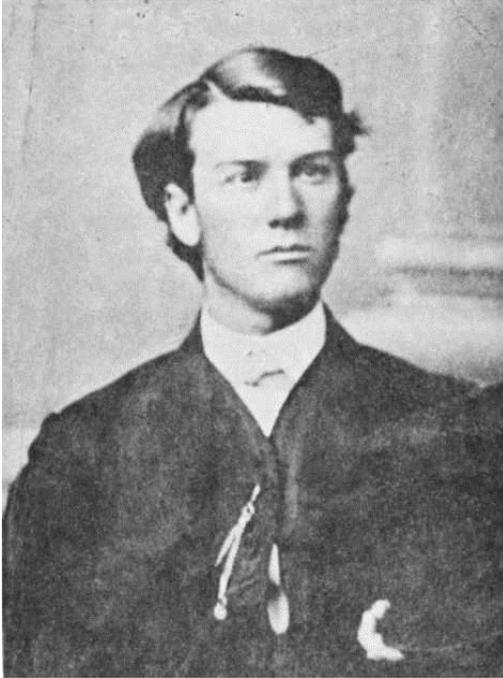


**James A. Harding, Evangelist and Teacher**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Carroll B. Ellis Symposium on Restoration Preaching**  
**John Mark Hicks**

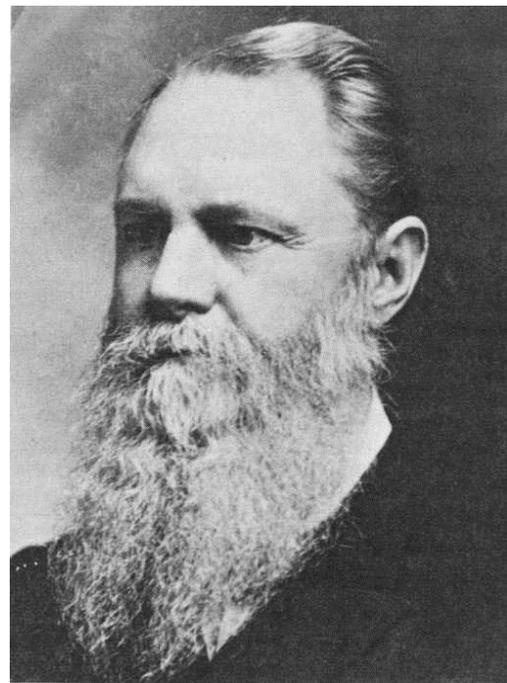


Harding at Bethany College (age 20?)

Harding is described as 5 feet, 11 inches, stocky build, weighing between 175-200 lbs at various times in his life. His hair was dark brown with reddish tint and he had blazing blue eyes. His hair/beard grew snow white as he aged. He always wore a Prince Albert Coat that was traditional dress for preachers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He had flaming eyes that could flash with earnestness or temper, but also weep with deep emotion during his preaching. S. P. Pittman described him as “fiery, emotional, and inspirational. His magnetism and driving power were incentive enough to his students. His faith and zeal impressed every student who came under his sway” (Backlog, Lipscomb Student Annual, 1941).



Harding in his early 40s (?)



Harding in his late 50s or early 60s.

# I. Lecture One: Evangelist and Teacher

## A. Family Life.

- 1. James Walter (1823-1919) and Mary Harding.**
  - James W. was merchant/tailor in Winchester, KY
  - James W. began preaching at 15; self-educated man.
- 2. First Wife: Carrie M. Knight (b. Oct 9, 1851; d. Aug 14, 1876), married on October 4, 1871.<sup>1</sup>**
  - Leon Knight Harding (b. Aug 2, 1872; d. 1941).
  - Mary Noxie Harding (b. Mar 21, 1874; d. July 9, 1874).
  - Captain Jinks Harding (b. July 15, 1875; d. June 4, 1876).
- 3. Second Wife: Pattie Cobb (b. Mar 6, 1853; d. Aug 9, 1945), married on March 27, 1878.**
  - Ida Woodson Harding (b. Jan 6, 1879; d. ???).
  - Benjamin Franklin Harding (b. Oct 19, 1882; d. 1941).
  - Jesse Cobb Harding (b. Sept 17, 1884; d. July 10, 1891).
  - Susan Blackaby Harding (b. Nov 16, 1888; d. Jan 12, 1979)
  - Paul Travers Harding (b. Oct 29, 1891; d. July 13, 1913).
  - David Allen Harding (b. July 16, 1893; d. Aug 10, 1906).

