OBJECTIVE SELVES VERSUS EMPOWERED SELVES:
THE CONFLICT OVER HOLINESS IN THE
POST-CIVIL WAR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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After the Civil War, Methodists in the north were diverging ever more sharply in their perceptions and evaluations of their church. One side may be represented by the remarks in 1878 of Leonard Gurley, a veteran preacher of Ohio Methodism. He had little sympathy, he declared, with those who were always looking back to early times as if those times were Methodism's Golden Age and who were constantly "mourning over the degeneracy of these later days." Modern Methodism had progressed:

Early Methodism was subjective; personal conversion, personal experience, was the theme of pulpit, class, and love-feast. Modern Methodism is more objective: ... it devotes its attention more fully to Christian activities. Our people talk less in class, but they work more in the Sunday-school. ... The Methodist Episcopal Church of to-day [sic] is better, stronger, and more efficient than it was in the days of Asbury and McKendree.¹

The other side is evident in a scathing 1875 ad hoc committee report on the "Welfare of Ohio Conference Methodism." The authors' descriptions of the church coincided remarkably with Gurley's observations of the "objective" character of modern Methodism, but their evaluations were very different. They noted that Sunday Schools were thriving, but they bemoaned the moribund condition in the conference of class meetings, prayer meetings, camp-meetings, and quarterly meetings. All these forms of association had once been prime occasions for testimony and thus major means of promoting personal religious experience. The committee closed its report with a grim section headed "Christian Experience."

There is much Church attachment, enterprize [sic], and religious sentiment, but little spirituality. ... The least promising feature ... of Methodism within our bounds

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... is, that every material and social interest is in advance of ... spirituality; that we are more tenacious for our usages, for our doctrines, for our economy than for our progress in Christian experience.2

How are we to account for these differing responses to the late nineteenth-century church? One response gloried in the progress and power of the church, the other deplored its dearth of spirituality. Yet both sides saw similar things happening. It was their evaluations that differed so profoundly. In what follows I will argue that these differing responses are grounded in differing experiences of the self, experiences which arose as believers’ selfhood was constructed in and through differing patterns of association.

The associational patterns of Methodism had surely changed from the days when the legendary Bishops Francis Asbury and William McKendree had superintended the church. The early generations of American Methodists had joined a spiritual family with intense emotional ties and a firmly enforced moral boundary between itself and “the world.” Both the family spirit and its boundaries were sustained through class meetings, prayer meetings, camp-meetings, and quarterly meetings, precisely those rituals of testimony that, said the 1875 critics of Ohio Methodism, had grown moribund.3

By mid-nineteenth century the family-like character of Methodism had receded and was being replaced by more formal patterns of association. Of course, the growth in numbers of members and in their wealth, education, and social respectability had much to do with this change. The evangelical dynamic inherent in Methodism itself, however, made a major contribution to the change by stimulating the birth and growth of many special-purpose voluntary associations. Methodists had always believed God intended them to reform the nation. Missionary societies, temperance societies, Sunday school associations, and many other such efforts became powerful new means of promoting this reform in the three decades before the Civil War. By the 1870s these associations had become part of the formal structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the church itself was becoming a major participant in the trend Alan Trachtenberg has termed “the incorporation of American culture.”4

Those in a position to identify with the church’s great voluntary agencies of benevolence and reform gloried in the organizational power of the

church. The bishops issued a pastoral letter to their people in which they boasted that the contemporary church controlled "the men and munitions" needed to convert the world to God in that century. This power derived from a unifying force that church officials called "connectionalism." All the units and agencies of the church were integrated under the authority of the pastors, the General Conference, and the "General Superintendency" of the bishops. "An army in detachments, under independent authorities," observed the bishops, "would be feeble and ineffective in comparison with the same army moved by one supreme authority, having unity of purpose and action." The unity of the church, then, consisted in its joint benevolent activity centrally coordinated through its connectional system. Its power depended upon such organizational unity. This was a different form of association from that of rituals of testimony like the old-time Methodist class meetings that had fused believers' hearts into a spiritual unity that generated great personal power for evangelism.

The rituals of testimony in Methodism had not died out, however. They had only changed form. At about the same time that Methodists were following the evangelistic dynamic of their faith into their voluntary benevolent associations, many of them were also following the spiritual dynamic of their faith into the holiness revival. The movement for holiness created vital analogues to the old Methodist class meeting and love feast.

