

**‘OUTSIDE THE CAMP’:  
BRETHREN SPIRITUALITY AND WIDER  
EVANGELICALISM IN THE 1920s**

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The spirituality of the Brethren has often been affected by developments within the wider Christian community and has itself influenced such developments. In the 1830s the emergent Brethren movement owed much to leaders who left the Church of England. Links existed between seceders of differing theological hues in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> J. N. Darby, a former Anglican clergyman, was shaped by his original Calvinistic theological milieu and claimed to have been the means of the conversion of a high Calvinist seceder, J. C. Philpot, who became an erudite spokesman for Strict Baptist ecclesiology.<sup>2</sup> Edward Irving’s views about eschatology and the gifts of the Spirit were also part of this mosaic. In the 1830s and 1840s H. B. Bulteel (who, until the Bishop of Oxford removed him, was at St Ebbe’s, Oxford) was associated in turn with high Calvinists, the Irvingite connection and Brethren.<sup>3</sup> These separatist groups were also wracked by their own internal tensions. The 1840s saw Darby denouncing certain Brethren leaders over alleged Christological deviations, the upshot being the Exclusive and Open division.<sup>4</sup> In 1859-60 a similar split took place among Strict Baptists.<sup>5</sup> The Brethren mirrored larger patterns within nineteenth-century evangelicalism.

In this century, especially in the years after the First World War, the story was a similar one. Brethren found their experiences inextricably entwined with those of other movements shaping evangelicalism.<sup>6</sup> It was a period when the Brethren were growing. In 1924 Henry Pickering (1858-1941), editor of *The Witness*, asserted that Fundamentalists had no need to form any new union of churches, since Brethren assemblies—which by 1927 he estimated as totalling 3,000 in Britain—were available

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1. See Grayson Carter, ‘Evangelical Seceders from the Church of England, c.1800-1850’ (University of Oxford D. Phil thesis, 1990), especially chapters 6 and 7; cf. H. H. Rowdon, ‘Secession from the Established Church in the early nineteenth Century’, *Vox Evangelica*, 1964, pp. 76-88.

2. *Letters of J.N.D.*, 3 (London, n.d.), pp. 205-7, 474; W. G. Turner, *John Nelson Darby* (London, 1944), p. 46.’

3. Tim Grass, ‘The restoration of a congregation of Baptists’, *The Baptist Quarterly*, 37(1998), pp. 283-97.

4. P.L. Embley, ‘The early development of the Plymouth Brethren’, in Bryan R. Wilson (ed.), *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London, 1967), pp.213-43.

5. A. C. Underwood, *A History of the Baptists* (London, 1947), pp. 245, 147.

6. For movements of evangelical spirituality in the inter-war period see Ian M Randall, *Evangelical Experiences: a Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism 1918-1939* (Carlisle, 1999).

to join.<sup>7</sup> Pickering's estimate may have been slightly high, but the number of British Open Brethren assemblies alone grew from 1,440 in 1922 to 1,739 in 1933.<sup>8</sup> From 1914 to 1929 *The Witness* increased its circulation from 16,000 to nearly 30,000.<sup>9</sup> This article will focus on Open Brethren in the 1920s and will examine the interface between them and the Keswick Convention, the Fundamentalist and separatist agendas, varieties of premillennialism, evangelistic revivalism and Pentecostalism. Calls were often issued, for example by the more conservative *Believer's Magazine*, edited by John Ritchie (1853-1930), to avoid wider movements and remain 'outside the camp'.<sup>10</sup> Although this position had strident advocates, it was to be questioned in an increasingly inter-denominational evangelical context.

### THE CHALLENGE OF KESWICK

It was the Keswick Convention, dating from 1875, with its message of 'holiness by faith' and 'full surrender', and its motto, 'All One in Christ Jesus', which was to pose a particular challenge to Brethren claims to be uniquely non-sectarian. By 1907 the convention week at Keswick was attracting over 6,000 devotees.<sup>11</sup> The Keswick idiom, as David Bebbington argues, shaped the prevailing pattern of evangelical piety for much of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> After the First World War Keswick saw an influx of young people and this helped to stimulate the founding of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, an inter-denominational network of evangelical undergraduates. In its affirmation of undenominational spiritual unity, Keswick appeared to be in tune with Brethren thinking. At the beginning of the century Brethren attendance at the convention was small, but Brethren numbers rose from about 200 in 1926 to at least 700 in 1938.<sup>13</sup> Many Brethren leaders of the 1920s, however, saw Keswick-style fellowship as compromising New Testament ecclesiology. *The Believer's Magazine* was insistent, in 1922, that the process of 'Deepening of the Spiritual Life'—a common description of Keswick's spirituality—had to cover ecclesiastical matters as well as personal Christian living. The 'higher life', it was asserted, could not excuse 'unsanctified associations'.<sup>14</sup> This was a reference to being linked with denominations—referred to by Brethren as 'sects'.

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7. *The Witness* [hereafter *W*], 54 (October 1924), p. 404; *W*, 57 (June 1927), p. 11.

8. Peter Brierley *et al.*, *The Christian Brethren as the Nineties Began* (Carlisle, 1993), p. 90.

9. *W*, 57 (November 1927), p. 213; *W*, 59 (December 1929), p. 282.

10. *The Believer's Magazine* [hereafter *BM*], 32 (March 1922), p. 41; *ibid.*, (May), p. 54; *ibid.*, (August), p. 88.

11. *The Record*, 2 August 1907, p. 679; C. F. Harford, *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Method and Its Men* (London, 1907), p. 15; for the history of Keswick see Charles Price and Ian Randall, *Transforming Keswick* (Carlisle, 2000).

12. D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p. 151.

13. *The Christian*, 21 July 1938, p. 8.

14. *BM*, 32 (October 1922), pp. 108-9.

