressed in subsequent essays.

founder of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.⁵ Glenn Cook's ministry led to the conversion of C. H. Mason's church in Memphis to Pentecostalism which became the mother church of the Church of God in Christ. Cook also facilitated the acceptance of the "oneness" theology by the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. Knapp was important for Holiness developments in Japan and Korea: J. Nakada, Charles and Lettie Cowman and the Kilbournes were among the "students" at God's Bible School and John Thomas had deep connections to the institution. These were among the eventual founders of the Oriental Missionary Society (OMS), the Holiness Church of Japan; and the Holiness churches of Korea.⁶ Many other persons from God's Bible School would follow their example to Korea, China and Japan.

The Radical Holiness Churches were deeply indebted to Knapp and to God's Bible School. Among those who were part of Knapp's ministries were the founders of the Pilgrim Holiness Church (1922)⁷ and the early leaders of the Metropolitan Church Association. The Pentecost Bands of the Free Methodist Church, forced out of that denomination for being too radical in their evangelism and social vision, made common cause with Knapp, as did the Vanguard Mission of St. Louis. As a result missionaries across the USA and around the world came to be represented in Knapp's periodicals and influenced by them. Knapp also influenced the early leaders of the Church of the Nazarene, including C. W. Ruth, J. O. McClurkan, Seth Cook Rees, and A. M. Hills.

God's Bible School attracted well-known faculty members including A. M. Hills, W. B. Godbey and Oswald Chambers. Knapp, through his publishing made theologians like G. D. Watson, Beverly Carradine, Samuel A. Keen, A. M. Hills, Seth Cook Rees, Abbie C. Morrow (who later became a Pentecostal theologian, evangelist and missionary to Palestine) and W. B. Godbey well known.

The Life and Ministry of Knapp

Much of what we know about Knapp and his early ministry comes from Knapp himself, either directly through his publications, especially *The Revivalist*, or through the use of his diaries by his first biographer A. M. Hills. Modest bits of independent data can be found in the records of the Michigan Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and from the independent *Michigan Holiness Record*. However, Knapp is the primary source of our knowledge about Knapp, and his self-interpretation was the basis for Hills's work. Hills merely provided a hagiographical framework for the story. As is always the case, biographical and autobiographical revelations are always developed to articulate values and goals. The stories of saints lives were cultivated first by the saints and then by the hagiographers. That does not mean that

⁵ T. C. Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Missauga, ONT: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994).

⁶ Note that the Cowmans and Kilbournes were part of the community of God's Bible School. Both couples wrote for *God's Revivalist*. Their financial support came, in fits and starts, from their connections in the national Radical Holiness network as well as from their friendships in Cincinnati. See for example: Charles and Lettie Cowman, "Called to Japan," *Revivalist* 12, 46 (15 November 1900), 9; and Edwin L. Kilbourne, "God-given privileges," *Revivalist* 12,47 (22 November 1900), 9, in which he is praising Nakada and grateful for the work of Nakada in Japan.

⁷⁷ The relationship of the eventual Pilgrim Holiness Church to the Associations developed by Knapp is very complicated and are beyond what can be included in this lecture.

the ideas and data are false, but that they represent a perspective, a construction, of a life. Thus Knapp can be said to be a Holiness and Pentecostal saint!

The Early Life of Martin Wells Knapp. The sources present Knapp as having lived a life that was a narrative of transition from poverty to plenty, from failure to success; a story illustrative of the results of entire consecration to God and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Knapp was born into a poor farm family in “a one-roomed log house in Clarendon, Calhoun County,” Michigan, on 27 March 1853. The family struggled to survive. The hard work, lack of medical care and probably bad nutrition, destroyed the health of Knapp’s father and permanently damaged that of Martin Wells Knapp. Despite the need to take the place of his father in providing for the family, Knapp’s mother kept the dream of education alive. Supported by his mother’s commitment, Knapp enrolled at the Methodist Protestant related Albion College, located in the small town of Albion, Michigan.⁸ Albion College, whose first President was Asa Mahan, was founded by the Wesleyan Methodists but rescued from bankruptcy by the Methodist Protestant Church of Michigan. It was a center of Holiness influence and activism.

