

A Pentecostal Reception History of the Book of Judges

LEE ROY MARTIN (UNISA & PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)

ABSTRACT

This early Pentecostal reception history aims to locate the book of Judges within the Pentecostal context and to discover the effects of the book on the tradition's theology and practice. The study examines North American periodicals (plus Confidence, a British publication) from the beginning of 1906 (the start of the Azusa St. revival) to the end of 1925, a period that historian Walter J. Hollenweger describes as the "heart" of the Pentecostal movement. These early voices help to shape a Pentecostal approach to the book of Judges as they show how this segment of the first generation of Pentecostals struggled with issues such as paradigms of leadership, the necessity of Spirit empowerment, the role of women in ministry and the relationship between purity and power. The testimonies, sermons and articles reviewed here demonstrate that some early Pentecostals identified with the stories and characters in Judges and appropriated them to the Pentecostal context.

KEYWORDS: Judges, Reception History, Pentecostal

A INTRODUCTION

Pentecostal approaches to biblical interpretation rely on the triad of Scripture, the Spirit and the community;¹ and recent Pentecostal forays into hermeneutics have expanded the role of the community to incorporate reception history.² The reception history method was developed largely from the works of Hans Georg Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss. Gadamer highlighted the effects of the text (*Wirkungsgeschichte*)³ and Jauss emphasised the reception of the text

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¹ See especially Archer's study of early Pentecostal hermeneutics; Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2009), 89–169.

² Regarding the Pentecostal utilisation of reception history, see John Christopher Thomas, "The Spirit, the Text, and Early Pentecostal Reception: The Emergence of a Discipline," in *Receiving Scripture in the Pentecostal Tradition* (ed. Daniel D. Isgrigg, et al.; Cleveland: CPT Press, 2021), 49–92; Martin W. Mittelstadt, "Receiving Luke–Acts: The Rise of Reception History and a Call to Pentecostal Scholars," *PNEUMA* 40/3 (2018):367–388.

³ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1989).

(*Rezeptionaesthetik*) by its readers.⁴ While these two approaches obviously overlap, "Gadamer's term stresses the *effect* of a work, in that the focus is on the text and the influence it has in history. Jauss's term stresses the *reception* of a work, in that the focus is on the way a particular audience interprets a work."⁵ Subsequent practitioners of reception history have defined and implemented the methodology in a variety of ways.⁶ The value of reception history for hearing the book of Judges is illustrated by David M. Gunn's ground-breaking commentary in which he traces the influence of Judges and its reception by scholars, preachers, poets, film-makers, artists, composers and politicians throughout history.⁷

This study supplements Gunn's work by focusing on the reception of Judges by one segment of the early Pentecostal community. This reception history examines North American periodical literature (plus *Confidence*, a British publication) from the first generation of the movement.⁸ Pentecostal revivals arose in many parts of the world in the latter 19th and early 20th centuries and a study of those global voices would be an important addition to this project. Unfortunately, I do not have access to early publications outside North America and Great Britain.

Periodical literature is the focus of the investigation for three reasons. First, most of the early theological discussions were carried on within the pages of numerous periodicals. Second, the periodicals, published by Pentecostal leaders and often representing the various newly formed denominations, are the nearest equivalent to authoritative theological voices. Third, the periodicals include diverse voices of ground-level theological reflection that previously have been marginalised. These rarely-heard voices speak in the form of prayers, songs, poems, testimonies, sermons, lessons, revival reports, missionary reports and letters to the editor.⁹ For this study, I examined periodicals from the beginning of 1906 (the start of the Azusa St. revival) to the end of 1925. According to historian

⁴ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (2; trans. Timothy Bahti; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981).

⁵ Robert Berg, "'All Men Are Created Equal': An Introduction to Reception History," in *Receiving Scripture in the Pentecostal Tradition: A Reception History* (ed. Daniel D. Isgrigg, et al.; Cleveland: CPT Press, 2021), 12 (emphasis original).

⁶ For a critique of recent developments and variations on the method, see Thomas, "The Spirit, the Text," 49–51.

⁷ David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005).

⁸ My original plan was to focus on the first ten years of the Pentecostal movement but after locating only eleven references to Judges in the period from 1906–1915, I expanded the search to the first twenty years of the tradition.

⁹ The seminal work that utilised these diverse voices for theological construction is Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), first published in 1993.

Walter J. Hollenweger, the first ten years are crucial for establishing the “heart” of the Pentecostal tradition.¹⁰

This early Pentecostal reception history aims to locate the book of Judges within the Pentecostal context and to discover the effects of the book on the tradition’s theology and practice. Like the Old Testament (OT) prophets when they encountered God and like Jesus’ disciples on the Day of Pentecost, the Pentecostals experienced a dramatic transformation and re-orientation when they were baptised in the Holy Spirit. Their encounters with God altered their vision and gave them new insights into the biblical text.¹¹ Those insights that come from our spiritual forebears, but which come from outside our contemporary context, add to the richness of the biblical text. Moreover, the act of engaging with the early literature furthers the reader’s formation as a Pentecostal interpreter, as it instils the Pentecostal dispositions and affections.¹²

Reception history is viewed somewhat like a “testimony” of the community’s past experiences with the text. As testimony, the examples from reception history are placed in conversation with the text and with contemporary interpreters. The reception history does not govern the contemporary interpretation but it serves as one voice – “a great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12.1) – within the larger Pentecostal community of faith. These early voices help us to shape a Pentecostal approach to the book of Judges as we consider how the first generation of Pentecostals struggled with issues such as paradigms of leadership, the necessity of Spirit empowerment, the role of women in ministry and the relationship between purity and power. Reception history, states Ulrich Luz, is a

¹⁰ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (trans. R.A. Wilson; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 551.

¹¹ John W. McKay, “When the Veil Is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience on Biblical Interpretation,” in *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader* (ed. Lee Roy Martin; Cleveland: CPT Press, 2014), 61, declares that Spirit baptism removes a veil (2 Cor 3:14–18), thereby enhancing our perception of Scripture. He writes, “I can honestly say that I came to understand more ... [about the Bible] in the months following my own experience of Pentecost, than I had in all my years of theological study.”

¹² See Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 47, 50, 52, 63, who argues that Pentecostal spirituality consists of orthodoxy (right belief/worship) and orthopraxy (right actions) integrated in the affections (orthopathy). The key Pentecostal affections, according to Land, are gratitude (thanks/praise), compassion (love/longing) and courage (confidence/hope). John Christopher Thomas, “‘What the Spirit Is Saying to the Church’: The Testimony of a Pentecostal in New Testament Studies,” in *Spirit and Scripture: Exploring a Pneumatic Hermeneutic* (ed. Kevin L. Spawn and Archie T. Wright; New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 117, names five affections that correspond broadly to the elements of the Fivefold Gospel—Salvation/Gratitude, Sanctification/Compassion, Spirit Baptism/Courage, Healing/Joy, Return of Jesus/Hope.