## B. Early Life (1848-1876).

- 1. Education.**
  - Born April 16, 1848, Winchester, KY; oldest of 14 (only 7 matured).
  - Public School in Winchester, KY.
  - Private School in Hopkinsville, KY (1864-1866).
  - Bethany College (1866-1869).
- 2. School Teacher.**
  - “School for Boys and Young Men” (1869-1874).
  - Preaches in area congregations on Sundays.
  - Contracts malaria (1874-1875).
  - Teacher in Winchester, KY (1875-1876, 1878-1879).
  - Held first protracted meeting in 1875.

## C. Itinerant Evangelist (1876-1891).

- 1. The Life of an Evangelist.**
  - Protracted Meetings (10 days to 7 weeks).

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<sup>1</sup> L. C. Sears, *Eyes of Jehovah: The Life and Faith of James A. Harding* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1970), 32: “Carrie’s death, painful as it was to bear, Harding felt later was a blessing both for her and for him. With her feeble health he could never have accomplished the great work he was destined to do.”

- During these years, he conducted 300+ meetings.
- Ranged from Canada to Florida, from New York to New Mexico.
- Beginning in 1876, he conducted 50 debates, and most of them during this evangelist period. He conducted 10 debates between Oct 1887 and Oct 1888.<sup>2</sup> He was well-known as a masterful and skilled debater.
- 1883: preached 300 days delivering 500+ sermons. A normal week meant that he would leave on Thursday or Friday and return home on Sunday or Monday. However, he would often be gone ten days.
- He averaged 10 sermons a week for seventeen years.<sup>3</sup>
- His sermons in a protracted meeting generally began with God, then moved to Jesus, then to the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), then to the salvation (conversions in Acts), the church and ultimately eschatology (he usually preached a sermon on the millennium).

## 2. Harding's Theology of Church Planting and Development.

- Evangelists travel to new places to plant churches, or to assist developing churches that are small or poor, or they go to established churches to conduct evangelistic meetings.
- Elders shepherd the church and feed it. Harding believed the church should experience mutual edification in its regular meetings.
- A "model" church: Plum Street in Detroit, MI. 300 members, the table (using leavened bread) was the principal feature of worship assembly on Sunday morning with mutual edification (20+ men participating over a period of time) along with a weekly collection for the poor and a monthly collection for evangelism. They conducted a bible school in the afternoon ("This church is a genuine Bible college"), preaching in the evening for evangelistic purposes and a "prayer meeting" on Wednesday nights.<sup>4</sup> "If our churches would work as does this Plum street church there would be no need for any Bible colleges except the churches." They also sent a missionary to Armenia with their own funds and administered \$2000-3000 a year to the poor in the city.<sup>5</sup> However, he was skeptical of invitation songs as a denominational innovation.<sup>6</sup>
- "Preaching is for the world, teaching for the church"—preaching is done by evangelists, teaching is the responsibility of the elders which they also share with other men in the church. "It is true in apostolic times, evangelists organized churches and kept an oversight of them, till overseers were developed among them. It is also true that these overseers then took oversight, and became the teachers of the flock...Pastors were developed, not called; and there were a plurality of them in every church."<sup>7</sup>
- The Spruce Street church in Nashville also practiced mutual edification except once a month Lipscomb preached in the morning service since he was unable to get out at night. However, "there are not many regular

<sup>2</sup> Harding, "Debates. Judge Them By Their Fruits," *Gospel Advocate* 30.49 (5 December 1888), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Don Carlos Janes, "J. A. Harding," *Gospel Herald* 2.27 (14 May 1914), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Harding, "The Church of Christ, Plum St., Detroit, Mich.," *The Old Path Guide* 3.5 (May 1881), 266-8; "The Plum Street Church of Detroit, Michigan," *Gospel Advocate* 24.9 (May 11, 1882), 298-9.

<sup>5</sup> Harding, "Scraps," *Gospel Advocate* 29 (1887), 88.

<sup>6</sup> Harding, "The Plum Street Church," *Gospel Advocate* 27 (1885), 742.

<sup>7</sup> Harding, "Indebtedness," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (1883), 8.

meetings of the church in which fewer than four or five brethren take part in the meeting.”<sup>8</sup>

- "There is no doubt in my mind but that the delivering of a discourse on Lord's day morning to the exclusion of a number of short speeches by different brethren is a great mistake, and one of the chief causes of the lack of spirituality that is so prevalent in the churches. As many of the brethren as possible should take part in the services."<sup>9</sup>
- Harding lamented the change he saw among the Churches of Christ on this practice and complained that E.A. Elam (president of Nashville Bible School) and J. W. Shepherd (who was the lone baptism in one of his early meetings) among others had changed their mind in this regard.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Defender of the Faith

- Harding vigorously defended the church against “innovations” during this period.
- As a traveling evangelist, he was a primary model of evangelistic work without a missionary society for support.
- He called for separation from innovators, particularly those who divided churches with instrumental music such as what happened in his own home church of Winchester, KY in 1887.
- Associate Editor, *Gospel Advocate*, 1883-1890.