Within Methodism the holiness revival meant a renewal of interest in the distinctively Methodist doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification, said Methodist theology, was a second work of grace, subsequent to conversion, in which the believer's heart might be so filled with the love of God that the will to sin was purged away. Besides the term "holiness," proponents of this experience used several synonyms for it, like "perfect love," "heart purity," or "Christian perfection." They held that it was a "definite" experience that could be perceived, remembered, and even dated by those who experienced it. Earlier generations of Methodists had used the word "holiness" loosely enough to connote the range of religious experience from conversion through sanctification with the latter as the ultimate goal. But by the mid-nineteenth century advocates of the renewed focus on holiness were attempting to reserve the term exclusively for the definite second crisis of religion experience. Their opponents in the church sought to make holiness synonymous with conversion or with a gradual growth subsequent to conversion.

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6 Journal of the General Conference . . . 1876, 399-401.

One of the issues at the heart of this debate was whether or not it was
good or even possible for a believer to give clear testimony to having ex­
perienced holiness. Holiness proponents insisted that it was. Indeed, they
insisted that those who experienced the blessing must testify to it or risk
losing it. Testimony was essential to the propagation of their movement,
and they cultivated those patterns of association that were conducive to
testimony. Phoebe Worall Palmer, chief theologian and spokesperson for
the movement, helped create in the 1830s the famous “Tuesday Meeting for
the Promotion of Holiness” which became the pattern for hundreds of
similar weekly house meetings that were the associational backbone of
the movement. These meetings were for the sharing of personal testimony
regarding the experience of perfect love. They were the holiness version
of the class meeting, without the disciplinary function that the class meeting
had once served and, significantly, without the class meeting's official status
in church structure. In 1867, a group of mostly rank-and-file Methodist
ministers founded the National Camp-Meeting Association for the Pro­
motion of Holiness. At the national camp-meetings they organized,
thousands could attend love feasts where they shared and heard testimony
to holiness. The national camp-meeting provided a new venue for the love
feast. Methodism's traditional rituals of testimony, then, were revived by
the holiness movement, but outside the official church structure.

The two different forms of association led their adherents to quarrel
about things like boundaries. Those attached to the formal church struc­
ture criticized the National Camp-Meeting Association for its violation
of connectional boundaries and its consequent threat to church unity.
Those attached to holiness meetings, on the other hand, were appalled
at what seemed to them to be the loss of a clear moral boundary between
the church and the world. Thus, the 1875 committee on the Welfare of
Ohio Methodism blamed the declining power of public worship to draw
and influence non-members and the unconverted on the indifference of
the membership and the ministry's laxity in rebuking common vices like
intemperance, Sabbath-breaking, dancing, and card-playing. At stake for
both sides was the unity and power of the church. They had very different
visions, however, of the nature of churchly unity and power.

Perhaps the clearest way to communicate the difference is to describe
the use the two sides made of the military metaphor for the church. Both
factions, under the sway of images from the Civil War, saw the church as
God's army, advancing upon the world for the sake of establishing God's
kingdom. But they had very different understandings of what was
important about an army. Church officials used the military metaphor to
convey their sense of an army as “organic machinery” strategically
assembled and centrally coordinated to advance upon the world and
systematically to subject it to Christ. Holiness advocates, animated by the

8 "Welfare of Ohio Conference Methodism,” 220-221.
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spirit of weekly house meetings and national camp-meetings, spoke of God’s army as a community of morale, a community so bonded and energized by common experience and feeling as to overwhelm the enemy with the sheer power of its contagious spirit.9

The differences between the two sides went even deeper, however, than conflicts over associational boundaries and alternative visions of unity and power. Deeper down were alternative experiences of the Christian self, differing senses of how the self ought to be presented and how it ought to organize its experience.

The holiness proponents’ experience we will summarize with the label, “the empowered self.” This label reflects a persistent theme in their writings. John S. Inskip, first president of the National Camp-Meeting Association, sounded this theme and indicated the circumstances that helped elicit it when he wrote that one of the great errors of the age was for Christians to assume that the main thing they needed was some “well-arranged system of endeavor.” Almost any system would do, Inskip counseled, if the hearts of those who operated it were full of the Holy Ghost. The great need of the age was for power, “not the power of combination merely . . . but spiritual, supernatural power.”10 The self’s quest for spiritual, supernatural power was at the center of the holiness project. Access to divine power was through those definite religious experiences which, though critics labelled them subjective, took on a firm shared reality as holiness believers talked about them in their testimonies, social prayers, and other religious discourse. The success of these testimonies and prayers in evangelizing others was validation of the self’s experience of holiness and proof of its access to divine power.