Forced to work on the farm to support the family, Knapp’s education was frequently interrupted and haphazard. In six years, he was able to complete only two years of course work and that without distinction.⁹ Perhaps most important to his future was that he met at Albion his wife Lucy J. Glenn. The class work was supplemented by the “Course of Study,” a directed program of individual supervised study of Methodist theology, history, liturgy and church practices. The “course of study” normally undertaken while serving as a pastor under supervision, was the most normal theological education for Methodist Episcopal Church clergy during the period.

Pastor, Evangelist and Editor. Thus prepared Martin Wells Knapp entered the ministry under the aegis of the Michigan Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1881.¹⁰ He served a number of pastorates, often over the protests of the parishioners. By his own account, he was timid, fearful and frustrated. That he survived in this profession is without doubt significantly attributable to the gifts and confidence of his wife Lucy J. Glenn Knapp. Lucy J. Glenn Knapp was an accomplished speaker, an excellent manager of money, resources and people, and was better educated than her husband. When they were appointed evangelists by the Michigan Conference, both Lucy J. Glenn Knapp and Martin Wells Knapp were listed. Knapp considered her both muse and mentor. They collaborated on every aspect of their work, including the founding of *The Revivalist* in 1888. Her death on 5 September 1890, of influenza, left a huge gap in the life of Knapp and of the family.¹¹ Knapp, and his colleagues, continued to develop *The Revivalist*. It became a very successful religious periodical, with a circulation in excess of 20,000 copies.

⁸ Martin Wells Knapp, *Out of Egypt into Canaan* (Cincinnati: Office of the Revivalist, 1887), 188.

⁹ A. M. hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer*, 18.

¹⁰ George L. Carter, *A Brief History of the Elsie Methodist Episcopal Church* (Elsie, MI: The Elsie Sun, 1934), 5.

¹¹ Martin Wells Knapp, “Glorified,” *The Revivalist* 3, 10 (October 1890), 3. See also the testimony of Lucy Glenn Knapp, ““Being Dead Yet Speaketh,”” *The Revivalist* 3, 10 (October 1890), 4. A. M. hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer*, 15-106.

The Move from Rural Michigan to Urban Cincinnati. Two years later after the death of Lucy Knapp, on 14 September 1894, Knapp married Lucy's friend and his office assistant Minnie C. Ferle and about two months later the newly-weds moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, to continue Holiness evangelism a major urban center.¹² There Knapp and his fellow workers entered a decade of frenetic activity that created the legend of Martin Wells Knapp. W. B. Godbey remembered him as having a "sweetness in manner" that "reminded me of an angel instead of a man, yet he had a power over the human will which was absolutely indescribable and apparently irresistible."¹³ The description of A. M. Hills suggests that the reality was more complicated:

He was about five feet four inches high, and weighed about one hundred and twenty pounds. The proportions of his body were not fine: the various parts and members of his body, in their general effect, seemed as if they had been thrown together or had chanced to come together by some laughable accident of nature. The first impression he made upon a strange audience was always unfavorable.¹⁴

Hills argued that Knapp had accomplished much despite his lack of education, lack of cultural sophistication, an unattractive speaking voice and lack of attractive physical attributes. He insisted that Knapp was evidence of "the uplifting, ennobling, and transforming power of the Holy Ghost on a life."¹⁵ These personal factors contributed to what appears to have been his understated leadership which stood in stark contrast from the majority of the famous, handsome, stentorian Holiness revivalists of the period. In the pages of *The Revivalist*, he presented himself as modest and self-effacing. He and his first biographer, A. M. Hills, consistently presented Knapp as an example of a life overcoming adversity through the power of God. There is no evidence that his Radical Holiness contemporaries considered him otherwise.