## D. College President

### 1. Nashville Bible School (1891-1901).

- In 1889 Harding was asked by Lipscomb to head a new school.
- School opened October 5, 1891 with nine students (eventually 32). During the first year Harding taught OT history/exegesis, Topical Bible Study, and NT Greek.<sup>11</sup>
- Students: 32, 42, 53, 88, 110, 120, 137, 92, 75, and 106 (1900-01).
- Nature of the School: male & female, daily Bible,<sup>12</sup> daily chapel, liberal arts (not “just for preachers”), Monday evening topical discussions.
- Harding’s Teaching Style: after students recited the assigned text, he questioned them about the text and ask them to summarize it, then he would lecture on the text and answer questions about it.
- Began publication of *The Way* (1899).
- The presence of the school and intense evangelistic work in Nashville resulted in the move from five churches in 1888 (2 of which were “digressive”) to 50 churches in 1910.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Harding, “The Pastor—A Letter from Brother J.E. Dunn and a Reply by the Editor,” *The Way* 2.6 (June 1900), 84.

<sup>9</sup> Harding, “An Interesting Letter from C. E. J.,” 5.12 (July 9, 1903), 707.

<sup>10</sup> Harding, “In a Reminiscent Vein,” *The Christian Leader and the Way* 23.39 (28 September 1909), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Harding, “Nashville Bible School,” *Gospel Advocate* 34 (1892), 373.

<sup>12</sup> J. N. Armstrong, “J. A. Harding and the Bible-School Work,” *The Christian Leader and the Way* 26.26 (25 June 1912), 8-9: “Twenty-two years ago, as far as known, there was not a literary school on earth that taught daily the word of God to its every student--just the word of God, the naked truth of heaven...I suppose nobody will gainsay the statement that David Lipscomb and J. A. Harding are the fathers of the thought., surely the mothers of the child.”

<sup>13</sup> Harding, “What are the Nashville Churches Doing?,” *The Christian Leader and the Way* 24.26 (28 June 1910), 8.

## 2. Potter Bible School (1901-1912).

- The Potters donated building, land and farm in Bowling Green, KY.<sup>14</sup> From October 1897 to March 1901, Harding preached in Bowling Green once a month for the group that had separated from the Stone-Campbell church than had introduced the instrument in January 1896. By December 1899, this group had built a building on 12<sup>th</sup> street.
- Purpose: multiply efforts (100 students at NBS, 107 at PBS in 1901-02).
- NBS continued to grow (192 in 1906-07 and 215 in 1914-1915), and Potter always had between 100 and 125 every year.
- Harding was busier at this time in his life more than any other: “seven or eight hours a day to the college work, to edit and publish a weekly paper, to preach twice each Sunday...and from ten to fourteen times a week during the vacations.”<sup>15</sup>
- *The Way* merged with *The Christian Leader* to form the *Christian Leader and Way* that Harding co-edited. Prominent issues which Harding discussed in both *The Way* (1899-1903) and *The Christian Leader and the Way* (1903-1912) included:
  - Special Providence
  - Appointment of Elders
  - Role of Evangelists
  - Instrumental Music
  - Missionary Societies
  - Fellowship with Innovators and Digressives
  - Bible Colleges
  - The Unimmersed
  - Rebaptism
  - Denominationalism
  - Holy Spirit (his work on sinners and saints)
  - Eschatology
  - Right hand of Fellowship
  - Role of Women
  - Whether the Gospels are part of the NT law
  - The Intermediate State
  - Sponsoring Churches with Cooperative Churches<sup>16</sup>
- Harding, “the father of the Bible Schools” among Churches of Christ.

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<sup>14</sup> I believe, along with Earl West, *Search for the Ancient Order* (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, 1979), 3:270-3, that Harding disagreed with Lipscomb over whether to endow and incorporate Nashville Bible School. In 1902, Harding wrote that “if our school had a Board of Trustee” empowered as Nashville Bible School was so constituted in 1901, then he could not teach in it (cf. “Potter Bible College and the Missionary Society,” *The Way* 4.28 (9 October 1902), 218-9. In 1901-2, Lipscomb and Harding also engaged in a sharp disagreement over divine providence and the appointment of elders by the laying of hands in the pages of the *Gospel Advocate* and *The Way*. There was tension in the ranks, but ultimately it was amicable.