Such high ecclesiology drove *The Believer's Magazine* four years later to suggest that Keswick-style 'promiscuous gatherings' (an evocative description of inter-denominational meetings) were injurious to 'true spirituality'.<sup>15</sup> In the same year Henry Pickering, although he had been allowing Keswick teaching to feature in *The Witness*, accused Keswick of displaying its motto affirming oneness while simultaneously condoning denominationalism, which, for him, flagrantly flouted true unity. In the town of Keswick itself, Pickering suggested, 'Bethesda' (the small Brethren assembly) was the only place where worshippers met 'apart from party, sect, denomination, garb, or other man-made marks'.<sup>16</sup> Not to be outdone, William Hoste, a Cambridge graduate who had aspired to Anglican ministry before embracing Brethren views, declared in 1927 in *The Believer's Magazine* that Keswick actually muzzled ecclesiastical convictions. He complained about the way in which 'reverends or quasi reverends' dominated Keswick. He also pointed out, correctly, that given Keswick's pan-denominationalism a Baptist speaker could not enunciate his convictions on baptism at the convention. At the end of the Keswick week, Hoste grumbled, 'trains waft all back to the surplices, prayer books, one man priesthood or ministry, and other sectarian practices'.<sup>17</sup>

The spirituality at the heart of Keswick, which showed itself in a call to Christians to come to a point of full surrender, was itself something that engendered Brethren debate. George Goodman, a solicitor from Tunbridge Wells, said in 1919 that the believer was sanctified at conversion (a standard Brethren view), but that this was realised in varying degrees. Thus there could, he argued, be a subsequent experience of full surrender.<sup>18</sup> *The Believer's Magazine*, four months later, flatly disagreed, opposing all teaching about the higher life, the second blessing or holiness by faith.<sup>19</sup> In the inter-war years George Goodman and his brother Montague became popular Keswick speakers. Montague played a part in many evangelical enterprises, including London Bible College.<sup>20</sup> George, a frequent contributor to *The Witness*, took on the task of offering Brethren a defence of Keswick spirituality. He accepted in 1923 that some holiness terms—such as entire sanctification—might be misleading, but he urged the importance of real experiences of spiritual victory.<sup>21</sup> G. H. Lang, an independent Brethren thinker (described by F. F. Bruce as 'a speaker of exceptional vigour and lucidity'), suggested in 1925 that the most serious deficiency in Brethren theology, by comparison with Keswick, had been the lack of attention given to sanctification by Brethren.<sup>22</sup>

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15. *BM*, 36 (June 1926), p. 78.

16. *W*, 56 (August 1926), p. 394.

17. *BM*, 37 (May 1927), p. 67

18. *W*, 49 (October 1919), p. 160.

19. *BM*, 30 (February 1920), p. 26.

20. I.M. Randall, *Educating Evangelicalism: the Origins, Development and Impact of London Bible College* (Carlisle, 2000), chpts 1-5.

21. *W*, 53 (August 1923), pp. 117-19; *ibid.*, (September), p. 159.

22. G. H. Lang, *Departure: A Warning and an Appeal* (London, 1925), p. 104. For F. F. Bruce on Lang see *W*, 88 (December 1958), pp. 253-4.

As well as challenging Keswick's acceptance of denominationalism and analysing its view of spiritual growth, a number of Brethren leaders questioned aspects of the communion services which increasingly took place at holiness conventions. It might have seemed that convention leaders were incorporating Brethren thinking, since in the 1920s they were introducing communion services embodying a plain liturgical format. From 1928 at least 3,000 people at Keswick participated in a celebration of communion at which, *The Life of Faith* (Keswick's semi-official mouthpiece) commented, 'members of the Brethren must have felt themselves in the familiar atmosphere of the breaking of the bread'.<sup>23</sup> A non-ritualistic style for the celebration of the Lord's Supper pleased Keswick Anglicans, who were keen to counter the Anglo-Catholic drift of the Church of England. But the new developments did not necessarily win Brethren approval. Referring to a report of a convention at which Fuller Gooch, a well known independent Baptist minister, had 'presided' over a communion service, *The Witness* asked: 'When did the Lord relinquish control?'<sup>24</sup> *The Believer's Magazine* asserted that the devil was delighted when the 'Feast of remembrance' was squeezed into a corner, and Graham Scroggie, Keswick's most penetrating inter-war expositor, was castigated by *The Witness* in 1924 for abandoning weekly communion at Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh, where he was pastor.<sup>25</sup>

Many Brethren were also unconvinced about the Keswick style of 'Bible Readings', at which leading ministers gave addresses. The ministry of Keswick speakers was applauded on some occasions, although often with a caveat. For example F. S. Webster, Rector of All Souls, Langham Place, London who died suddenly in 1920 (knocked down by a motor car), was referred to in *The Witness* as one of a dwindling number of Anglicans who were out-and-out evangelicals.<sup>26</sup> When Lang visited Keswick in 1925 he was profoundly impressed by the forthright Irish Methodist, Charles Inwood.<sup>27</sup> But at the Brethren's Bible readings—the same name was used—Keswick-style addresses were discouraged. Instead (male) members discussed texts of scripture together, avoiding the danger of being 'dependent for spiritual food upon what we hear'.<sup>28</sup> It was argued that 'closed' conferences, with prearranged speakers, were unspiritual, while 'open' platforms demonstrated 'acknowledgment of the Lord as present to rule'.<sup>29</sup> In 1928 *The Harvester*—a magazine launched especially to encourage Brethren outreach—lamented that conversational Bible readings were giving way to addresses and lectures.<sup>30</sup> But in the early 1930s Lang was urging Brethren elders to 'exercise their authority by repressing bores, talkers of platitudes, and other time wasters', and pointed out that the much

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23. *The Life of Faith*, 26 July 1933, p. 859.

24. *W*, 53 (May 1923), p. 84.

25. *BM*, 29 (May 1919), p. 71; *W*, 24 (June 1924), p. 324.

26. *W*, 50 (February 1920), p. 227.

27. G. H. Lang, *An Ordered Life* (London, 1959), p. 199.

28. *The Harvester* [hereafter *H*], 5 (April 1928), p. 49.

29. *BM*, 28 (October 1918), pp. 113-14; *BM*, 41 (March 1931), pp. 54-5.

30. *H*, 5 (April 1928), p. 49.

vaunted Brethren freedom did not allow women to pray, or supernatural gifts to be exercised and did not give space for the 'spiritually accredited' to teach.<sup>31</sup>

Despite continuing criticisms of Keswick, which came especially from the more conservative wing of the Brethren, by the later 1920s a changed attitude towards the convention was evident. *The Witness* applauded the presence of two Brethren speakers, George Goodman and Northcote Deck (from the Solomon Islands), on the convention platform in 1928. It affirmed Keswick during a *fracas* in that year over the broad theological sympathies of Stuart Holden, the Keswick chairman. Holden had been accused of condoning modernism, but Henry Pickering wanted to make it clear that Keswick speakers—Graham Scroggie was mentioned—were to be supported in their teaching, which was described, significantly, not as holiness by faith but as 'holiness in truth'.<sup>32</sup> Eight years earlier *The Witness* had been rather wary about the orthodoxy of the Keswick platform.<sup>33</sup> In 1928 questions still remained about Keswick in relation to the Brethren's much-prized weekly communion, with *The Witness* asking why those attending Keswick did not break bread every week 'as practised in thousands of humble Assemblies'. But at the same time the relativising of 'sectarian barriers and clerical distinctions' at Keswick was welcomed.<sup>34</sup> The Brethren's image of an ecclesiastical fellowship which refused any 'sectarian' label was increasingly coloured by Keswick-style inter-denominational spirituality.