Another strength of Knapp's ministry was his commitment to and ability to work with diverse people from diverse traditions. The only requirement: to share Knapp's vision of Radical Holiness as a transformative paradigm for persons and society. Thus, Hills presented Knapp as a Holiness ecumenist urging Holiness people to cooperate as much as possible in light of their different traditions, ecclesiastical relations and social location.¹⁶ Knapp insisted: "Baptism with the Holy Spirit unites God's

¹² A. M. Hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer*, 127.

¹³ W. B. Godbey, *Autobiography of Rev. W. B. Godbey, A.M.* (Cincinnati: God's Revivalist Office, 1909), 367.

¹⁴ A. M. Hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer; or, Life of Rev. Martin Wells Knapp* (Cincinnati: Mrs. M. W. Knapp, Mount of Blessings, 1902), 15. Reprinted: (Noblesville, IN: Newby Book Room, 1973), 15.

¹⁵ A. M. Hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer*, 18-19. Hills disparagement of Knapp's educational endeavors is a bit gratuitous and may be thus stated to emphasize his own standing as a graduate of Yale University. Knapp's education was more extensive than that of many of his peers and disciples. See also Martin Wells Knapp, "Why a college diploma should not be made a condition of entrance to the Christian ministry," *God's Revivalist* 13,27 (4 July 1901), 8.

¹⁶ A. M. Hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer*. Knapp spoke of this issue often in the pages of *The Revivalist*. For example: [Martin Wells Knapp], "Bigotry a Revival Hindrance," *The Revivalist* 7, 12 (December 1893), 1; [Martin Wells Knapp], "This is true in war, politics, business and religion," *The Revivalist* 7, 3 (March 1893), 1, [Martin Wells Knapp] "Revival Unity," *The Revivalist* 12, 43 (25 Oct. 1900), 1.

people all into one body, whatever their name or creed or clime may be.”¹⁷ He celebrated the fact that traditions other than the Methodists were teaching and experiencing “sanctification”. He promoted both Methodist and non-Methodist Holiness speakers and writers in the pages of *The Revivalist*. Despite his strident condemnations of all types of injustice, as will be discussed below, Knapp appears to have been gentler in his spiritual advice to the audiences: he worked to persuade, but trusted the hearers to negotiate with God and to seek, respond, and choose.¹⁸

At the same time, Knapp did not shy away from controversy. He refused to have the message of “Pentecost” be limited by the church, government or the powerful forces of society. He was intensely angry and indignant at injustice, which for him included keeping the “blessing” of sanctification from the people—from the exhausted and exploited masses of the new American industrializing urban reality. He strongly and aggressively promoted and encouraged the ministry of women, in *The Revivalist* periodical, organization and in preaching.¹⁹ Women were also given important writing assignments, including theological and exegetical columns in the revivalist. These included Anna Abrams, Beatrice M. Finney, Lettie Cowman, Hulda Rees, Alma White, Elizabeth D. Ferle, Minnie Lindberg, Mabel Hirst, Barbara Hershey, and Abbie C. Morrow. He reached out to include African-Americans in the life of GBS, as students, liturgists and strategically placed participants in the meetings as is evidenced by the mocking racist cartoons in Cincinnati newspapers. He collaborated with Amanda Berry Smith, although she withdrew from the relationship over pre-millennialism and Knapp’s encouragement of those who left the established churches, those who chose “come-outer-ism.”²⁰

Hills presented Knapp as an idealist regarding the efficacy of the experience of sanctification, but also as pragmatic and entrepreneurial. While he described the elements of the development of Knapp’s program in Albion and Cincinnati, Hills was so caught in his own agenda that he missed, or repressed, the clarity of that program and of the definition of the new reality toward which Knapp was endeavoring to lead the Radical Holiness Movement. One could argue that Hills interpreted Knapp as a typical Holiness preacher in a new “come-outer” church who was aspiring to develop structures like the denominations they had left. He deliberately muted the radicalism of Knapp’s vision of the church and society. Hills was by 1902, when he wrote about Knapp, in favor of forming a Holiness denomination, a structure that Knapp had expressly avoided in favor of “associations” of persons of shared values but

¹⁷ Martin Wells Knapp, “Revival Unity,” *The Revivalist* 12, 43 (25 October 1900), 1.