"bridge between the biblical texts and us ... We, the present readers, are not independent from the history of effects of the Bible."¹³

My research of the periodical literature from 1906 through 1925 uncovered a total of fifty-one separate articles that contain references to Judges. Thirty-one articles are published in the Wesleyan–Holiness stream of the Pentecostal tradition: *The Apostolic Evangel (AE)*, *The Apostolic Faith (AF)* and the Portland, OR edition *AFO*, *The Bridegroom's Messenger (TBM)*, *The Church of God Evangel (CGE)*, *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate (PHA)*, *Petal from the Rose of Sharon (PRS)*, *The White Wing Messenger (WWM)*. Eighteen references are found in periodicals from the Finished Work stream: *The Bridal Call (BC)*, *The Latter Rain Evangel (LRE)*, *The Revival Broadcast (RB)*, *The Christian Evangel/Weekly Evangel/Pentecostal Evangel (PE)*. I also discovered two references in *Confidence*, published in England.¹⁴ These references provide an opportunity for discerning reflection on the Pentecostal appropriation of the book of Judges. The discussion is organised according to the biblical order.

B OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

A brief article (about 1600 words) written by A.P. Collins in 1917 surveys the entire book of Judges.¹⁵ Presented as Lesson Eight of a "Pentecostal Bible Course," the article summarises the book's message and then traces the contents of the book by commenting successively on Bochim, Deborah, Meroz, Reuben, Gilead, Dan, Gideon, Samson, Abimelech and Jephthah. Collins's survey is somewhat imbalanced, in that it does not mention Othniel, Ehud, the minor judges, or any specific events from chs. 17–21; while four relatively insignificant characters in Judg 5 (Meroz, Reuben, Gilead and Dan) receive marked attention. Collins utilises intertextuality throughout the article including texts from both

¹³ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew in History/Interpretation, Influence, and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 24–25.

¹⁴ I searched the extant issues of all periodicals archived online at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (<https://ifphc.org/>) and at the Consortium of Pentecostal Archives (<https://pentecostalarchives.org/>). From these sites, I searched for the words "Judges," "Jdg," "Judg," "Jud," "Caleb," "Othniel," "Achsah," "Ehud," "Shamgar," "Deborah," "Barak," "Jael," "Gideon," "Abimelech," "Jephthah," "Samson," "Delilah," "Micah" and "Danites." Full-text searches are incomplete, however, because some of the original texts were in poor condition when scanned. Therefore, a close reading of the entire corpus would reveal a number of references that were not discovered through text searches. I also searched the Canadian periodicals reprinted in Martin W. Mittelstadt and Caleb Howard Courtney, eds., *Canadian Pentecostal Reader: The First Generation of Pentecostal Voices in Canada, 1907–1925* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2021), which revealed only one reference (*The Revival Broadcast* 1/1 (1923):6–7).

¹⁵ A.P. Collins, "Pentecostal Bible Course," *PE* 175 (1917):13. *The Pentecostal Evangel*, published by the Assemblies of God, began in 1913 under the name *The Christian Evangel*. The name of the periodical was changed to *The Weekly Evangel* in 1915 and to *The Pentecostal Evangel* in 1919.

the OT and the New Testament (NT). The intertexts, most of them related to Pentecostal interests, are too numerous to list here.

Overall, the article represents a view of Judges that was common among conservative Bible commentators. That is, Judges recounts "a series of apostasies with corresponding corrections and restorations." Israel was prone to "disobedience," "backslidings" and idolatry—that led to disunity and "anarchy." According to Collins, the primary teaching of Judges is that "God is the center of unity. When once He is lost sight of, disintegration, division, strife ensue." Collins suggests that the "key" to the book is its final verse: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg 21:25 KJV).

Despite its rather typical approach to Judges, the article maintains a Pentecostal emphasis throughout, focusing on the relevance of Judges for the church and for the individual believer. Collins declares that all of God's disciplinary measures toward Israel were "for our instruction in righteousness" (an allusion to 2 Tim 3:16). Judges, therefore, addresses basic spiritual concerns such as the need for obedience to God. However, Judges also speaks to topics of interest to a Pentecostal audience such as Spirit empowerment, leadership and the charismatic gifts. Collins states that, "God has set in the churches" Spirit-filled leaders and "the gifts" of the Spirit are to "edify or build up the body of Christ." Using conventional Pentecostal language, he insists that the church must value "God's glory" and must appreciate the "presence of God." The Judges stories afford Collins the opportunity to talk about a number of apparent problem areas as well. For example, he is concerned about the possibility of losing the Spirit's power, stating that Samson's behaviour grieved the Holy Spirit and hindered God's power.

Other Pentecostal emphases include Collins's praise of "the Deborahs in the Pentecostal work" and his call for missional involvement. The seriousness of the Pentecostal mission explains the amount of space that he gives to the characters in Judg 5. Meroz was cursed because "he came not to the help of the Lord." Reuben became side-tracked because he wanted "to debate the question when the battle was raging." Unlike Gilead, who cared nothing for people outside his own territory, we have a responsibility to the global body of Christ – "Cooperation world-wide is what God wants." Dan remained in his ships in a place of safety while his brothers fought the battle. Unlike Dan, we must help each other to fight against our "common foe, the devil." Collins concludes his survey by observing the Israelites' tendency to "lapse so quickly" after each miraculous deliverance. Finally, this observation leads Collins to challenge what he calls "a false notion among us" that "forms" are antithetical to the freedom of the Spirit. He declares: "So it is not the form that God objects to, but the form without the power."

C SHAMGAR AND GIDEON

In a three-page article, retired missionary G.E. Smith uses Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 as an encouragement to missionary work. He asserts that all those who follow Jesus will eventually find themselves in a very difficult situation, "a desert place."¹⁶ Missionaries, in particular, must learn to rely on God's provision if they are to remain in the mission field. By observing the works of Jesus, they can learn to live by faith. Jesus commanded his disciples to feed the crowd but the disciples responded with incredulity, realising that it would be impossible for them to provide enough food for the entire multitude. Jesus then asked, "How many loaves do you have?" Smith suggests that Jesus "doesn't want any more than we have." This is "the reasoning of faith": if we give God whatever we have, God will provide all that is needed. Both Shamgar and Gideon were believers who gave God what was in their hands. Shamgar had nothing but an ox-goad, and Gideon had "a pitcher, a lamp, and a horn." They gave those things to God's service, and God gave miraculous victories. God "wants all we have, but nothing more."¹⁷

Seeing Shamgar and Gideon as typological or analogical, Smith uses them to teach a spiritual lesson. According to Smith, God's people in every place and in every time must learn to trust and obey God like Shamgar and Gideon, even when the odds are against them.

D DEBORAH

I located five references to Deborah and each of them uses her story as support for women in ministry. The earliest is from an article written by Jonathan Paul, who reports a discussion on "Woman's Place in the Church."¹⁸ The discussion took place at the Sunderland Convention (England). One of the participants in the discussion argued that women should not serve as pastors over a congregation because "a woman should not be the governor of man . . . But sometimes, if there are not men, the Lord would take a Deborah, but He would take a Deborah because there Barak was unable to come with Deborah."¹⁹ The speaker concedes, therefore, that women may lead in certain exceptional cases. However, it should

¹⁶ G.E. Smith, "Jesus Proves Himself in the Desert Place," *LRE* 13/5 (1921):18–20. *The Latter Rain Evangel* was published by William H. Piper at the Stone Church in Chicago, which was affiliated with the Assemblies of God.