#### THE FUNDAMENTALIST AGENDA

Another movement that had an impact on evangelicalism in the 1920s was Fundamentalism, with its insistence on strict adherence to what were seen as the 'fundamentals' of the faith. Fundamentalism, which was especially evident after the First World War, was characterised both by truculent protest and the 'withdrawal instinct of the sectarian'.<sup>35</sup> This bellicose form of evangelicalism was on a very much smaller scale in Britain in the 1920s than in America,<sup>36</sup> in part due to Keswick's moderation. Alignment to a system of doctrine was not, for Keswick's Stuart Holden, a Keswick requirement.<sup>37</sup> This was consistent with the convention's position that spirituality was its central concern. But some evangelicals believed that a more definite and indeed militant stance was needed. Unity, for them, was only possible on the basis of a clear doctrinal statement, usually one that affirmed the inerrancy of the Bible. In 1922 an undenominational union, later the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical

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31. G. H. Lang, *The Rights of the Holy Spirit in the House of God* (Walsham-le-Willows, Suffolk, 1938), pp. 19-21.

32. *W*, 58 (May 1928), p. 334.

33. *W*, 50 (March 1920), p. 234.

34. *W*, 58 (May 1928), p. 414.

35. D.W. Bebbington, 'Martyrs for the truth: Fundamentalists in Britain', in Diana Wood (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, 30 (Oxford, 1993), p. 448.

36. G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York, 1980), pp. 3-8.

37. *The Keswick Week* (1920), p. 57.

Churches (F.I.E.C.), was formed to draw together congregations wishing no part in what they saw as doctrinally mixed denominations. Support for this separatist position appeared to be growing. The Fundamentalist Wesley Bible Union applauded the coming together of independent churches and undenominational mission halls to form a 'New Nonconformity'.<sup>38</sup>

Fundamentalist separatism, like Keswick, was to present a challenge to Brethren thinking. In the case of Keswick, the idea of being 'all one' was a factor attracting some Brethren to the convention. The contrasting belief held within Fundamentalism was that it was vital to withdraw 'outside the camp' of ecclesiastical structures. Brethren responses to the Fundamentalist-separatist phenomenon were not uniform. Some voices dismissed it as irrelevant, but a number of other leaders realised that there were affinities with the Brethren approach to denominationalism. William Hoste, for example, contributed to *The Bible League Quarterly*, which was the mouthpiece of the Fundamentalist Bible League. In 1923 the election of T. R. Glover, a liberal evangelical classical scholar at Cambridge, to the presidency of the Baptist Union, attracted the ferocity of the Bible League and other Fundamentalist bodies, and two years later there was Fundamentalist dismay that evangelicals such as Dinsdale Young, minister of Westminster Central Hall, and Gipsy Smith, had shared a platform at the Royal Albert Hall with Glover. *The Witness*, in this case, used typical Fundamentalist language: 'How anyone with a spark of the Evangelical can be linked up with such an out and out Modernist, and how they can expect the blessing of the Lord to abide on such a union, beats our comprehension.'<sup>39</sup>

For James Mountain, the venerable leader of a Baptist Fundamentalist group, the Baptist Bible Union, the crisis over Glover in 1923 was reminiscent of the Downgrade controversy of the 1880s, when C. H. Spurgeon had left the Baptist Union.<sup>40</sup> Mountain insisted in May 1924 on militant testimony against sceptical biblical critics. 'There is', he pronounced, 'no point of contact between the Modernist and the believer'.<sup>41</sup> A few months later *The Witness* made a point of expressing sympathy with such sentiments, stating that Fundamentalism was as old as the New Testament.<sup>42</sup> Henry Pickering later explored the issue in some detail, asking: 'Who are the true Fundamentalists?' They were, in his view, those retaining the faith once delivered to the saints. By contrast, he argued, the leaders in most denominations had made plain their position as modernists. He named the Church of England and the main Free Churches—Wesleyan, Congregational and Baptist—as those infected by evil doctrine. Some individual ministers and congregations were, Pickering accepted, true to the old faith. But rather than these Fundamentalists forming new alliances ('isms', as he called them),

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38. *The Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (November 1922), p. 247.

39. *W*, 55 (January 1925), p. 14

40. *The Bible Call* (November 1923), p. 163.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 163; *The Bible Call* (April 1924), p. 52. For Mountain and the Baptist Bible Union see D.W. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism in inter-war Britain', in Keith Robbins, (ed.), *Studies in Church History, Subsidia*, 7 (Oxford, 1990), pp. 297-326.

42. *W*, 54 (August 1924), p. 364.

Pickering's crucial argument was that Brethren assemblies would welcome such denominational refugees.<sup>43</sup>

Pickering was well aware, however, that for Fundamentalist believers to leave the denominations and join the Brethren was not always straightforward. In July 1925 he suggested that assemblies which were 'Open' should be prepared to receive all Christian who were 'born again, sound in faith and godly in life'. Yet Pickering acknowledged that some Open assemblies, especially in Ireland and parts of Scotland, refused to accept anyone who was not in fellowship in their own meetings. He wondered how such Brethren could properly be regarded as 'open'.<sup>44</sup> It is not that Pickering's call for an 'open table' policy among Brethren meant that he was playing down Brethren distinctives. Indeed he stressed in April 1926 that it was imperative to 'come out' of all organised church federations.<sup>45</sup> What he seems to have wanted to do was to offer a genuine welcome to those coming out. John Ritchie, *The Believer's Magazine* editor, writing three months later, took a very different line from that of Pickering. He was appalled at the idea of assemblies opening the Lord's Table so that 'believers from all churches, chapels, missions, divisions and sub-divisions might be included'. That would, in his view, destroy all real separation.<sup>46</sup>