While the holiness believers were seeking the empowered self, those who identified with the church organization were developing what we will call “the objective self.” The self fostered by the connectional system of the church may be said to be objective in two ways. First, it was a self that found validation in and through the public offices and benevolent activities that were established in the church. Second, its inner life was so complicated by tangles of motive and uniqueness of temperament as to defy the power of set formulas of religious testimony to encompass it. Persons under the sway of such selfhood preferred, therefore, that the state of people’s souls be judged objectively, by the fruits of religion in action rather than by “subjective” testimony to inner experiences.


The editors of the then new *Baltimore Methodist* evinced their objective, organizational selfhood when giving account of themselves and their new activities in their first issue. They said that, 1) they were loyal members of the Methodist connection, 2) their conference had voted to sponsor the paper with them as editors, and 3) they would therefore act the part given them by the conference. This predictable "organization man" sense of self was just as evident in the editors' disapproval of persons who believed themselves called to be evangelists, but who operated without the sanction of any organized church. Yes, God did give some to be evangelists, the editors granted, "and the kind he gave is the kind we want." But the "irregulars" needed to enroll, drill, and take orders in some regularly constituted division of the Lord's army. Some plan of cooperation needed to be adopted by the local congregations and the General Conference that would give all sections of the church the benefit of the irregulars' peculiar gifts. This plan would also, of course, restrain their eccentricities and exclude those "blunderers" who would not be controlled. The church, concluded the editors, needed to use its gifts to prevent useless vagrancy. Certain holiness evangelists might have pointed out that the text of Ephesians 4 to which the editors alluded stated that the gifts God gave in the form of evangelists, etc., were gifts to the church, not of the church. For church officials like Baltimore editors, however, the divine gift was in the office more than in the person.

National Association leaders would occasionally rub some of the sheen off the idealized picture of the faithful connectional self by pointing out the struggles for status and position in the connectional system. "Soul saving does not seem to be so much thought of," complained a National Association editor, "as who shall be Presiding Elder, Editor, Secretary or Bishop." The system was degenerating into a "great ecclesiasticism, which is largely intended to provide place and emolument for the aspiring and ambitious." The sense of self promoted by such a system, suggested holiness advocates, surely could not serve God's purposes. The sense of self established by holiness, on the other hand, was what would actually make the system work. When worldly selfhood "is annihilated in the bosom of a minister by the power of full salvation," then place would not matter. The man would go without complaint to where he was sent and serve faithfully without plotting to win some future preferment.

In their own idealization of certain holiness missionaries, on the other hand, holiness advocates did not sound so interested in making the system

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work. The maverick missionary William Taylor was a leading candidate for such idealization because he seemed to show what a single person might accomplish when he consecrated himself totally to God and was filled with the power of holiness. 15 Without connection to any official body, Taylor had gone all over the world and raised up hundreds of Methodist churches with thousands of converts. “Our Bishops urge greater liberality in the contributions for missionary work,” observed a speaker at an 1877 national holiness conference, “but seem to overlook what one sanctified minister did in India, independent of missionary funds and of all ecclesiastical machinery.” 16 Taylor was a rebuke to the church’s organization men and a model for the seeker after holiness.

The bishops had not overlooked Taylor. Just a few weeks before the holiness conference, they had taken care to deflate the image of this “missionary on his own hook.” The setting was the 1877 annual meeting of General Committee of the Missionary Society. The main task of the committee was to determine appropriations to the various local conferences of the church, both domestic and foreign, while keeping within its $668,000 budget and reducing the heavy indebtedness that it had built up over the past several years. When they considered India, they knew they had to explain the contrast between the committee-supported North India Conference with its demand for $55,000, and Taylor’s independent South India Conference with its boast of self-support. They did so using something like a social scientific analysis that put Taylor in his place. Their missionaries, they said, worked among “full-blooded Hindus” of low caste who lost even more economic opportunity when they converted to Christianity. Taylor’s work was among Europeans and their English-speaking Eurasian descendants, some of whom were civil and military officials who earned enough to support their own pastors. Taylor’s theory, furthermore, that the Eurasians would evangelize the full-blooded Hindus was entirely unsupported by the membership data. 17