¹⁷ Smith, "Jesus Proves Himself," 20.

¹⁸ Pastor Paul, "Woman's Place in the Church," *Confidence* 7/11 (1914):208–209, 212–214. Although the author is identified only as "Pastor Paul," he is almost certainly Jonathan Paul, early leader of German Pentecostalism and a frequent visitor to conventions all across Europe and the United Kingdom. *Confidence* was published in England and edited by A.A. Boddy, an Anglican rector who experienced Spirit baptism in 1907.

¹⁹ Pastor Paul, "Woman's Place in the Church," 214.

be pointed out that this speaker misreads Judges. Barak did, in fact, go with Deborah to the battle.

The second reference to Deborah comes in 1915 from A.J. Tomlinson, who was then General Overseer of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN). Tomlinson wrote a two-part defence of "Women Preaching" in response to an article that had appeared in the *Florida Baptist Witness*. The writer of the Baptist article, Mr. Parker, had challenged anyone to "point out one woman that ever preached as recorded in the Bible."²⁰ Tomlinson cites numerous biblical examples of women preachers including Deborah. He writes that Deborah "apparently stood beside Barak and delivered that wonderful sermon in song, which takes one whole chapter of thirty-one verses to record it." Throughout his article, Tomlinson classifies prophecy as a type of preaching. Tomlinson's two-part study is the most extensive and most convincing defence of women preachers in the early Pentecostal periodicals. He concludes that "when the Holy Ghost is poured out upon the people, He endues with power both men and women, and both men and women shall preach."²¹

In the "Questions and Answers" section of the *Weekly Evangel*, E.N. Bell responds to the question, "Has a woman the Bible right to be pastor over an assembly of Apostolic Faith saints?" He answered a similar question almost five years later.²² In both cases Bell appeals to the example of Deborah. In the first answer he writes,

God has in the past raised up women, as Deborah in Judges 4:4–5:31, to lead his people, and the result is recorded (in 5:31) that the "land had rest 40 years." If God will raise up now some Deborah who can give rest and peace to the Pentecostal people for forty years, I will only praise Him and leave God to attend to His own business. God is sovereign and can raise up or put down whom he will.²³

Bell, however, goes on to suggest that God only uses women as pastors when "men fail God and don't take care of his flock ... God often uses women temporarily to do a work for him that no man at that place is prepared to do."²⁴

²⁰ ANON, "Women Preaching—Continued," *CGE* 6/37 (1915):1, 4. *The Church of God Evangel* (1910–) is the official publication of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN). It began as *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* (based on Zech 14:7) but the name was shortened in 1911. Church of God General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson edited the paper from 1910 through December 9, 1922 (vol. 13, no. 47). J.S. Llewellyn served as editor from December 16, 1922 through October 1927. Tomlinson normally wrote the front-page articles but he did not attach a byline. I will assume that he is the author of those items.

²¹ ANON, "Women Preaching—Continued," 4.

²² E.N. Bell, "Questions and Answers," *PE* 155 (1916): 8; and E.N. Bell, "Questions and Answers," *PE* 374–375 (1921):10.

²³ Bell, "Questions and Answers," *PE* 155, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Therefore, Bell seems to affirm the calling of women to ministry but only in exceptional circumstances. He repeats the same viewpoint in his later answer. He states, "Women often have to do many things in the church that the men are supposed to do, because the men are neglecting their duty to God. God used Deborah to lead when Borak [sic] refused to do it."²⁵

R.B. Hayes, in a passionate defence of women preachers, points to the biblical examples of Deborah and other women prophets. He concludes from these examples that:

[T]here have been women preachers all the way, and we notice in every holiness movement, as long as the power and fire fell and they kept red hot for God, women preachers were in the crowd; but just as soon as they backslide and compromise and tone down, they want to elbow off the women preachers.²⁶

In contrast to others, who view women preachers as an exception that is allowed only when the men fail, Hayes takes the opposite approach, arguing that women preachers have always been a normal part of the spiritually vibrant church and that it is only when the church backslides that women are forbidden to preach.

E GIDEON

The fourteen references to Gideon between 1906 and 1925 interpret the experience of Gideon as a source of spiritual lessons, practical guidance and encouragement for Christians. In G.F. Taylor's discussion of the Canaanite god Baal, Taylor argues that "Anything connected with Baal is an abomination in God's sight. Those who would follow Jehovah must separate themselves entirely from anything pertaining to the nature of Baal."²⁷ Taylor observes that Gideon was given the name Jerubbaal, which means "Let Baal plead [for himself];" but at some point, the name Jerubbaal was modified to Jerubbesheth (2 Sam 11:21), by inserting the word "besheth," meaning "shame," in the place of "Baal," the Canaanite god. Taylor argues that because the Israelites were commanded not to mention the names of other gods (Exod 23:13), the name Jerubbaal was not acceptable.²⁸ Taylor's point is that God's people must resist all forms of idolatry.

In his personal testimony published in *The Bridegroom's Messenger*, R.E. Massey explains that Gideon's use of the fleece to determine God's will (Judg

²⁵ Bell, "Questions and Answers," PE 374-375, 10.

²⁶ R.B. Hayes, "Women Preaching," PHA 2/11 (1918):6. *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* (1901-1996) was the official publication of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church.

²⁷ G.F. Taylor, "Editorial: Baal," PHA 4/32 (1920): 8-11 (10).

²⁸ Taylor, "Editorial: Baal," 10.

6:36–37) served as a guide to his own similar experiment.²⁹ Massey declares that when he was called by God to be a missionary, he received a clear word from God, directing him to go to India. God also named Massey's future wife, whom he had not yet met. Massey, however, like Gideon, doubted God and asked for signs. Although he does not describe the nature of his "fleece," Massey states that he repeated it seven times with success each time.

The most common approach to the Gideon narrative finds areas of similarity between Gideon's experience and the Pentecostal experience. Alice R. Frodsham, for example, compares the testing and reduction of Gideon's army to the Christian process of discipleship. She writes that, "By revealing the ever unpopular way of the cross, Christ sifts the multitude down as did Gideon his 32,000 of old. A true disciple makes the Lord Jesus Christ the center of his life and deepest affection."³⁰

Similarly, E.H. Blake views the threefold testing of Gideon's forces as an example of the three stages of Christian growth. He argues that:

[T]he three hundred with their broken pitchers and shining lights is a very good type of those who, passing through this third state are broken in spirit and subdued that there is nothing in them to hinder the outshining of the indwelling Christ.³¹

America's entry into the First World War signalled to Alonzo Gann that the "tribulation period" had begun, the end was near, and the church must move quickly to evangelise the world.³² Every believer must participate in the church's mission; and Gann insists that the victory will be won "by the ones who are faithful unto the end," those who are like Gideon's "willing and obedient ones," who "with one accord" defeated the Midianites.³³ Pentecostal power is given to the church when it is unified and obedient to God. Gann's article demonstrates the interconnectedness of eschatology, mission and the gift of the Spirit in the Pentecostal tradition.