<sup>15</sup> Harding, “An Intricate Problem Solved,” *The Christian Leader and the Way* 18.1 (5 January 1904), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Harding, “Is it Service to God, or a Rejection of Him?,” *The Christian Leader and the Way* 24.29 (19 July 1910), 8: “Just now a matter is being agitated in some of the papers of the brotherhood which may develop into another departure from the divine order. Some are teaching that each church that is able to do it should send out a missionary; this missionary, they think, should be supported by the church and should report to the church. If one church is not able to support a missionary, they suggest that two or more may combine and do it....To these suggestions there are, to my mind, two fatal objections. The first is this: No such arrangement was ever made in the apostolic age so far as the records show. And we are to be guided by the divine record. The other objection is, we have from God a perfect arrangement for the support and direction of preachers.”

- S. M. Jones, Beamsville Bible School in Meaford, Ontario, Canada.
- O. H. and E. A. Tallman, Maritima Bible and Literary College, Nova Scotia, Canada.
- Kh. B. Yohanan in Persia (Armenia).
- Valdosta Bible School (1903)
- Gunter Bible School (1903)
- J. W. Grant, Alatennga Bible School, Bridgeport, AL.
- A. B. Barrett, Childer's Classical Institute, Abilene, Texas.
- Southwestern Christian University in Denton, Texas.
- J. N. Armstrong, Western Bible and Literary College, Odessa, Missouri (1905).
- Wataru Sakakibara and Hyozo Makita, Tokyo Bible School.
- Cordell Christian College (1908), Cordell, OK.
- Thorp Springs Christian College (1910), Thorp Springs, TX.
- Highland Home College, Highland Hope, AL.
- Harper College (1915), Harper, KS.
- Arkansas Christian College (1922), Morrilton, AR.
- Harding College (1924), ultimately located in Searcy, AR.

## ***E. Twilight Years.***

### **1. Itinerant Evangelist (1912-13).**

- Co-Editor, *Christian Herald* (1912-1915).
- Conducted meetings from New Mexico to Missouri.
- Lived in Bowling Green and boarded students from Potter.
- Spoke at Cordell, Abilene and Thorp Springs Colleges in 1912.
- Memory had been failing for several years, but in the summer of 1912 began to have blackouts and fainting spells.

### **2. Occasional Speaker (1913-1917)**

- Ceased conducting protracted meetings in mid-1913.
- Lived with daughter Susan and husband Dr. Payne in Atlanta.
- Wintered at Cordell in 1915-16 with J. N. and Woodson Armstrong.
- Preached regularly on Sundays (sometimes 3 times) in Atlanta.

### **3. Feeble Mind and Body (1917-1922).**

- Died May 22, 1922 in Atlanta, GA.
- Buried in Bowling Green, KY.

## ***F. Discussion Questions***

1. What surprised you most about Harding's life?
2. What impressed you about his life?
3. How does his life model and/or embody values that are needed in the contemporary church?

## II. Lecture Two: Spiritual Dynamics.

R. C. Bell was a student at the Nashville Bible School, and later a teacher with Harding and Armstrong at Potter Bible College, and then with Armstrong at Western Bible and Literary College and Cordell Christian College. He would later become President of Thorp Springs Christian College, Dean of Harding College, and a teacher at Abilene Christian College.<sup>17</sup> In Bell's autobiographical article, he emphasizes the tremendous impact Harding had on his life and thought that the church as a whole needed the kind of life-changing experience of Harding's teaching to revive it. For example, he believed Harding's doctrine of special providence, personal indwelling of the Spirit and empowerment of the Spirit as a divine-human encounter are "needed to save the church from changing divine dynamics to human mechanics."<sup>18</sup> As with R. H. Boll of premillennial fame and S. H. Hall of David Lipscomb College, Harding's influence on R. C. Bell was transformational.

### A. Eschatological Structure.

In an interview given to Green, R. C. Bell perceptively noted that Harding's understanding of Christianity was "built upon an eschatological framework--that is, that Christ's bodily return to earth to help wind up earthly affairs is an integral part of Christianity."<sup>19</sup> The millennial reign of Christ was not simply an end-time addendum but was the culmination of the work of God throughout redemptive history. Consequently, eschatology was not an afterthought in Harding's theology but its very structure.