The indications are that in the 1920s Open Brethren, certainly those in England, were receiving transferees from other groups. No doubt in response to this trend, Pickering went so far as to suggest in March 1925 that assembly fellowship should not necessarily be withheld from those who were not baptised as believers. He wished to make allowances for those who had reservations about believer's baptism due to the influence of previous 'false teaching'.<sup>47</sup> He was presumably referring to infant baptism. Although Pickering recalled the 'good old days' of the assemblies, he was forward-thinking enough to talk about the 'good new days', noting that there were an estimated 7,000 assemblies world-wide. Growth, said Pickering, was 'beyond all expectations'.<sup>48</sup> How much was through transfer and how much was conversion growth is difficult to ascertain. *The Witness* occasionally highlighted those who had 'come out' of the 'sects'. In 1926 it featured the testimony of someone who had left a church where he had been a deacon. In his new life with the Brethren he was, among other things, enjoying reading *The Witness*. Pickering, delighted with this commendation, took the opportunity to issue a forthright call to abandon any church ('so-called') or any association 'which unites saved and unsaved, light and darkness, children of God and sons of Beliel'.<sup>49</sup> More conservative Open Brethren were alleging that Brethren leaders

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43. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

44. *W*, 55 (July 1925), p. 134; for attitudes towards fellowship among Brethren in Scotland during this period, see Neil T.R. Dickson, 'The History of the Open Brethren in Scotland 1838-1999', Vol.2 (University of Stirling Ph.D. thesis, 2000), pp.287-295.

45. *W*, 56 (April 1926), pp. 311, 314.

46. *BM*, 36 (July 1926), p. 93.

47. *W*, 55 (March 1925), p. 45.

48. *Ibid.* (December), p. 233

49. *W*, 56 (April 1926), p. 311.

had largely lost the ‘truth of separation’.<sup>50</sup> Pickering was affirming his own separatist Brethren credentials.

*The Believer’s Magazine*, however, was reluctant to give any credence to the wider Fundamentalist movement. Referring to the Bible Schools that were becoming more prominent in the 1920s, it argued in 1921 that although they might not deny the ‘fundamentals’ they offered ‘absolutely nothing for the soul, nothing to feed or strengthen the spiritual life’.<sup>51</sup> It accepted that a separatist movement was growing and that some who had formerly been opposed to the Brethren were now sympathetic, but the emergence of ‘all-sectarian’ unions—no doubt the F.I.E.C. was in mind—was seen as contrary to God’s will.<sup>52</sup> In March 1925 *The Believer’s Magazine* queried the attempt to treat only some truths as ‘fundamental’. Is anything, it asked, non-essential?<sup>53</sup> Such absolutism was sustainable only through complete separation from those who diverged from Brethrenism at any point. By July 1925 *The Believer’s Magazine* had concocted the theory that those attending ‘pansectarian’ missions, ‘instead of being associated with ONE sect... are here associated with many, and they patronise them all’. It reiterated demands for ‘separation from all unholy combinations and amalgamations’.<sup>54</sup> The stark logic of this position was that if a person moved to a town without a Brethren assembly it was preferable to stay at home on Sundays rather than attend an existing church.<sup>55</sup> Brethren spirituality could match the rigidity of the most uncompromising of Fundamentalists.

#### VARIETIES OF PREMILLENNIALISM

In the 1920s there was widespread acceptance among those with Fundamentalist/separatist inclinations that evil was gathering strength before Christ’s return and his subsequent millennial reign. Apocalyptic fervour had been heightened by the First World War and by the 1917 Balfour Declaration, announcing a national home for the Jews in Palestine. A. H. Burton, a leading figure in the pan-denominational Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement (A.T.P.M.), which was formed in 1917, proposed in 1923 that commitment or otherwise to premillennialism was constituting a parting of the ways between Fundamentalists and modernists. Burton, a medical doctor whose background was in the Brethren, pronounced: ‘There can be no compromise, no neutrality. We are in opposing camps.’<sup>56</sup> Not all premillennial advocates in this period, however, were Fundamentalists. The A.T.P.M., at its inception, had strong links with moderate Keswick thinking. The influence of nineteenth-century Brethrenism was also evident. Before the A.T.P.M. was launched, F. B. Meyer, who was Keswick’s leading international representative, had to resolve differences within the embryonic movement

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50. *BM*, 36 (February 1926), p. 24.

51. *BM*, 31 (February 1921), p. 21.

52. *BM*, 32 (May 1922), p. 54.

53. *BM*, 35 (March 1925), p. 39.

54. *Ibid.*, (July), pp. 89-90.

55. *BM*, 36 (January 1926), p. 10.

56. *The Advent Witness*, 15 December 1923, p. 136.



over whether Christ's coming to remove believers from the world would, as J. N. Darby had taught, involve a 'secret rapture'.<sup>57</sup>

Many Brethren leaders considered the work of the A.T.P.M., with its attempt to accommodate a number of premillennial variants, to be of little value. In 1920 Pickering attacked a recent Advent Testimony meeting where one speaker had suggested that Christ would return in 1923. The second speaker had assured those present that there was no warrant for fixing dates. Was this sort of meeting, asked Pickering scathingly, a *testimony*?<sup>58</sup> In turn, Brethren were attacked by other premillennialists. D. M. Panton, an independent minister in Norwich and a noted premillennialist, incensed *The Witness* in 1929 by his 'gross and malicious representation' of the Brethren as marred by constant rupture. In some English cities, Panton asserted, there were fifteen Brethren sub-divisions.<sup>59</sup> The Calvinistic Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony (S.G.A.T.) lamented as unscriptural the teaching that the 'rapture' of the church could take place 'at any moment' and would be followed by a 'great tribulation' before the millennium.<sup>60</sup> This 'any moment' futurist view, often linked with dispensationalism, was the predominant one in the Brethren.<sup>61</sup> Indeed Lang suggested that in many assemblies only those who held this position were allowed to exercise public ministry.<sup>62</sup> *The Believer's Magazine* was adamant that post-tribulationism, the belief espoused by the S.G.A.T. as well as by a minority of Brethren, was 'destructive of the Blessed Hope'.<sup>63</sup>

These broad divisions, together with more minor variants, prevented premillennial unity. *The Advent Witness*, the A.T.P.M.'s mouthpiece, could claim a readership of 50,000, while the S.G.A.T., which had considerable support among Strict Baptists, was able to distribute 20,000 copies of its statement of faith.<sup>64</sup> The S.G.A.T. looked to the views of an early Brethren teacher, B. W. Newton, whom Darby had denounced, and in 1932 it complained that leaflets were being distributed which practically charged Newton with propagating the views of a Jesuit named Ribera.<sup>65</sup> In the same period Harold Morton, whose Wesley Bible Union joined forces with James Mountain's Baptist Bible Union, opposed Brethren pre-tribulationism in *The Fundamentalist*.<sup>66</sup> It was by then well known that Mountain subscribed to British Israelitism, the theory that the Anglo-Saxon races were descended from the lost tribes

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57. *The Advent Witness*, January 1925, p. 1. For background see D. W. Bebbington, 'The advent hope in British Evangelicalism since 1800', *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, 9, No. 2 (1988), pp. 103-14; I. M. Randall, 'Cultural change and future hope: premillennialism in Britain following the First World War', *Christianity and History Newsletter*, No. 13 (1994), pp. 19-27.