L.R. Graham also calls for unity; but Gideon's army is cited for another reason. Oddly, Graham cites Gideon only as a precedent for questioning God. When Gideon heard the angelic greeting, "The Lord is with you," his immediate response was to ask the question, "If God is with us, then why have these troubles befallen us?" Graham, therefore, believes that he is justified in asking God why

²⁹ R.E. Massey and M.E. Massey, "A Call to India: My Experience," *TBM* 1/18 (1908):2. *The Bridegroom's Messenger* was published in Atlanta, GA by G.B. Cashwell, beginning in 1907.

³⁰ Alice R. Frodsham, "The Cost of Discipleship," *PE* 2/15 (1914):7.

³¹ E.H. Blake, "The Stages of Christian Experience," *PHA* 2/4 (1918):2–3.

³² Alonzo Gann, "Obedience and Concerted Action Necessary," *CGE* 8/15 (1917):4.

³³ Gann, "Obedience and Concerted Action," 4.

there are "so many varied opinions among (heresies among Pentecostal people) us who believe or profess to be believers."³⁴

Like Alonzo Gann, A.J. Tomlinson writes about the church in terms of the last days. He expresses passion for the mission of the church and believes that every believer should be a soldier in God's army. Both men and women must participate in the conflict. In his lengthy article, "Be Manly Men and Very Courageous," Tomlinson uses the story of Gideon to prod his readers into action.³⁵ He points to the 22,000 men who were dismissed from Gideon's army because they were afraid and he asks, "I wonder if we have any such cowards in our ranks that will turn and walk away just as the battle begins to wax fiercer and stronger. I can't think so!" Tomlinson wonders what kind of person can "walk away from responsibilities just because the coming conflict looks too hard and severe." Gideon's three hundred, Tomlinson writes, "were the true blue kind and stood all the tests ... The Church of God must have such heroes."³⁶

What is demanded by the Gideon story, according to A.J. Lawson, is trust and obedience. Lawson insists that God's primary objection to Gideon's plan was not the large numbers in the army; rather, "The greater objection to Gideon's number was on account of their fearful heart. They did not know God well enough to stand ..."³⁷ We learn from Gideon's experience that God tests us until we learn to trust him.

A Sunday school lesson printed in the *White Wing Messenger* suggests a similar take on Gideon's story. The lesson states that God would not "object to a large number if they were true and brave;" but because Gideon's forces were not spiritually mature, their numbers were reduced in order to ensure that God received all the glory.³⁸ The Pentecostal church, therefore, must confess its "false holy pride" and submit to God's process of testing.³⁹ In 1923, the Church of God split into two denominations, the largest of which retained the name "Church of God" and the smaller became known as the Church of God of Prophecy. The author (a Church of God of Prophecy member) alludes to the previous year's split as proof that a very small percentage of the people "were really standing on

³⁴ L.R. Graham, "Division," *PHA* 2/5 (1918): 2-3.

³⁵ A.J. Tomlinson "Be Manly Men and Very Courageous," *CGE* 12/30 (1921):1.

³⁶ Tomlinson "Be Manly Men," 1.

³⁷ A.J. Lawson, "A Tried People," *WWM* 2/3 (1925):1-2. *The White Wing Messenger* (1923-). The official publication of the Church of God of Prophecy was first edited by General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson.

³⁸ "The Period of the Judges: SS Lesson for February 24," *WWM* 1/12 (1924):4. The writer of this Sunday school lesson is unknown, as are the writers of many other items that will be discussed here.

³⁹ ANON, "The Period of the Judges," 4.

God's word." God "wants us to have boldness and such confidence in Him that we will go ALL the way with HIM."⁴⁰

The call for courage and faithfulness is repeated in two articles the following year. A.J. Tomlinson alludes to the aforementioned split, saying,

We have, in a sense, become a part of the three hundred Gideon soldiers by the stand we have taken for the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice, and it is an uphill pull in many ways, but by special effort and all sticking together we can win and save ourselves and many of those who hear us as we shout "the sword of the Lord and Gideon."⁴¹

Tomlinson concludes that like Gideon's army, the church is fighting a battle; and the battle demands faithfulness. He pleads, therefore: "let us renew our strength, increase our courage and trust God for the anointing, inspiration and out pouring of the Spirit."⁴²

A further effort to stir up the Church of God of Prophecy's zeal for mission was published a few months later and, once again, the appeal is based on Gideon's story. Tomlinson states, "Some may become fearful and leave the battle field like many of the Gideon army;" and others, who have a "criticising spirit ... will doubtless be sent home by our Gideon who is in command ... Only the very highest type of the Gideon three hundred stripe will be worthwhile in this last great conflict."⁴³

The terminology "last great conflict" was used by Tomlinson to describe the church's battle against evil in the last days.⁴⁴

The article entitled, "God Calls Busy People," is another essay that encourages Christians to be involved in God's work. This survey of both the OT and the NT shows that God chooses people who are "busily engaged" rather than people who "have nothing else to do."⁴⁵ Like Moses, Saul, David, Simon, Andrew and others, Gideon was "very busy" when God called him.⁴⁶ Although Gideon was occupied with threshing wheat, he was willing to serve God; "so he only needed instructions from God to be fully able and ready for duty."⁴⁷ The

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ ANON, "The Blessings to Come," *WWM* 2/3 (1925):4. Although the writer is not named, we can assume it was the editor and General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson.

⁴² ANON, "The Blessings to Come," 4.

⁴³ ANON, "Who Are Trouble Makers?" *WWM* 2/13 (1925):1, 4.

⁴⁴ See A.J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict* (Cleveland: White Wing Publishing House, 2011; first published in 1913). The phrase "last great conflict" was part of the common vocabulary of late nineteenth-century eschatology.

⁴⁵ ANON, "God Calls Busy People," *CGE* 6/22 (1915):1.

⁴⁶ ANON, "God Calls Busy People," 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

same is true today, and those who are hard at work "are apt to claim the Lord's attention; and He, seeing their active and zealous disposition, will soon have a place to thrust such a person into, that he may be of some service in performing exploits for his Lord."⁴⁸

We may feel overwhelmed by our responsibilities, but God will make a way for us to do even more for his kingdom.

Of the fourteen articles that mention Gideon, G.F. Taylor's Sunday school lesson entitled, "The Victory of Gideon's Band," offers the most extensive commentary on the Gideon narrative.⁴⁹ Taylor's exposition of Judg 7:1–21 is a re-telling of the story with comments added along the way. For example, Taylor observes that Gideon made excuses but that we should not criticise Gideon because he only wanted to be "absolutely sure that God was calling him to this work."⁵⁰ Unlike the articles discussed previously, Taylor's work contains a number of allegorical comments. The 32,000 men who volunteered represent "the church as a whole," the 10,000 who remained after the first test "represent the sanctified people" and the 300 who passed the second test represent the Spirit-baptised believers "whom God can trust."⁵¹ The battle was won by the simple means of lamps and pitchers: "The Israelites did not need any swords ... Likewise the spiritual warfare is not fought with carnal weapons." The breaking of the pitchers "represents the breaking of our will and nature" and the lamps stand for the "light of a Christian life."⁵²

In his study of "the Spirit before Pentecost," S.P. Jacobs compares the work of the Spirit in the OT to the Spirit's work in the NT. Based on the examples of Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson, Jacobs argues that the Spirit came upon OT believers and that their "unsullied purity and constant fellowship with the Holy Spirit imply complete salvation from sin."⁵³ However, he insists that the work of the Spirit after Pentecost is distinct from and qualitatively superior to the Spirit's work before Pentecost. Jacobs argues that OT believers experienced the Spirit's "operations" but at Pentecost, believers received the Spirit's "person."⁵⁴ Jacobs explains that Pentecost represents the Spirit's "personal presence" or "personal coming ... into the believer's consciousness."⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ G.F. Taylor, "The Victory of Gideon's Band," *PHA* 3/150 (1920):2–3.

