

JOINT MEETING OF THE WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
AND THE SOCIETY FOR PENTECOSTAL STUDIES
Asbury Theological Seminary, March 20-22, 2003

**WESLEYAN AND PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENTS
FOR A NEW CENTURY:
CRUCIAL CHOICES, ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

At their inception Wesleyan, Holiness, Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements were clear as to why God had called them into existence. The early Wesleyans sought to renew the church and to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land. The Holiness movement desired to make holiness of heart and life a living reality in the lives of Christians and the motivation of a vast evangelistic and social mission. Pentecostals proclaimed the full gospel in the power of the Spirit as both a warning to the church and a witness to the nations of the coming of the Lord. Charismatics sought to reappropriate the charisms of the Spirit in order to renew the church and its mission.

In one way or another their essential contribution to the Christian movement was to renew the life of the church and enable it to engage in mission to the world. But they also faced crucial choices. As these movements grew, they were continually tempted to compromise the vision of renewal and mission, yet also presented with opportunities to faithfully revision their theology and practice for new contexts.

What contributions can these movements make to the church and the world as we enter a new century? What crucial choices do they face? Is there something vitally essential to God's mission in the world and to the life of the church that these movements can and must contribute?

There are a multitude of ways this theme might be addressed:

- Early participants in these movements were passionately committed to renewal and mission. Is that passion and commitment warranted today? If so, would it best be informed by a recovery of past traditions or adopting a new and different vision?
- What difference do essential and distinctive theological elements such as Christian perfection, spirit-baptism, etc. make for the whole of theology? Are these simply additions to traditional theologies, questionable relics of the past, or should they be used to rethink theology today?
- How do these movements relate justification and sanctification, purity and power, personal salvation and social justice, the renewal of the church and mission to the world? Do these relationships provide theological guidance for Christians today?
- How have these movements approached the presentation and defense of Christian truth claims? Do they provide alternatives to the kinds of rational apologetics typical of Reformed evangelicalism or the experiential apologetics of liberal theology? Can they address postmodern concerns?
- In a global context, what do these movements contribute to the issue of how to be faithful to Christian tradition while contextualizing the gospel in diverse cultures? Do they have a distinct approach to the liberation of the poor and oppressed? Is their strong emphasis on Christian experience and the transforming presence of God a distraction from social justice or does it have liberating effects?

There are certainly many other issues worthy of scholarly attention. In their examination of any of these, the conference theme invites scholars to ask what crucial choices must be made and what essential contributions can be offered by these movements for the sake of the church and the mission of God in the world.