58. *W*, 50 (March 1920), p. 242.

59. *W*, 59 (May 1929), p. 115.

60. *Watching and Waiting*, November 1926, pp. 278-9.

61. *BM*, 35 (December 1925), p. 154.

62. Lang, *Rights of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 5, 6.

63. *BM*, 40 (January 1930), p. 13.

64. Note with *The Advent Witness*, March 1939; *Watching and Waiting*, February 1926, p. 195.

65. *Watching and Waiting*, February 1932, p. 205.

66. *The Fundamentalist*, August 1933, p. 177; June 1935, pp. 139-40.

of Israel. In 1927 Mountain made public in *The Bible Call* the fact that he had held this interpretation for forty years.<sup>67</sup> He believed that in preparation for the second advent British Israelitism should be spread within the British Empire.<sup>68</sup> For *The Believer's Magazine* such teaching was not to be dignified with the name heresy.<sup>69</sup> Even the normally mild George Goodman considered in 1930 that those Brethren members holding British Israelite views should ultimately be put out of assemblies.<sup>70</sup>

A small number of Brethren, most notably G. H. Lang, held the 'partial rapture' premillennial theory, which was that only 'watchful' or 'overcoming' believers would be removed from the world before the great tribulation. The spiritual quality of adventist teaching was of crucial importance for Lang and he feared that 'popular prophetic orthodoxy'—that all believers would be raptured—might prove to be 'the death of spirituality'.<sup>71</sup> One writer in *The Witness* in 1919 wondered if Lang taught a form of purgatory for those found not to be worthy.<sup>72</sup> Although Lang had his defenders—such as the much-respected Harold St John who spoke of his admiration for Lang's depth of spirituality—Lang was seen as a very controversial figure in Brethren circles. Lang was, however, given a platform by D. M. Panton in Panton's magazine *The Dawn*. There Lang painted an idealised picture of the overcoming believer free from strains, sleeplessness and the premature old age which characterised the world.<sup>73</sup> He argued in 1930 that he was in line with a 'strong, ripely spiritual, expert body of thought' which included Hudson Taylor, H. W. Webb-Peploe, who was a leading Keswick speaker, and Jessie Penn-Lewis, who was associated with the 1904-5 Welsh Revival.<sup>74</sup> *The Witness* accepted that a few evangelical leaders held partial rapture views but compared them with the hundreds of respected figures who rejected the teaching.<sup>75</sup>

Despite such disagreements over eschatological details, Brethren and other premillennialists shared the conviction that they were living in increasingly dark times and that this signalled Christ's imminent coming. Those committed to the hope of Christ's return were often most conscious of the power of evil. Church systems were regarded by many as doomed. W. E. Vine, known for his scholarly New Testament studies, said in 1919 that the destruction of the whole ecclesiastical system of Christendom had been foretold.<sup>76</sup> Evil was also at work in the wider structures of society. In 1920 *The Witness* suggested that trade unions were preparing the way for Anti-Christ, although it acknowledged that if the prohibition on trade union membership was extended to professional bodies serving lawyers, accountants and

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67. *The Bible Call*, April-June 1927, p. 25.

68. *Ibid.*, October-December 1927, p. 58.

69. *BM*, 40 (February 1930), pp. 46-7.

70. *W*, 40 (July 1930), p. 158.

71. Lang, *Rights of the Holy Spirit*, p. 25.

72. *W*, 49 (May 1919), p. 78.

73. *The Dawn*, 3, No. 6 (1926), p. 269.

74. *The Dawn*, 7, No. 5 (1930-31), p. 196.

75. *W*, 60 (June 1930), p. 138.

76. *W*, 49 (March 1919), p. 42.

doctors then Brethren ranks—which included significant numbers of professionals—could be severely depleted.<sup>77</sup> In 1921 *The Believer's Magazine* stated categorically that to join a trade union was unacceptable.<sup>78</sup> There was fear of sociopolitical endeavour. 'If I could introduce a great improvement in the world', said one extravagant commentator, 'by political action equivalent only to lifting my little finger, I would not do it, because I want my Saviour to have the glory.'<sup>79</sup> Henry Pickering, writing in 1924, put no faith in human diplomacy.<sup>80</sup> A year later A. W. Burton, in *The Advent Witness*, opined that Mussolini might revive the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire in accordance with prophecies in Revelation.<sup>81</sup>

There was intense interest on the part of all premillennialists in the 1920s in the interpretation of current events. This affected even those who believed in an 'any moment' return and who in theory did not look for definite signs of the end. At a capacity gathering in the Albert Hall in 1927 the main speaker, Christabel Pankhurst, who had been converted to belief in the second advent and had abandoned the women's movement, argued that a Roman confederacy would emerge to oppose Germany, the Far East and Communism. F. B. Meyer, the chairman for the event, led the audience in the words, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus'.<sup>82</sup> The fact that the Albert Hall could be filled for a premillennial gathering was indicative of adventist strength. Brethren were in tune with a premillennial world-view shared by many evangelicals, including Keswick moderates and hard-line Fundamentalists. In 1931, therefore, when the S.G.A.T.'s *Watching and Waking* linked the Brethren movement with the 'abomination' (a typical premillennial term) of modernism, it was perceived to have over-stepped the mark. *The Fundamentalist* joined *The Witness* in expressing outrage.<sup>83</sup> Under pressure, the S.G.A.T. grudgingly withdrew some of the charges.<sup>84</sup> E. J. Poole-Connor, the pioneer of the F.I.E.C. and a S.G.A.T. supporter, was appalled at the way *Watching and Waiting* had 'pilloried a number of my dear friends'.<sup>85</sup> Some worked towards a premillennial coalition.