⁵⁰ Taylor, "The Victory of Gideon's Band," 2.

⁵¹ Ibid., 2.

⁵² Ibid., 3.

⁵³ S.P. Jacobs, "The Spirit before Pentecost," *TBM* 5/99 (1911):4; excerpted from S.P. Jacobs, *The Real Christian* (Bedford: S.P. Jacobs, 1899):165–170.

⁵⁴ Jacobs, "The Spirit before Pentecost," 4.

⁵⁵ Jacobs, *The Real Christian*, 175.

F JEPHTHAH

In addition to Jacobs's work mentioned above, I located five articles that refer to Jephthah all of which grapple with Jephthah's vow. In the "Questions Box" of the *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, G.F. Taylor responds to the inquiry, "Was Jephthah's daughter really executed?"⁵⁶ Before answering the question, Taylor challenges the common view that Jephthah's vow was "rash." Without offering any reasons for his view, he states, "I see nothing rash about it."⁵⁷ He then commends Jephthah's actions based on the witness of Heb 11. Taylor states emphatically, "If Jephthah had offered his daughter in sacrifice, I do not believe that the Holy Ghost would have ever put him down in the 11th chapter of Hebrews as one of the greatest heroes of faith."⁵⁸ Accordingly, Taylor concludes that Jephthah consecrated "his daughter entirely to the service of God."

Taylor's view that Jephthah did not sacrifice his daughter stands alone among the five articles under discussion here. H.A. Pressgrove concedes that Jephthah's predicament was the "test of his life" but Jephthah "was afraid to go back on his word."⁵⁹ Pressgrove stresses the pain that Jephthah suffered but he does not mention the agony endured by Jephthah's daughter. In agreement with Pressgrove, Ernest S. Williams writes regarding Jephthah, "his league with God he would not break."⁶⁰ Finally, an article in the *Pentecostal Evangel* quotes Jephthah's tragic remark – "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot draw back" – as evidence that he fulfilled his vow.⁶¹ The brief article entitled, "Consecration," applauds Jephthah's decision to make a vow, going so far as to make his vow the reason for victory: "God delivered the Israelites by his hand, because he made a vow unto the Lord and God knew that he would keep it."⁶² Equally tragic is the unanimous affirmation that Jephthah receives in these articles. The *Pentecostal Evangel* encourages young people to follow Jephthah's example: "Let us not be among those that draw back."⁶³ Ernest Williams declares that Jephthah's action in fulfilling his vow is witness to his "sterling character"

⁵⁶ ANON, "Question Box," *PHA* 3/52 (1920):9–10 (9).

⁵⁷ ANON, "Question Box," *PHA* 3/52, 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁹ H.A. Pressgrove, "A New Year Message of Courage and Cheer," *WWM* 1/9 (1924):4.

⁶⁰ Ernest S. Williams, "Jephthah," *PE* 608 (1925):4.

⁶¹ ANON, "Young People's Meeting," *PE* 610 (1925):8.

⁶² ANON, "Consecration," *AFO* 29 (1915):3. *The Apostolic Faith* was published from 1906 to 1908 by William J. Seymour at The Apostolic Faith Mission in Los Angeles. The newspaper reported on the Azusa Street revival and included other news, testimonies, articles and letters from the Pentecostal movement worldwide. The articles focused on distinctive Pentecostal doctrines and the testimonies recounted dramatic Pentecostal experiences such as healings, miracles, sanctifications and Spirit baptisms. Florence Crawford, who spent time at the Azusa St. Revival, began a version of *The Apostolic Faith* in Portland, OR in 1908 that continued until 1929.

⁶³ ANON, "Young People's Meeting," 8.

and his "loyal heart"⁶⁴ and Pressgrove encourages his readers to keep the promises they have made to God. His counsel for the new year is: "It is right to make vows unto the Lord, but we must be sure and keep them."⁶⁵

In contrast to these four writers who commend Jephthah, A.P. Collins, whose article we discussed at the beginning of this reception history, is not so eager to praise Jephthah. He offers two critiques of Jephthah's actions. First, Collins asserts that Jephthah's vow was "rash." Second, "If a vow violates the law of God then it is not wrong to break the vow."⁶⁶

G SAMSON

As would be expected, Pentecostal writers refer to Samson more than to any other person in Judges; and, quite appropriately, Samson is the subject of the earliest article (Dec 1906) and of the latest article (Oct 1925) that we discuss in this reception history.⁶⁷

T.B. Barratt, who would become a major figure in European Pentecostalism, shares his dramatic and inspiring testimony of Spirit baptism. After describing the wonder, joy, and resulting benefits of his experience, Barratt concludes with a very brief reference to Samson: "Oh what praises to God arose from my soul for His mercy. I felt as strong as a lion and know now where David and Samson got their strength."⁶⁸

Stanley H. Frodsham refers to Samson in his tribute to Lilian Garr, a well-known Pentecostal minister who had died following surgery.⁶⁹ Garr had preached around the world alongside her husband and had enjoyed great success. Frodsham, however, noting the effect of Garr's funeral on its attendees, wrote, "At her funeral all the Pentecostal saints of Los Angeles, who have been divided by various doctrinal dissensions, were all melted into one." Frodsham compared Garr's funeral to the statement in Judges that "the dead that Samson slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."⁷⁰

A.J. Tomlinson writes that "the Eagle Saints" are those who are "living above the world, and surmounting oppositions and difficulties ... in time of storm, they rise above it," as described in Isa 40:31.⁷¹ Samson appears only

⁶⁴ Williams, "Jephthah," 4.

⁶⁵ Pressgrove, "A New Year Message," 4.

⁶⁶ Collins, "Pentecostal Bible Course," 13.

⁶⁷ I located 23 articles that reference Samson; however, one article is published in three parts one article appears twice. Therefore, the list in the appendix contains 26 items.

⁶⁸ T.B. Barratt, "Baptized in New York," *AF* (Los Angeles) 1/4 (1906):3.

⁶⁹ Stanley H. Frodsham, "A Wonderful Life Ended," *Confidence* 5/9 (1916):79–80.

⁷⁰ S.H. Frodsham, "A Wonderful Life Ended," 80.