The bishops’ deflation of Taylor was made widely available to the Methodist people by Charles Fowler, editor of the New York Christian Advocate, who dedicated his November 22 issue to a detailed transcript of the entire five-day meeting. If the people could see, he wrote, “how carefully and patiently every place is scanned, and how much definite and accurate knowledge is had concerning every part of our vast field,” they

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15 See, for instance, “The General Church: To the Seven Non-Resident Angels of the Seven Churches in Asia,” Advocate of Christian Holiness 8 (July 1877): 160-1.
17 “General Missionary Committee,” New York Christian Advocate, November 22, 1877, 740.
would accept the committee's deliberations with confidence. 18 Fowler's editorial comments highlighted the strengths and values of the church's proto-bureaucratic connectional system: careful, patient, rational deliberation and decisions based on precise and accurate information. The system and its values required its members to develop objective selves, selves which were known through their ability to serve the task at hand. They came to meetings to debate cordially, to win and to lose with good will, and to keep personal experience and feeling in the background. The transcript of the missionary committee's meeting evinced many such selves in action.

The system of holiness meetings and associations, on the other hand, required members to develop selves that could make known their inner states of consciousness and feeling. Manifestly, these were not objective selves. But they ought not to be called subjective selves either. The holiness community had a language that allowed some of the inner realities of selfhood to be shared, evaluated, and appropriated by a community of believers. Phrases like "entire consecration," "lay all upon the altar," "naked faith," and "washed in the blood of the Lamb," had shared meanings that were validated again and again in the responses of those who heard them in holiness meetings. Further validation came from those who professed to be transformed and sustained even by printed and published testimonies and by transcripts of testimony meetings that appeared regularly in holiness periodicals. 19 It could not be mere animal contagion that such phrases conveyed if they moved readers who were far removed from the meetings where they might catch such contagion.

There was no necessary incompatibility between the holiness empowered self and the connectional objective self. Many, as holiness leaders often observed, were good church people and fervent holiness advocates at the same time. To develop the objective self required by the connectional system, however, did open up room to develop a much more private and personal self, a self with such depths of impulse, complications of motive, and uniqueness of makeup as to defy the power of holiness language to encompass it.

That certain opponents of the holiness movement were developing this complexity of subjective awareness was evident in some of their theological objections. Daniel Curry, prominent church editor and a persistent critic of the holiness movement, descried the use of "set phrases and words" for religious experience. First of all, he claimed, such phrases always had different meanings to different people depending upon their differing perspectives and inner makeup. Second, it was one thing to experience the inward operations of the Holy Spirit and another thing to speak about them correctly and intelligibly. The ability to read clearly one's own mind

19 See, for example, "Editor's Social Meeting," Philadelphia Methodist Home Journal, 8 March 1873, 74.
and to put it into recognizable language was not common among "ordinarily intelligent people." Thus when some sincere folk claimed something like being "dead to sin," they often sounded more like Pelagian heretics who saw sin only in conscious volition, rather than like orthodox Wesleyans who followed Augustine in locating sin deep in the dispositions of the moral nature. Sin might very well be present in the soul, but lying dormant, such that the introspection of the believer could not sense it. Third, even though it was true that Methodism historically taught Christian perfection, the current teaching was so confused and confusing that, practically speaking, little was lost if people refrained from making any special profession of having attained it. After all, when tested by the scriptural standard of the fruits of their lives, many people who did not testify to perfect love were as good Christians as those who did.20

Charles Fowler, Curry's successor to the editorship of the Christian Advocate, published an editorial that echoed many of Curry's points, and lifted up some additional elements of the objective self: its steadiness and modesty. Fowler spoke against the necessity of knowing the precise moment of either one's conversion or one's attainment of holiness. Those who could not testify to a definite moment of conversion, said Fowler, usually had their compensation in "a more equable temperament and a more uniform religious life." He recommended the examples of several eminent Christian men who "grew into a steady and healthy modesty in their profession of piety" and who became both "better and more subdued with their years." Methodism, Fowler acknowledged, had begun as a protest against formalism and in favor of personal religious experience. In pursuit of such experience it had developed a literature almost mystical "in its exaltation of the powers of the individual soul." Fowler wanted to tame this exaltation. "There is so much imprudence in the mere professions men make," concluded the editor, "that it is safest to let the world read our religion in our deeds instead of listening to our housetop declarations."21