#### EVANGELISTIC REVIVALISM

The imminent return of Christ was a spur to evangelistic work. Preaching the gospel, for Brethren, was unquestionably an urgent matter. The Pilgrim Preachers, led by P. W. Petter of Yeovil and Ernest Luff of Frinton-on-Sea, were a Brethren group that undertook route marches and conducted evangelistic meetings throughout Britain. They emphasised the second coming in their preaching, displayed banners with scripture

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77. *W*, 50 (May 1920), p. 274.

78. *BM*, 31 (June 1921), p. 66.

79. T. Fred Hemsley in *W*, 50 (September 1920), p. 325.

80. *W*, 54 (December 1924), p. 44.

81. *The Advent Witness*, October 1925, pp. 109, 113.

82. *The English Churchman*, 27 January 1927, p. 40.

83. *Watching and Waiting*, March 1931, pp. 117-19; *W*, 61 (May 1931), p. 114; *The Fundamentalist*, June 1931, p. 133.

84. *Watching and Waiting*, April 1931, pp. 125-6; May 1931, p. 132.

85. *W*, 61 (May 1931), p. 114.

texts and sang choruses. Meetings were described in *The Witness* as being without ceremony, bondage or officialdom. As the Pilgrim Preachers moved from place to place they prayed for guidance about where to go next.<sup>86</sup> In similar vein, Lang did not make long-term bookings, seeing his ministry, which took him to India, Burma, the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe, as ‘one continuous experience of distinct guidance’.<sup>87</sup> *The Harvester* was eager to chart evangelistic endeavours in the 1920s, sometimes highlighting co-operation with non-Brethren groups. At an open air service in Guildford, Surrey, in 1924, for instance, the Pilgrim Preachers were supported by members of the local Baptist Chapel, who swelled the ranks and supplied a harmonium. In Coventry hospitality was offered by the ‘faithful Vicar of Christ Church’.<sup>88</sup> It seems that in the Brethren, as in traditional Wesleyanism and Pentecostalism, the 1920s constituted a period of evangelistic fervour. Appeals for funds to help miners during the General Strike in 1926 suggest Brethren penetration of industrial communities.<sup>89</sup> Churches were also being planted on new estates in southern England.<sup>90</sup>

Although local assemblies did not have settled pastors, the Brethren’s evangelists and other prominent speakers gave considerable leadership and often spearheaded outreach. Montague Goodman was deeply involved in the Children’s Special Seaside Mission and led the singing at the Scripture Union Jubilee in the Royal Albert Hall in 1929.<sup>91</sup> A number of Brethren ‘workers’, some known as ‘Counties’ evangelists, came together for a conference each year at Llanfairfechan. Speakers included Harold St John and W. E. Vine, who acted as editor of the magazine which stimulated the open Brethren’s extensive missionary activity, *Echoes of Service*. The editors of *The Harvester* indicated that they were in touch with nearly 250 workers in Britain.<sup>92</sup> Local missions—sometimes tent missions—might last for several weeks and were designed to contribute to church growth.<sup>93</sup> There was interest in the way in which various regions of the country were being affected. A report in *The Witness* in 1922 described conversions taking place in East Anglia through Douglas Brown, a Baptist minister, and in the North East of Scotland through Jock Troup from Wick.<sup>94</sup> Brethren gained converts from these wider movements as well as from their own efforts. In 1927 a Gospel Hall in Ipswich was reported to have doubled in the previous six years to over one hundred members.<sup>95</sup>

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86. *W*, 49 (June 1919), p. 129.

87. Lang, *Ordered Life*, p. 177.

88. *H*, 1 (August 1924), pp. 258.

89. *W*, 56 (August 1926), p. 394; *ibid.*, (September), p. 419.

90. *H*, 6 (July 1929), p. 105; *H*, 9 (March 1932), p. 55.

91. *H*, 6 (June 1929), p. 87.

92. *H*, 13 (November 1936), p. 241.

93. For examples, see Brian Mills, *A Story to Tell: Evangelism in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle, 1999).

94. *W*, 52 (February 1922), p. 166.

95. *H*, 4 (June 1927), p. 89.

*The Witness* spoke in 1924 of a welcome influx of young people into the Brethren, a phenomenon which it did not label revival but which it attributed to a post-war spiritual search.<sup>96</sup> This kind of analysis, however, raised questions. *The Believer's Magazine* was scathing in its disparagement of evangelistic methods which were 'filling up the ranks of empty professors' and its dismissal of the 'flimsy revivalism' of evangelists who counted the numbers of people 'deciding for Christ'.<sup>97</sup> This suggests a Calvinistic theology, but *The Believer's Magazine* did not embrace predestinarianism, suggesting that nowhere in the Bible was it stated that everything was determined beforehand.<sup>98</sup> Ian Rennie, in his illuminating study of Brethren spirituality, has over-estimated the influence of 'hyper-Calvinism', by which he means extreme Calvinism, among the Brethren.<sup>99</sup> G. H. Lang stated that he disagreed at certain points with the B. W. Newton 'school of prophecy'—presumably a reference to the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony—because its adherents were 'too pronouncedly Calvinistic'.<sup>100</sup> A lesser-known Brethren evangelist, H. K. Downie, who was active in Sussex, where rural Strict Baptist chapels were relatively numerous, discovered 'Calvinism in its most uncompromising and aggressive form'. An Evangelical Anglican curate explained to Downie that the area was the hardest in which he had worked, attributing this to hyper Calvinism.<sup>101</sup>

The polemic against 'flimsy revivalism' found in *The Believer's Magazine* had its origins in a commitment to traditional Brethrenism rather than to Calvinism. 'A true revival among the saints', *The Believer's Magazine* of September 1922 observed, 'lifts them up to a higher altitude spiritually'.<sup>102</sup> There were calls in the 1920s to return to 'old-time and simple methods' such as visiting and open-air preaching, although *The Believer's Magazine* was not prepared to endorse one Brethren zealot who began to shout texts in the open air on Remembrance Sunday as the two minutes silence began. For conservatives, 'new-fangled methods' of evangelism were bringing into assemblies worldly people who would prove to be 'a drag and a deadweight'. There were allegedly no conversions in up-to-date meetings where believers played golf.<sup>103</sup> Authentic Christian witness was world-denying, as evidenced by a hairdresser who, *The Believer's Magazine* reported approvingly, refused to bob hair. Let us not, urged the report, be 'partakers of other men's sins'.<sup>104</sup> Presumably 'men' meant 'women'. In 1925 the magazine expressed its serious lack of confidence in the current ideas of

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96. *H*, 7 (November 1930), p. 161; *W*, 54 (August 1924), p. 384.