⁷¹ ANON, "The Eagle Saints," *CGE* 8/7 (1917):1, 4.

briefly in the article, when Tomlinson states that the strength of the Eagle Saints "is not in their hair, like Samson, but it is in their service to the Lord."⁷²

A one-page article entitled, "In the Power of His Might," relates the story of Samson with accompanying spiritual applications, much like a sermon.⁷³ The article portrays Samson as a model of spiritual warfare against the enemies of God's people. Samson was weak but when he receives strength from the Holy Spirit, he becomes an instrument of God's power. Samson's successful campaign against the enemy made him a target, and he was entrapped by Delilah. Samson suffered greatly because of his disobedience, but he was restored when his hair grew again. Although Samson "was destroyed" when he pulled down the temple of Dagon, the Spirit was not "destroyed." The writer declines to make Samson a type of Christ but both Samson and Christ accomplished God's work by means of death; and in their deaths, "God triumphed."⁷⁴ Christ has poured out the Holy Spirit and the power is available today but we must "mind the leakages and beware of the Delilahs . . . The God of Samson . . . is the God of the saint today."⁷⁵

G.F. Taylor cites Samson as an example of the Spirit's empowerment of OT believers. He acknowledges that the exact nature and extent of the Spirit's work in the OT remains a mystery but that the Spirit was "active." He goes on to make a distinction between the Spirit's work in the OT and the Spirit's work in the NT, saying that OT believers "had the Holy Spirit in a measure . . . but none of these had the Baptism [in the Holy Spirit]."⁷⁶

G.F. Taylor answers the question, "Was Samson saved or lost?," in the affirmative by appealing to Heb 11:32, a verse that groups Samson "with Samuel, David, and the prophets among the heroes of faith."⁷⁷ To his credit, Taylor concedes that elements of Samson's life are difficult to "reconcile with New Testament religion."⁷⁸

While defending the right of women to preach, Tomlinson ironically accuses women of being more easily deceived than men.⁷⁹ He argues further that when a woman is deceived, she will lead astray the men who listen to her, just as Eve led Adam away from the truth. According to Tomlinson, Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Church of Christ, Scientist, is a modern example of the deceived (and deceiving) woman. He compares her to Delilah, who deceived Samson and

⁷² ANON, "The Eagle Saints," 1.

⁷³ ANON, "In the Power of His Might," *PE* 203 (1917): 8, reprinted in *PE* 530 (1924):3.

⁷⁴ ANON, "In the Power of His Might," 8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ G.F. Taylor, "Basis of Union, Chapter XV: Baptism of the Holy Ghost," *PHA* 1/38 (1918):8-9.

⁷⁷ ANON, "Question Box," *PHA* 1/9 (1917):15.

⁷⁸ ANON, "Question Box," *PHA* 1/9, 15.

⁷⁹ ANON, "A New One Started," *CGE* 5/17 (1914):2.

caused his downfall. Similarly, Eddy's false religion cuts off the hair of "foolish men" and robs them of their "manhood."⁸⁰ Unfortunately, Tomlinson's perspective is evidence that prejudice against women is a deep-seated problem, even among churches that encourage women in ministry. Moreover, Tomlinson's logic fails. After asserting that women are weaker than men, his description of Eddy makes her appear to be stronger than the men who follow her. Given the innumerable heresies promulgated by men and the various false religions founded by men, Tomlinson's focus on women teachers appears misleading and misogynistic.

Addressing the relationship between purity and power, J.H. King names the sins of prominent figures in the Bible and in Christian history to show that everyone is subject to errors, "mistakes, foolishness and fanaticism."⁸¹ Respected leaders like Abraham, Joshua, Madam Guyon, George Fox and John Wesley fell into error; but God blessed their ministries despite their failures. God aided Samson in his battles against the Philistines but "there were things in Samson's life that were not right. God's blessings upon him were not an endorsement of these things. God cannot sanction sin."⁸² In light of the examples that he cites, King emphasises that Christians must not display an air of superiority but they must remain humble and teachable, admitting and renouncing their errors.

An article in the *Apostolic Evangel* proposes that Samson's "failure to successfully meet the great crisis of his life" occurred not at once but in stages and that "every one who fails traverses pretty much the same course."⁸³ To support the thesis, each episode in Samson's story is recounted and spiritualised. Some of the lessons of the story are framed allegorically and others are stated analogically. An example of the analogical approach would be the observation that Samson's downward slide begins when he associates too closely with the enemy; and, by analogy, Christians must not "come into sympathetic companionship with those who are opposed to God."⁸⁴ An example that comes close to being allegorical would be the article's claim that Delilah represents a Christian's "worldly companions" who attempt to lead the Christian into sin.

⁸⁰ ANON, "A New One Started," 2.

⁸¹ J.H. King, "Great Blessings May not Evidence Full Approval," *AE* 2/4 (1910):1. King served as General Overseer of the Fire-baptized Holiness Church and later as General Superintendent of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. The *Apostolic Evangel* was the official publication of the Fire-baptized Holiness Church from 1907 to 1909 and was later associated with the International Pentecostal Holiness Church.

⁸² King, "Great Blessings May not Evidence Full Approval," 1.

⁸³ ANON, "He Knew not," *AE* 7/8 (1915):5. The PDF of the article is incomplete because the original page was damaged.

⁸⁴ ANON, "He Knew not," 5.

Delilah's cutting of Samson's hair, then, represents the "scorn" that will come to the Christian who gives in to temptation.⁸⁵

In a substantial article (about 2500 words) entitled, "Samson and His Exploits," A.J. Tomlinson characterises Samson both as an example and as a warning. Samson's story shows the powerful effects of the Holy Spirit in the life of a faithful and obedient person but his downfall is a warning to those who become "self-confident."⁸⁶ In Tomlinson's interpretation of the story, God worked through Samson despite Samson's moral failings: "The providence of God was signally displayed in overruling for good the hasty passions of Samson."⁸⁷ Tomlinson sees a close correspondence between the work of the Spirit in Samson's life and the work of the Spirit in the lives of Spirit-baptised Pentecostals. In both cases, the Spirit acts episodically; and in both cases, the recipient of the Spirit may perform mysterious deeds that are not directly related to the mission of salvation. Just as Samson's killing of the lion did nothing to bring deliverance to Israel, so also some of the Pentecostals' actions (falling down in the Spirit, for example) do not seem to be directly redemptive. About half of Tomlinson's article is devoted to warning his readers that if they presume on God's grace by playing games with sin and by consorting with the enemy, they will lose their power and their faith.

In another article – this one focused on the last days – Tomlinson advances a similar warning:

Samson played along and trifled with God until God left him, and he did not know it until he undertook to use his strength as usual, and he awoke to the fact that his strength had departed. In a similar manner, many good people will trifle their time away in the last days ... but, like Samson, they will find their strength is gone and they cannot do as they expected.⁸⁸

Believing the end of time to be near, Tomlinson urges his readers to be strong in battle. He states that fear is abounding and "iniquity is running rampant over the earth;" therefore, the church must "never compromise" and must "stand pat on the Word of God and be true and loyal to His Church."⁸⁹

O.C. Wilkins declares that the effectiveness of the church does not depend on the beauty of its facilities, the precision of its choir, the skill of its orators or the level of its entertainment; rather, the church will attract multitudes only when the power of God draws them. Samson defeated the multitude not because he used a "fine polished weapon" but because the power of God was behind the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ ANON, "Samson and His Exploits," *CGE* 10/39 (1919):1.

⁸⁷ ANON, "Samson and His Exploits," 1.

⁸⁸ ANON, "The Last Days Are upon Us," *CGE* 13/15 (1922):1.