In his effort to tame exalted claims for the individual soul, Fowler had come to the heart of the conflict between organizational people and holiness people. Such claims for the powers of the individual soul were exactly what holiness advocates were unwilling to relinquish. The incorporating process going on in American society and culture and within their own church were confronting them with a daunting social complexity and scale. Within a social order growing ever larger and more complicated, they felt dangerous spiritual confinement and fragmentation. They wanted power to meet and overcome the constrictions they felt. Evidence of this

yearning and hints of the circumstances in which it arose were present in the remarks of J. A. Roche, one of the speakers in a debate in the New York Preachers’ Meeting on the methods of promotion of perfect love. Roche replied indignantly to an assertion by Daniel Curry that it was unwise and damaging to promote perfect love at special meetings for it. How could such meetings be damaging, queried Roche, for preachers who felt so weighed down by their labors, sacrifices, and obligations that they desired an experience of God greater than any they had had before? Was it damaging, he asked, for such ministers to come together with church members who also felt the need of “more sanctifying grace to fit them for their diversified spheres and duties?”

George Hughes was a holiness leader whose writings revealed much about social circumstances and their impact on believers’ sense of selfhood in post–Civil War America. In describing his times, Hughes referred often to money—the world’s rampant speculation in pursuit of it, the church’s need of it, the craven cultivation of worldly rich people in order to secure it, the pew rents and worldly fairs and festivals congregations instituted in order to raise it, and so on. In a semi-fictional pamphlet, Ministerial Life Pictures, Hughes included as a prominent character a “speculator,” a lay member grown wealthy through investments in stocks and oil. In the story, it is a sign of the minister’s impotence that he cannot bring himself to speak with this brother about his wine-drinking and other signs of worldliness. Because of such powerlessness, the minister so dreads his pastoral visitation duties that he is on the verge of quitting the ministry.

Another of Hughes’s themes was status. He decried inordinate ambition with regard to church edifices, architecture, and styles of worship. One reason why the minister in Hughes’s story cannot exhort or reprove the wealthy speculator is that he dares not. The church board relies heavily on the speculator’s contributions to sustain the church. If the minister offends the speculator, he will lose favor with the board and be replaced at the end of the year. He should then “lose cast [sic] as a minister.”

When he made his fictional minister contemplate the effects of his educated, philosophical preaching, Hughes pointed toward another social circumstance that he and his fellow holiness advocates experienced as confining: the compartmentalizing of social life. The minister on Monday morning, after his labors in church, notes that his church members admire

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26Hughes, Ministerial Life Pictures, 15.
his philosophy and rhetoric, but that they go from church to drink and dance. His labors have occasioned no devotional fervor nor any action that lives up to the demands of Christianity. "How stands the account," in the "merchandise of souls?" he asks himself. The record, of course, is unsatisfactory, and the answer to the problem is power, the power of holiness.27 That power, furthermore, is not to be confined within church walls. Hughes's minister comes to understand this when he finally brings himself to attend a camp-meeting. He had believed that camp-meetings were no longer necessary, now that people had churches in which to assemble, "where quiet, orderly worship might be conducted." At this camp-meeting, however, he discerns that in this "stirring age," when every other "department of life is under a lightning-dominion," it is necessary for Christians "to go out of ordinary channels." He has confined himself and his religion to the ordinary channels of pastor's study during the week and church on Sunday and has suffered impotence because of it.28

Hughes dedicated his story to ministers and all others who worked for the salvation of immortal souls in Sunday school, at home, or in any other area of Christian service. Alfred Cookman, who wrote the introduction to the story, represented it as typical of the "secret experiences" of many such workers. The point of the story was what Hughes put into his very first chapter: "Power—Power—POWER! is what you need," says an inner voice to the perplexed preacher, "Seek it—SEEK IT."29 Hughes' hero finally did seek it, of course. The story ends with an experience of holiness in his personal life, a revival in his congregation, a conversion of his wealthy and worldly parishioner, and, ultimately, with an end to his life in which he dies in spiritual triumph.30 Holiness believers would settle for nothing less than this. They sought a fully empowered self, untrammeled by the demands of wealth and status or by the functional boundaries of church organization or of the larger social order. Hence, their idealization of men like William Taylor who appeared to be converting the world by relying on simple faith.