97. *BM*, 33 (April 1923), pp. 42-3; *BM*, 34 (July 1924), pp. 91-2; *ibid.*, (August), p. 104.

98. *BM*, 43 (January 1933), p. 24.

99. I.S. Rennie, 'Aspects of Christian Brethren spirituality', in J.I. Packer and Loren Wilkinson (eds), *Alive to God: Studies in Spirituality* (Downers Grove, Ill., 1992), pp.190-201.

100. Lang, *Rights of the Holy Spirit*, p. 4.

101. H. K. Downie in *H*, 4 (September 1927), p. 134.

102. *BM*, 32 (September 1922), p. 98.

103. *BM*, 32 (July 1922), p. 77; *ibid.*, (August), p. 88; *BM*, 33 (April 1923), pp. 42-3; *BM*, 39 (March 1929), pp. 70-1. *The Believer's Magazine* was not in favour of the two minutes silence in the breaking of bread.

104. *BM*, 39 (October 1929), p. 239.

revival and in preachers who promoted them.<sup>105</sup> Far from allowing these buckets of cold water to extinguish all flickers of revival, however, *The Harvester* reported in 1926 that an assembly in Liverpool had experienced ‘revival times’, with thirty people baptised.<sup>106</sup>

In part these tensions over evangelism reflected different attitudes among Open Brethren about the way to reach British society in the years after the First World War. Harold Barker, who had joined the Open Brethren from the Glanton Brethren, believed that following the war there was the possibility of fresh evangelistic advance. He spoke in 1920 about how revival often followed war, instancing the 1859 Revival which followed the Crimean War and the Welsh Revival after the Boer War. Such revivals, for Barker, ‘seemed Pentecostal in their scope and intensity’.<sup>107</sup> There was little sympathy, however, with the post-war mood of reconstruction which many British people hoped would produce a better society. To enter the political arena, even by voting, was alien to the position of believers as ‘strangers and pilgrims’ in the world.<sup>108</sup> In Brethren thinking, evangelism and social action were hardly ever seen as partners. Indeed Henry Pickering went so far as to state in 1920 that social activity was a hindrance to salvation. The Salvation Army, he suggested, had lost its spiritual power, a loss linked, in his view, with its involvement in social work, support from the world and recognition by Royalty. Pickering was prepared to admit that in its early days the Army drew people to God. But given the premillennial view of the future world reforming schemes were ultimately of no value.<sup>109</sup>

#### THE CHALLENGE OF PENTECOSTALISM

The final movement to be considered here is Pentecostalism. The 1920s saw the growth of Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God, the Elim Church and the Apostolic Church.<sup>110</sup> A crucial factor in shaping these denominations was the Brethren concept of restoring New Testament church life. Brethren characteristics such as weekly breaking of bread were evident within Pentecostalism, for example at W. O. Hutchinson’s Emmanuel Mission Hall, Bournemouth, opened in 1908 as the first Pentecostal church building in Britain.<sup>111</sup> Nelson Parr, who became General Secretary of the Assemblies of God, joined Stanley Hall, Manchester, a small Brethren cause, in 1917. Following the removal of the existing leader Parr took his place.<sup>112</sup> Pentecostals

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105. *BM*, 35 (June 1925), p. 77.

106. *H*, 2 (May 1926), p. 73.

107. *W*, 50 (January 1920), pp. 213-14.

108. *BM*, 40 (January 1930), p. 24.

109. *W*, 50 (May 1920), p. 275.

110. See I. M. Randall, ‘Old time power: relationships between Pentecostalism and Evangelical Spirituality in England’, *Pneuma*, 19, No. 1 (1997) pp. 53-80.

111. J. E. Worsfold, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain* (Thorndon, NZ, 1991), pp. 39-40.

112. J. N. Parr, *Incredible* (Fleetwood, 1972), pp. 19, 27-8; David Brady and Fred J Evans, *Christian Brethren in Manchester and District: a History* (London, 1997), pp. 134-6. I am grateful to Roger Shuff who is currently engaged in doctoral research on the Brethren in twentieth-century England for the latter reference.

adopted Brethren terminology such as ‘assembly’, and in 1925 the Elim Church’s *Elim Evangel* saw weekly observance of the breaking of bread as part of the ‘divine order’.<sup>113</sup> A description of a Pentecostal communion service in Royston, Yorkshire, in the 1920s, was suffused with Brethren overtones. Worshipers encircled the communion table and anyone could announce a chorus or hymn (from a Brethren hymnbook) or bring a short message. A peak of intensity was reached, and traditional Brethren boundaries were crossed, when the congregation sang together in tongues.<sup>114</sup>

It was the gifts of speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing which provoked most controversy. There was an expectation of the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit in Brethren breaking of bread services, what Rennie calls ‘laundered charismaticism’.<sup>115</sup> A. Rendle Short, a distinguished Brethren surgeon who was indebted to the influence of G. H. Lang, said in 1925: ‘The open meeting is not a meeting that is open to man. It is a meeting that is open to the Holy Spirit.’<sup>116</sup> In the debates over gifts such as tongues, a few Brethren voices were raised in favour of the view that these gifts were for the continuing benefit of the churches. The most influential figure taking this position was Lang, who saw no reason to suppose that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit given to the church in the New Testament era were temporary.<sup>117</sup> At the same time, Lang, who was a careful observer of Pentecostalism, did not consider that the singing in tongues, noise and laughter that he had experienced at Pentecostal meetings was from God. Lang attended an Apostolic Church Convention at Penygroes in Wales and described the prophecies given as platitudes. He argued that there was no need to put human exhortations into the mouth of God.<sup>118</sup> Yet Lang was impressed by the way in which early Pentecostalism adopted an ‘open’ meeting, which in his view gave to the Spirit of God due honour as the actual Leader of worship.<sup>119</sup>

Most Brethren leaders assessed Pentecostalism from a very different theological perspective. In 1924 William Hoste, writing in *The Witness*, said that the ‘sign gifts’ such as tongues disappeared when the canon of Scripture was complete.<sup>120</sup> *The Believer’s Magazine* consistently took the view that tongues and miracles were never intended to continue. Edward Irving in the nineteenth century, it was noted, had tried this ‘forbidden path’.<sup>121</sup> Writing in *The Witness* in 1928 Harold Barker took strong objection to all the major planks in the teaching of George Jeffreys, the founder of the Elim Church. The baptism of the Spirit as an experience subsequent to conversion, which for Pentecostals was the route to spiritual gifts, was seen by Barker as having

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113. *The Elim Evangel*, 1 June 1925, p. 127.