¹⁸ A. M. Hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer*, 144-157, *et passim*. This is also seen in *The Revivalist*.

¹⁹ See for example, Martin Wells Knapp, “Women’s Work,” *Revivalist* 11, 52 (28 December 1899), 1. This was an address in the chapel at God’s Bible School.

²⁰ Amanda Smith, Letters published in: *The Revivalist* 10, 3 (March 1896), 4; 10, 9 (September 1896), 5. On her role in the first “Cincinnati Holiness Convention (1893) see, [Martin Wells Knapp], “Estimates of the Meeting” *The Revivalist* 7, 6 (June 1893), 1 and *idem*, “Sparks from Amanda Smith,” *The Revivalist* 7, 6 (June 1893), 1. See A. M. Hills, *A Hero of Faith and Prayer*. While Hills does not mention the presence of African-Americans in *The Revivalist* network, at the camp meetings or at God’s Bible School, the Cincinnati newspapers did and were more forthcoming. This lacuna in Hills is significant in light of the decision of the early Asbury College not to admit African-American students at Asbury, and the Church of the Nazarene which did not accept Black Holiness denominations in the formation of the Church of the Nazarene. African-Americans were not allowed into the Hill’s Young Men’s Christian Association in Indianapolis.

with no defined structure. Before and after his separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Knapp opposed starting denominations, even Holiness ones.

Activist for Holiness and Holy Living. The question of “power” was central for Knapp. There are two kinds of power: positive and negative. Positive power has its source in God, and is made available to individual Christians through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Negative power has its source in the human exploiters (state, political parties, industry, secret societies, church). These institutions conspire together and separately to limit the power of God for their own purposes. The churches considered “backslidden” were the most evil, excluding those from power who promote the transforming power of God which decreases dependency on those who exploit and thereby the power of the exploiters. Knapp argued that the divine power was for all believers. All humans were created equal and it is the duty of Christians to help all achieve that equality. All have worth no matter how broken they are by sin.

Knapp insisted that power was to not to be focused on anyone person in the church, society or social group. It is to be dispersed throughout the society; sanctified persons are able to actualize the possibilities of power positively better than others. It is this argument that was set forth in quite other language and intellectual categories most vigorously by Michel Foucault and others influenced by him during the last quarter of the twentieth century.²¹ It is important to note that Knapp does not suggest a national or even city-wide effort to organize to fight for social transformation. He was living in the period of social back-lash against the Holiness moment concomitant with the growing Northern racism and racial anger against the migrating African-Americans from the South. These peoples faced sometimes violent political and economic opposition. Knapp developed projects to transform the lives of the people he and his co-laborers could afford to reach. It was anticipated that individualistic transformation would have social consequences. He wrote: “God, who in nature transforms rot and refuse into roses, fruits and fragrances, in the realms of grace, surprises still more startling transformations.”²²

Knapp found several aspects of culture that needed renewal and control. He insisted that the large industries were evil when they pushed goods appealing to human greed and which fostered additions that take away the health and free-will of the individual. He defined the larger problem as the “worldliness” of Christians:

Worldliness is one of the most fatal worms that saps the life of spirituality. Wherever it gnaws, leaves wither and die. Its presence on every hand may be seen by the following outward marks:
Conformity to worldly fashions;
Sacrificing to worldly political parties;

²¹ Foucault, Michel, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), idem, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), idem, *Il faut défendre la société: cours au Collège de France, 1975-1976* (Paris : Gallimard/Seuil, 1997), idem, *Histoire de la sexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976-1984), idem, *Sécurité, territoire, population: cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Paris: Seuil, Gallimard, 2004) , idem, with Michelle Perrot, *L'Impossible prison: recherches sur le système pénitentiaire au XIXe siècle* (Paris : Seuil, 1980).