⁸⁹ ANON, "The Last Days Are upon Us," 1.

weapon (the jawbone). Like Samson, we need the power of God to make us effective but if we "compromise ... we will wake up to the fact that our power is gone, and we are left in a blind condition."⁹⁰

In an anonymous article, Samson's supernatural physical strength, which is "attributed to the Spirit of God," is counted as one of many OT witnesses to God's healing power.⁹¹

In "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit," Samson serves as a key OT example of the Spirit-filled life. In this full-page article, Samson's separation as a Nazirite represents consecration, which is the "fundamental requirement" for receiving Spirit baptism: "God requires a clean temple for His Holy Spirit to reside in."⁹² Like Wilkins and others, this writer interprets Samson's loss of eyesight as a symbol of the Christian's possible loss of "spiritual eyesight."⁹³ However, like Samson, the backslidden Christian can cry out to God and God will restore their "old time power."⁹⁴

In another article that cites Samson as evidence for Spirit baptism, D.W. Kerr writes that "Samson was clothed with the Holy Ghost."⁹⁵ Kerr reminds his readers of Samson's exploits that were done by the power of the Spirit and then he states emphatically that the "same Holy Ghost will come upon the church" and make the church an unstoppable force for God.⁹⁶

In "Samson the Nazarite," Alice E. Luce explains the regulations regarding the OT Nazirite vow and spiritualises the practice.⁹⁷ For Luce, the Nazirite's abstinence from wine symbolises the Christian's baptism in the Spirit (Eph 5:18) by which the believer falls under the influence of God as surely as "a drunken man is swayed and mastered by the demon of drink."⁹⁸ The Nazirite's long hair typifies "the consecration of all the mental powers, the reason and intellect of God's separated ones;" and the Nazirite rule against contact with a dead corpse signifies freedom from the defilement of sin, because "death is a type of SIN."⁹⁹ Luce argues that the primary message of Samson's story is that Christians must

⁹⁰ O.C. Wilkins, "Sermon," *PHA* 4/14 (1920):5-6.

⁹¹ ANON, "Divine Healing," *BC* 6/9 (1923):6-8 (6). *The Bridal Call* was published by Aimee Semple McPherson, pastor of Angelus Temple in Los Angeles and founder of the Foursquare Gospel Church.

⁹² Morris Kullman, "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit," *PE* 486-487 (1923):4.

⁹³ Kullman, "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit," 4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ D.W. Kerr, "The Missionary Outlook," *PE* 497 (1923):2-3 (3).

⁹⁶ Kerr, "The Missionary Outlook," 3.

⁹⁷ Alice E. Luce, "Samson the Nazarite," *PE* 512 (1923):6-7. Today's preferred spelling is "Nazirite."

⁹⁸ Luce, "Samson the Nazarite," 6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid* (emphasis original).

resist the enticements and seductions of "spiritual adultery," which consists of "CONFORMITY WITH THE WORLD."¹⁰⁰

Another article that focuses on Samson's Nazirite status is "The Spirit of God Unconquerable," which advances two main points, the first being the reality of the Spirit's work and the second being the opposition and ridicule that comes against those who are filled with the Spirit.¹⁰¹ The article argues that Samson's experience is like that of the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). In both cases, "God can and does do real, tangible work through human bodies."¹⁰² In both cases also, the recipients of the Spirit are despised and loathed. Nevertheless, the reader is encouraged to trust God because "the Spirit of God is unconquerable."¹⁰³

In response to a Church of God financial crisis in 1921, General Overseer A.J. Tomlinson appeals to the membership to support the *Evangel*. Labelling the crisis an impossible battle, Tomlinson points to Samson as an example of a believer who "would not back down" and, by so doing, won the victory. The church, therefore, must fast and pray, exercise faith and "do the impossible" to save the *Evangel*.¹⁰⁴

Aimee Semple McPherson's three-part sermon entitled, "Samson and Delilah," is a passionate and rousing call for revival.¹⁰⁵ Sister Aimee, as her church called her, tells the story of Samson in her usual dramatic and engaging style. The sermon is thoroughly allegorical, inasmuch as every element in the story symbolises some aspect of Christian spiritual life. Unlike early Christian allegories (such as those of Origen), however, McPherson does not make Samson a type of Christ. McPherson's symbolic interpretations frequently utilise intertextuality, connecting Samson's story to NT texts regarding faithfulness, prayer, the Holy Spirit and spiritual warfare. Examples of her allegorical interpretations include Samson's foxes, which represent "criticism, back-biting, falsifying and prevarication around when there is revival"¹⁰⁶ and the "seven locks" of Samson's hair that symbolise the "Seven Locks of the Church"—Salvation, the power of the Holy Spirit, faith, love, consecration, prayer and praise.¹⁰⁷ McPherson sees allegories also in the boy who guided blind Samson into the Philistine temple and in the death of Samson. Samson, guided by the boy, is the church, "guided by a childlike simplicity of faith and trust;"¹⁰⁸ and the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 7 (emphasis original).

¹⁰¹ ANON, "The Spirit of God Unconquerable," *PE* 525 (1923):6.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid..

¹⁰⁴ ANON, "This is a Love Message," *CGE* 12/36 (1921):1.

¹⁰⁵ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Samson and Delilah: Part I," *BC* 5/12 (1922): 3–5; eadem, "... Part II," *BC* 6/1 (1922): 3–5; eadem "... Part III," *BC* 6/2–3 (1922): 3–5.

¹⁰⁶ McPherson, "Samson and Delilah: Part I," 4.

¹⁰⁷ McPherson, "Samson and Delilah: Part II," 3–5.

¹⁰⁸ McPherson, "Samson and Delilah: Part III," 4.

death of Samson symbolises "the death of our own aims, ambitions and desires."¹⁰⁹ Sister Aimee's sermon is a powerful message to the church; however, its connections to Samson are mostly forced and unnecessary.

Harry L. Collier, in an article entitled, "Redemption in Him," mentions McPherson's sermon "Samson and Delilah," which we discussed above.¹¹⁰ Collier heard the sermon, as it was delivered live in McPherson's Angelus Temple in Los Angeles. He describes the sermon as allegorical, with Samson representing the church and Delilah representing the world. Samson and the church are robbed of their power when their seven locks are shorn; but the church can have her power restored if she, like Samson, will turn to God in prayer.¹¹¹

Taking his text from Ps 119.9, E.E. Wiley challenges young people to abstain from the evils of the world by grounding their lives in the Word of God.¹¹² Wiley cites Samson as an example of a young man who was overly confident and who trusted in his own strength.¹¹³ His success against the lion and against the Philistines made him so presumptuous that he failed to be vigilant in his dealings with Delilah. Young people, therefore, must not trust in their own strength or in their own wisdom.

The last two references to Samson that we will discuss are in sermons that were delivered by teenagers. A. Watson Argue was nineteen years of age when he preached the sermon "Hands Full of Honey" to a large crowd in Winnipeg, Canada. A report of Argue's revival meeting appears in *The Revival Broadcast*, and his sermon on Samson is described briefly. The report states that Argue likens Samson's encounter with the lion to the sudden and unexpected conflicts that meet young Christians.¹¹⁴

At the age of thirteen, Uldine Utley preached the sermon, "Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You out," in which she characterises the Holy Spirit as a photographer who never misses a picture.¹¹⁵ She relates several episodes throughout the Bible that demonstrate the inevitable penalty of sin. One of those episodes is the Samson and Delilah narrative and Utley states the obvious point that Samson was unable to escape the consequences of his disobedience.