114. W. K. Kay, ‘A History of British Assemblies of God’ (University of Nottingham PhD thesis, 1982), pp. 118-19.

115. Rennie, ‘Christian Brethren spirituality’, in Packer and Wilkinson, eds., *Alive to God*, p. 201.

116. *W*, 55 (January 1925), p. 11.

117. G.H. Lang, *The Modern Gifts of Tongues: Whence is it?*, p. 28; G.H. Lang, *The Earlier Years of the Modern Tongues Movement*, p. 5; W.R. Moore in *W*, 58 (May 1928), p. 332.

118. Lang, *Earlier Years*, p. 70.

119. *Ibid.*, p.78.

120. *W*, 54 (July 1924), p. 336.

121. *BM*, 31 (December 1921), p. 129; *BM*, 41 (December 1931), p. 284.

taken place at the day of Pentecost and, for Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius. Subsequently believers had been brought into ‘the unity formed by this baptism’ through ‘their reception of the Holy Spirit when they believed’. Barker compared Elim’s ‘testimony’ to ‘the prattle of children wading in the shallows’ and urged movement on from ‘Elim’, which in Israel’s journey in the Old Testament was just out of Egypt, into the enjoyment of the promised land.<sup>122</sup> The comments by Barker were restrained compared to the tone of another Brethren writer, A. J. Pollock. Writing in 1929 Pollock, in his *Modern Pentecostalism*, linked tongues to heathen practices.<sup>123</sup>

Most attention was given not to tongues but to divine healing. In a series of articles in *The Witness* in the early months of 1923 Barker expressed considerable caution about divine healing. He argued, following Harold St John, that the oil to be used in prayer for healing, as mentioned in James chapter 5, might be medicinal. In response to Barker the evidence of J.D. Darby’s interest in healing was adduced, with Philip Mauro saying that he had letters from Darby showing that prayer for the sick was common among early Brethren. The son of a Congregational minister, it was alleged, was almost immediately healed after prayer by Darby. During the holiness revival of the 1870s Darby apparently made it clear to Robert Pearsall Smith, the American holiness leader, that he believed God healed the sick.<sup>124</sup> In September 1923 Barker reported that he had received many letters in response to his articles, some of them ‘coarse and abusive’. Most spoke of personal experience of healing. Barker by now felt that he needed to make clear that he accepted the possibility of divine healing, but he did not see this as a way in which the church continued the ministry of Christ.<sup>125</sup>

*The Witness* was to return to the subject of healing on a number of occasions. In 1928 William Hoste recommended prayer and anointing with oil for illnesses in accordance with James 5, a passage which he said it was not ‘expedient’ to neglect, but it was clear that this was not Brethren practice.<sup>126</sup> Two months later W. E. Vine condemned healing campaigns—then being conducted by George Jeffreys—as ‘deplorable’ and stated that the widely-held Pentecostal belief in healing in the atonement of Christ was a ‘most specious form of error’.<sup>127</sup> The problem for the Brethren was especially with the passage in James 5, and they felt that they were on surer ground when condemning large-scale healing crusades. George Goodman alleged in 1928 that people affected by the supposed power of God at Pentecostal meetings were not necessarily healed. He argued that the pretence of healing was kept up by a few testimonies and that healings could not be verified.<sup>128</sup> Given such scepticism on the part of those who claimed to be believers in the practices of the New Testament, it is

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122. *W*, 58 (October 1928), pp. 431-2.

123. A. J. Pollock, *Modern Pentecostalism, Foursquare Gospel, ‘Healings’ and ‘Tongues’* (London, 1929), p. 7.

124. *W*, 53 (February 1923), p. 20; *ibid.*, (April), pp. 42-3; *ibid.*, (May), p. 59.

125. *Ibid.*, (September), p. 141.

126. *W*, 58 (September 1928), p. 413.

127. *Ibid.*, (November), p. 453

128. *H*, 5 (October 1928), p. 146.



not surprising that Pentecostals—like Brethren in an earlier period—saw themselves as rejected by the whole ecclesiastical and even the evangelical establishment.

#### CONCLUSION

The 1920s was a period of change for Brethren. Movements in the evangelical world challenged their distinctives in new ways. The call from Keswick to unite in spiritual fellowship was increasingly attractive to many Brethren. Others, as represented especially by *The Believer's Magazine*, while admitting by the 1930s that God was blessing Keswick's evangelical stance, argued that this gave credence neither to its doctrine of the church nor to its teaching on sanctification.<sup>129</sup> It might have seemed that Brethren would have identified with the strident demands from Fundamentalists and separatists in the 1920s to leave apostate church bodies. For some Brethren, however, all non-Brethren groups were in error, even those which might claim to hold to evangelical principles. To be delivered from the 'sects', it was suggested, was almost a greater deliverance than salvation.<sup>130</sup> E. J. Poole-Connor, the prime mover behind the F.I.E.C., considered that Brethren had made separation 'the highest ideal of the Christian life' and had contributed nothing to evangelical unity.<sup>131</sup> This is a somewhat harsh judgment, since Open Brethren were increasingly to enter the evangelical mainstream, especially through their participation in wider evangelistic endeavours. Indeed by the 1930s Brethren were keen to defend their conservative evangelical credentials. When Henry Pickering received a letter from the Elim Church explaining its position on healing he printed it, but with a caution which reflected not only Brethren thinking but the views of many evangelicals of the time, he expressed grave doubts about healings 'in crowded, emotional religious meetings'.<sup>132</sup> By this stage it seemed that Pentecostals were taking over the role of the Brethren as those 'outside the camp'.

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129. *BM*, 42 (June 1932), pp. 144-5.

130. *BM*, 43 (December 1933), p. 284.

131. E.J. Poole-Connor, *Evangelical Unity* (London, 1941), pp. 50-2.

132. Letters to Pickering from the Elim Church's head office, dated 9 May 1932 and 13 June 1932 in *W*, 63 (May 1932), p. 112; *ibid.*, (June), p. 138.