²² Martin Wells Knapp, “A Glorious Transformation,” *God’s Revivalist* 12, 47 (22 November 1900), 1.

Popularity of worldly churches;
 Affiliation with worldly fraternities;
 Adoption of worldly methods of business;
 Promotion of worldly advertisements in religious papers;
 Insertion of unseemly cuts in such advertisements;
 Worldly people as leaders of choirs, Sunday schools, on official boards;
 The discussion of worldly themes in the pulpit and by the religious press....²³

The issue at each point was the abuse of power and the subsequent damaging of the lives and spirituality of the persons to whom they represent positions of power. Thus, Knapp observed that political parties and the State divide people to control them with simplistic slogans that encourage people to act against their own interests, and unwittingly to support the corruption of the parties and the State.

The church was no better, maybe worse because it claimed to be different from the world. Knapp observed that the established churches with their mind numbing rituals are sustained and presided over by egotistical men. These seek to control the people and control access to God so that they can acquire money, titles and power for themselves. Women and the poor are excluded from positions and ministry in the churches.²⁴ In support of his position, he published an article by Newton Wray asserting that the Methodist Episcopal Church bragged about its statistics but was in a state of famine of the Spirit, encouraging nominal rather than transformative faith.²⁵ He also reprinted a text by A. T. Pierson which argued that the "The ideal church ... is one that is working for the conversion of souls, an educational church, and a democratic church; but it must be in my judgment, a free church."²⁶ More pointed were the articles by I. Reid, "Protestant Popery," and E. H. Dashiell, "Ecclesiasticism versus Jesus."²⁷ Knapp insisted that he was not against organizations or against the churches, but "against the prostitution of the organization in the interests of the world...."²⁸

²³ Martin Wells Knapp, "Worldliness," *The Revivalist* 11, 15 (13 April 1899), 5.

²⁴ Jacob Knapp, "Honorary Doctors," *The Revivalist* 11, 8 (June 1897), 5; Martin Wells Knapp, "The New Testament Church," *The Revivalist* 11, 9 (September 1897), 1; *idem* "Hirlings," *The Revivalist* 11, 23 (8 June 1899), 8; *idem*, "Anti-Revival Churches," *God's Revivalist* 12, 51 (20 December 1900), 1; *idem*, "The New Testament Church," *God's Revivalist* 12, 52 (27 December 1900), 1; *idem*, "Societies of God's Church vs. Worldly Societies and Denominations," *God's Revivalist* 13, 7 (14 February 1901), 8; *idem*, "Wrecked Humanity and Hirelings," *God's Revivalist* 13, 9 (28 February 1901), 1 [accompanied by a cartoon: "The Salary Seeking Minister" which shows the clergy getting fat and rich at the expense of the poor; *idem*, "Come-outerism and Revivals," *God's Revivalist* 13, 14 (4 April 1901), 1 ["The societies of God's church should be governed by New Testament principles and practices"]. Abuses by the established churches, especially by the Methodist Episcopal Church, is a recurring theme in *The Revivalist* and in Knapp's publications.

²⁵ Newton Wray, "Church Statistics and Spiritual Famine," *God's Revivalist* 12, 51 (20 December 1900), 9.

²⁶ A. T. Pierson, "The Ideal Church," *God's Revivalist* 13, 4 (24 Jan. 1901), 4.

²⁷ I. Reid, "Protestant Popery," *The Revivalist* 11, 6 (9 February 1899), 8; E. H. Dashiell, "Ecclesiasticism versus Jesus," *The Revivalist* 11, 6 (9 February 1899), 8.