¹⁰⁹ McPherson, "Samson and Delilah: Part III," 5.

¹¹⁰ Harry L. Collier, "Redemption in Him," *BC* 6/9 (1923):8–10, 19.

¹¹¹ Collier, "Redemption in Him," 10.

¹¹² E.E. Wiley, "The Word of God: The Only Safeguard amid the Perils of Youth," *PHA* 9/16 (1925):8–12.

¹¹³ Wiley, "The Word of God," 11.

¹¹⁴ ANON, "Boy Evangelist Argue Stirs Sullivan with Fiery Sermons at Tabernacle," *RB* 1/1 (1923):6–7 (7). *The Revival Broadcast* was published in Canada and edited by Zelma Argue, an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God.

¹¹⁵ Uldine Utley, "Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You out," *PRS* 1/9 (1925):2. *Petals from the Rose of Sharon* was published by Uldine Utley, a prominent Pentecostal child evangelist in the 1920s.

H CONCLUSION

This reception history of Judges in Pentecostal periodicals from 1906 through 1925 provides a brief glimpse into the theology, spirituality and hermeneutics of one segment of the Pentecostal tradition. It cannot be assumed that the North American periodicals are indicative of global Pentecostalism. However, the testimonies, sermons and articles reviewed here demonstrate that some early Pentecostals identified with the stories and characters in Judges and appropriated them to their Pentecostal context. Although a few of the examples reveal unusual or fanciful interpretations, most of the writers interpret Judges much like other Christian interpreters of that time. That is, Judges is a book of instruction for the people of God in every age, a warning against idolatry and disobedience. Pentecostals would add, however, that Judges promises the power of the Holy Spirit to everyone who serves God faithfully. Furthermore, the book was understood broadly as an example of spiritual battle against the forces of evil. Like Israel, the church is tempted to compromise with sin and to accommodate its surrounding culture; therefore, believers must remain vigilant, prayerful and devoted to God.

The book of Judges influenced this segment of Pentecostalism in a number of specific ways. First, in regard to practices, Gideon's use of the fleece to determine the will of God served as justification for the similar ritual among Pentecostals. Second, in regard to theology, Samson's loss of the Holy Spirit indicated to Pentecostals that they were not "eternally secure" in their relationship with God. The failure of Samson suggested that continued consecration is necessary for maintaining one's spiritual fullness – "God requires a clean temple for His Holy Spirit to reside in."¹¹⁶ Third, regarding ethics, Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter supported a rigid legalistic view of obedience that stands in tension with more relational versions of faithfulness that Pentecostals discerned from other stories in Judges. Fourth, regarding ecclesiology, Deborah's prophetic leadership was seen as validation of Spirit-filled women preachers in accord with Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17.

Early Pentecostals heard the message of Judges as an authoritative voice, as inspired Scripture, and they did not question the veracity of the text. They heard the book's message in light of the fivefold gospel, the common theological confession that Jesus is saviour, sanctifier, Spirit baptiser, healer and soon coming king. The motif of salvation pervades the literature in the form of battle language employed for missionary and evangelistic purposes. A.J. Tomlinson, for example, declares that we are "Gideon soldiers" and that we can "save ourselves" and others if we stick to the battle.¹¹⁷ The topics of sanctification and Spirit baptism are even more pervasive than the topic of salvation. G.F. Taylor argues that Gideon's army of 10,000 "represent the sanctified people," and the

¹¹⁶ Kullman, "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit," 4.

¹¹⁷ ANON, "The Blessings to Come," 4.

final 300 symbolise Spirit-baptised believers.¹¹⁸ Samson is described repeatedly as an example of what the Spirit can do in a sanctified life. Even healing is mentioned in connection to Judges. In an anonymous article, Samson's supernatural physical strength, which is "attributed to the Spirit of God," is counted as one of many OT witnesses to God's healing power.¹¹⁹ Finally, although the book of Judges does not speak directly to eschatology in general or to the kingship of Jesus in particular, the early Pentecostals read Judges, as they read all of the Bible, in light of the end. Alonzo Gann declares that the end is near, and every believer must participate in the church's mission. Gann insists that the victory will be won "by the ones who are faithful unto the end," those who are like Gideon's "willing and obedient ones," who "with one accord" defeated the Midianites.¹²⁰

In addition to the fivefold gospel, other common Pentecostal emphases can be discerned in the reception history of Judges. From its beginnings, Pentecostalism has affirmed the ministries of women as preachers, prophets and leaders. It has stressed the value of Spirit-filled worship, the need for spiritual warfare and the importance of foreign missions. Pentecostal writers connect each of these emphases to the book of Judges.

Early Pentecostal biblical interpreters did not follow a single methodology but the interpretations of Judges surveyed here demonstrate a number of common approaches. One common approach would be intertextuality (connecting Judges to other biblical texts). The Pentecostal version of intertextuality is based on the belief in the essential unity of Scripture. Another common feature of this literature is a dependence on the hermeneutical triad of Scripture, Spirit and community. First, the Bible is the authoritative word of God and there is no indication that anyone considered the Bible to be an "object" of critical examination but rather it is the "subject" that interrogates its hearers. Scripture speaks to the church and the church must listen and obey. Second, the church's dependence on the Holy Spirit is evident throughout these early interpretations of Judges. Third, the Scriptures are read in light of what God has done and is now doing within the Pentecostal community. It is clear that pneumatic experience influenced the Pentecostal interpretations of Judges.¹²¹

Finally, allegory appears less frequently than might be expected but it is present in a number of articles. More common, however, is what I would call "analogy," which is an interpretive approach that finds contemporary spiritual

¹¹⁸ Taylor, "The Victory of Gideon's Band," 2.

¹¹⁹ "Divine Healing," 6.

¹²⁰ Gann, "Obedience and Concerted Action," 4.

¹²¹ On Acts 15 as a model for the integration of Scripture, Spirit and community in interpretation, see John Christopher Thomas, "Women, Pentecostals and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2/5 (1994):41-56.

lessons in the biblical narrative based on the similarities between the ancient event and today’s context. This method is not unlike the approach found in the book of Hebrews, in which the wilderness experience of Israel (Num13–14) becomes a model for the Hebrew believers in Christ. Israel’s refusal to enter Canaan – because they were afraid – is presented as a warning to the Hebrew Christians. The ancient Israelites and the Hebrew Christians were faced with the same choice—either they go forward in obedience or they go back because of unbelief. The writers of the NT commonly used this approach, which can be called typological or analogical, as a way of making the OT relevant to Christian believers.¹²² This reception history shows that early Pentecostals believed, above all else, that the book of Judges continues to speak to God’s people.

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¹²² Regarding analogical interpretation, John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 184, writes, on the one hand, “we must not impose Christian meanings” on the Old Testament but, on the other hand, “Every Old Testament text, if rightly heard, has its word for us today” (p. 212).

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Prof Lee Roy Martin, University of South Africa, Research Fellow Dept of Biblical and Ancient Studies; Professor, Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee, email: lmartin@ptseminary.edu. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6582-8373>.