Hence also, their rejection of the idea that sin might remain dormant in the soul. They rejected any idea that entailed a lack of ability on the part of the self to choose to be saved to the uttermost. Nothing of any moral significance, asserted one holiness preacher, could remain dormant in a soul that was passing through the experience of perfect love. The totality of public, social, and private life, even the entire current of involuntary thoughts and imaginations came under the scrutiny of awakened conscience and of Omniscience itself.31 "Is my present state my fate or

27Hughes, Ministerial Life Pictures, 6-8.
28Hughes, Ministerial Life Pictures, 20-23.
29Hughes, Ministerial Life Pictures, 8.
30Hughes, Ministerial Life Pictures, 28-52.
my fault?,” challenged another holiness advocate. If fate, then why blame sinners? If fault, then it may be changed through choosing to believe, and one is eternally responsible for choosing. Theological theorizing must never diminish the reality of human responsibility in God’s moral economy. 32

In summary, we may say that the holiness movement in the post-Civil-War Methodist Episcopal Church appears to have been, among other things, a response to the processes of institutionalization and incorporation that were taking hold in the church and in American culture generally. A major dimension of these processes was the bifurcation of social life into public and private spheres. The church, with its many benevolent agencies and activities, was becoming what people of the time called a great “organism,” and what we would call a bureaucracy. Bureaucracies belong to the public sphere of social life and tend to be experienced as “objective” realities unconcerned with and unfazed by most of one’s “subjective” states of mind or any expression of them. Accordingly, those who identified with the nascent church bureaucracy tended to develop objective selves that were reticent to reveal their inner promptings and feelings; they preferred instead to be known by their activities.

The objective self had its subjective side, of course, but that side belonged to the private sphere of life. This was a sphere that Methodism, along with other evangelical churches, had helped to shape and sacralize as the realm of saintly mothers, heavenly homes, and impressionable children with immortal souls. 33 To be sure, evangelical churches like the Methodists constructed institutions to aid and support the Christian family in its sacred mission of forming and sustaining the inner life of the Christian self. The Sunday School is the most important example. 34 As Leonard Gurley implied in his 1878 “Memorial Discourse,” among Methodists the Sunday School had displaced structures like the class meeting as a chief locus of Christian endeavor. Such displacement signaled the fact that the church had ceded the shaping of the inner self to institutions that superintended the self in the gradual processes of its natural development, processes that, with the rise of psychology, would eventually themselves become subject to “objective” description and analysis. Definite supernatural transformations, to which the rituals of testimony were designed to give witness, were not disavowed, but they tended to lose plausibility. Institutions were growing

increasingly “objective” and forcing such testimony more and more into the insubstantial realm of the “subjective.”

The holiness revival and the sense of self that it fostered lay directly athwart the processes that bifurcated public from private and “objectivity” from “subjectivity.” These institutional processes threatened to make the Christian self a malleable instrument of what John Inskip called the mere powers of combination. For holiness advocates, these powers were not the power of God and could not empower the Christian self as God intended. In order to preserve the empowered self, Inskip and other holiness leaders re-constructed the old Methodist moral boundary between the faith community and the world. Within that boundary they provided distinctive modes of belonging in the weekly meetings and the national camp-meetings for the promotion of holiness. These reinvigorated rituals of testimony elevated the individual soul and its definite experience of full salvation. The bedrock of their scheme of association and of their concept of the Christian self was the conviction that people might know definitely the moral state of their souls and really choose to let God fully renovate their inner condition. With the self thus empowered, no outer circumstances could overcome it. It would then be able to realize what was, for holiness advocates, the true meaning of life: the conquering of the world for Christ.

The power of holiness has not visibly succeeded in such conquest, any more than has the power of churchly “connectionalism.” Holiness believers, nevertheless, had a prescient sense of some of the discontent that a modern social order would breed. Modern bureaucratic social forces, these seemingly arbitrary and impersonal human creations, constantly grow irksome because they lack a human face.35 The holiness quest to empower individuals as persons capable of knowing and choosing God was an important effort to preserve personal prerogatives, both human and divine, in the face of a social order growing increasingly impersonal.