²⁸ Martin Wells Knapp, "The Revivalist and the Church," *The Revivalist* 11, 26 (29 June 1899), 1.

He and the Radical Holiness network were strongly opposed to Secret Societies, such as the Free Masons. These exclude women, the poor and those who would refuse to compromise their theological convictions. Decisions made by the elite in secret meetings are by their nature deleterious to those excluded. The members of the secret societies, he insisted, protect each other in their corruption and greed.²⁹

The Methodist dominated National Holiness Association was found by Knapp to have adopted non-democratic values similar to those of the Methodist Episcopal Church or Free Masons. That is, they excluded those from the “Holiness Movement” who did not agree with them. They excluded non-Methodists and those that the National Holiness Association leadership thought too radical or too prone to split the denomination or congregations over Holiness; they were committed to staying in the Methodist Episcopal Church as was Knapp until he was attacked for preaching at a camp-meeting without permission from local Methodist Episcopal pastors or the bishop.³⁰ Because of these concerns, which were held by many Holiness “Pentecost” pastors and leaders across the world, the Radical Holiness networks became more closely linked through friendships, publications as well as the common concerns about exclusion and exploitation.

This division, between the more socially integrated Holiness movement, which increasingly accepted the general social, theological, economic and moral values of American society are now represented by “Holiness and Unity,”³¹ and the Interdenominational Holiness Convention continues. Knapp’s influence and institutions are a key part of the International Holiness Convention, and are minimally remembered among the larger Holiness churches in the USA.

Thus, Knapp argued that all of these (government, business, church and the National Holiness Association) are designed by the powerful for their benefit, rather than for the common person. A role of the Holiness Revival is to remind people that all resources belong to God. God owns the property.³² God provided in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles a model for the mission that reminds people of their need for God. Knapp insisted that it is the responsibility of the church and of individual Christians to struggle for personal and social transformation and for social justice. He warned that corruption and abuse of the poor by the governments and businesses would not last: “What a transition from poverty

²⁹ Martin Wells Knapp, “Secret Meetings,” *The Revivalist* 11, 21 (25 May 1899), 8; *idem*, “Secret Societies,” *The Revivalist* 11, 21 (25 May 1899), 8; *idem*, “Dr. Buckley and Secret Societies,” *The Revivalist* 11, 45 (9 November 1899), 8, where Knapp notes with satisfaction that the editor of the Methodist Episcopal *Western Christian Advocate* agreed with the earlier critique of “secret societies” published in *The Revivalist*. See also Minnie Ferle Knapp, “Real-Sham,” *The Revivalist* 12, 17 (26 April 1900), 8, commenting on the cheap valueless jewelry and Masonic badges put into the collection plate at Revival meetings in Cincinnati, and regretting that people had been seduced into using hard earned monies for such worthless objects.

³⁰ Martin Wells Knapp, *Pentecostal Aggressiveness; or, Why I conducted the meetings of the Chesapeake Holiness Union at Bowens, Maryland* (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, 1899).

³¹ The website of Holiness and Unity is: www.holinessandunity.org.

³² Hence the renaming of *The Revivalist* as *God’s Revivalist and Bible Advocate*, the naming of his school as God’s Bible School and deeding the school to God. This deeding resulted in a court case that lasted for decades when it was finally decided by the Ohio Supreme Court that God could not own property in Ohio.

to plenty This earth belongs to Jesus Christ, and he will not always allow His brothers and sisters to be treated as they are today.”³³

Theologian: “Pentecost” as Paradigm for Christian Life and Community. Knapp drew from his reading of the biblical narratives, especially the Sermon on the Mount and the early chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*. These texts provided Knapp with a paradigm, a vision, for a new reality that he sought. It was not a vision that he developed alone. It was being developed slowly and in fits, starts and contradictions among the ranks of the Radical Holiness preachers, several of whose works were published by Knapp. The tenets of the new “Pentecostal” or “Apostolic” Holiness movement, the Radical Holiness movement included:

- All have equal access to God and to the power of God, unhampered by clergy or church: Baptism with the Holy Spirit for purity and power is for all.
- Work for the equalization of power in churches, governments, leaders, corporations, businesses. These structures should have no monopoly on power or the right to use it to the detriment of others.
- Christian, and all society, should be egalitarian with no distinctions between race, creed, gender, class, sectional, laws, or educational attainment; all have equal value in the church, society and culture.
- Clergy are appointed by God and should care only for God and for the common people [ministry to the poor, physical healing, evangelizing].
- Support aspirations of humanity: facilitate positive transformation of the current realities.
- All of one’s life and possessions should be devoted to God, used in conformity to God’s will.
- Care for the poor, the sick, prisoners and the socially marginalized is at the core of the gospel: justice involves re-distribution of resources as well as respect for the all.
- Communalism, the equal distribution of resources according to needs and mutual care is the Pentecost paradigm for Christian life.
- Excess consumption takes away life and possessions from others and destroys the creation
- Christians should use of all technology and celebrate the improvements of life.
- Human ingenuity and inventiveness must be used for the good of people rather than for the aggrandizement of the few who control the wealth.
- The Pentecost Christian is to live expectantly, anticipating the imminent return of Christ who will right the wrongs and redeem and transform the world. It is “Our Hope”.
- Holiness Pentecost theology is pre-millennial: “look at the world” “who can believe it is getting better” only Christ can transform the world and the people in it.

³³ Martin Wells Knapp, “Governmental Positions,” *The Revivalist* 11, 33 (10 August 1889), 7. This has striking parallels with the Preamble to the Industrial Workers of the World Constitutions (Wobblies): “There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.” (Industrial Workers of the World website: www.IWW.org). See below. See also Knapp’s essay, “In Union there is Strength,” *Revivalist* 7, 3 (March 1893), 1.

- The vision of a just Pentecostal world is a global vision of love, mission and justice for transformation; it is not expected to happen before the return of Christ, but Holiness Christians should work toward the Godly paradigm for life and society as revealed in the biblical texts.
- The Pentecost Christian is to be pragmatic and entrepreneurial, using all to advance the Kingdom of God.
- The Pentecost leader has clarity of program and of the definition of the new reality toward which she or he is leading.

This was the theological paradigm of Martin Wells Knapp and the Radical Holiness movement. Supporting this was the conservative doctrinal consensus of the late nineteenth century among the Methodists and other daughter churches of the Second Great Awakening.

Conclusion

Martin Wells Knapp and the Radical Holiness movement argued for a version of modernity that would be more faithful to the biblical vision of a transformed humanity. As such it broke with the traditions of classical Christianity which focused on the power of the church and church leaders. The Radical Holiness tradition insisted that “Pentecost” was the model, the biblical paradigm, of the new community of God, the paradigm lived out by those who knew Jesus best.

They did this in the context of American culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and need to be understood in that context, the context in which the Radical Holiness movement developed and in which Knapp ministered. His students, disciples and friends went on to develop the Holiness and Pentecostal movements in ways he would not have foreseen. He was part of a large “global” international network of who were insisting that personal, theological and social transformation were part of the salvation offered by God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as their mentor John Wesley had insisted. Many would describe this perspective as “the Full Gospel” or “the Four-fold Gospel.”

It is important that Knapp and the Radical Holiness tradition produced two of four global Christian theological traditions that managed to supersede the boundaries of ethnicity and culture. The Holiness, Pentecostal, Catholic and Orthodox have achieved this in ways that the classical nationalistic reformation traditions did not. The later remain largely ethnic enclaves. In Korea it was precisely the theological structures of the “Four-fold Gospel,” or so it appears to this observer, developed in the framework of Korean culture that explains most adequately the phenomenon of Korean Christianity, but that is a discussion for another day!