#### 1. Kingdom of God versus the Kingdom of Satan.

The broad structure of Harding's thought is rooted in the spiritual war that now pervades human existence. There is a fundamental struggle between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan; between the Christian and the world; between the church and earthly governments; between righteousness and sin. This dualism dominates Harding's theology and it is the fundamental ground for his separatist approach to the struggle between the church and fallen world.

God created the cosmos for the "purpose of enlarging the family of God." God, as a triune divine community, graciously decided to create others who would share the divine reality. "There must be added to it [Trinity, JMH] a great host of 'sons of God,' of beings made in the image of God, after the likeness of God, being educated, trained and fitted to reign with Christ as members of the royal family, as children of the King."<sup>20</sup> God created humanity "to rule his universe. So he made man in his own image, and began at once to train him in ruling."<sup>21</sup> God created the world and put it into the hands of his vice-regent "while he was yet in his pristine purity."<sup>22</sup>

However, God's vice-regent quickly turned "it over to Satan." The Fall introduced the

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<sup>17</sup>M. Norvel Young, A History of Colleges Established and Controlled by Members of the Churches of Christ (Kansas City: Old Paths Book Club, 1949), 75, 113, 118, and L. C. Sears, For Freedom: The Biography of John Nelson Armstrong (Austin, TX: Sweet, 1969), 75ff, 110ff.

<sup>18</sup>R. C. Bell, "Honor to Whom Honor is Due," Firm Foundation 68 (6 November 1951), 6.

<sup>19</sup>Kenneth Wayne Green, "The Life and Times of James A. Harding," (M.A. Thesis, Abilene Christian College, 1960), 123.

<sup>20</sup>Harding, "For What Are We Here?," The Christian Leader and the Way 5 (3 December 1903), 1041.

<sup>21</sup>Harding, "Man Was Created to Reign for Ever and Ever," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (6 June 1905), 8.

<sup>22</sup>Harding, "The Kingdom of Christ Vs. the Kingdom of Satan," The Christian Leader and the Way 5 (15 October 1903), 930.

struggle between good and evil in the creation. But God soon destroyed the wicked and renewed his creation. "God swept Satan's servants from the face of the earth, and again gave it to the righteous men" in the days of Noah, but "they turned it over to Satan again."<sup>23</sup> The struggle continues. "The war is raging, the war of righteousness against wickedness, of Christ against Satan, of the kingdom of heaven, under the leadership of Jesus, against the kingdoms of this world, under the leadership of Satan."<sup>24</sup>

Just as the original cosmos was intended as a pedagogical tool for the sons of the King, so the war itself becomes a tool in God's hand for the maturing of his children. The earth is "God's nursery" for the purpose of "education, development and training" until the royal family reaches "maturity, until the end of the Messianic age has come."

The Messianic age is the time in which God has revealed his kingdom in Jesus Christ. "The beginning of Christ's reign was announced on earth on the first Pentecost after his resurrection." It now continues through the church as the kingdom is advanced through its ministry, and it will culminate in Christ's return to the earth where he will reign for a thousand years. "From all this it is evident that the last thousand years of Christ's reign will be a period of perfect rest from sin."<sup>25</sup> Eden will return and fulfill God's original purpose in creation.

What God had created as righteous and pure, humanity turned over to Satan through their sin. God, however, is active in his world to condemn and destroy the work of Satan as well as to train and discipline his children. God is preparing his people for the future. God will allow "no purpose of his to be thwarted." He is preparing them to reign with Christ in the millennium. Humanity was "created to reign for ever and ever"--first with Christ in the millennium and then with God in the New Heaven and New Earth.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. Relationship to Earthly Governments.

This eschatological structure shapes Harding's understanding of the relationship between the church and earthly governments. Just as the church is the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ in the present, so earthly governments are a manifestation of the kingdom of Satan in the world. "Every government on this earth is in the hands of wicked men. The government of Christ is at war with every one of them." They are the "governments of Satan"<sup>27</sup> and "Christ came into this world to establish a kingdom which is antagonistic to all human authority, to all the governments of the earth. Its mission is to break down and destroy them."<sup>28</sup> Harding held Lipscomb's classic position on civil government and endorsed his book.<sup>29</sup> Jesse P. Sewell, one of Harding's students, commented that "James Harding and David Lipscomb believed the same thing concerning a Christian's participating in governmental activities."<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, "we ought not to have any kind of partnership with" earthly governments. This means we should not participate in the political processes of human governments. This includes holding office, voting and military service.<sup>31</sup> "We should have nothing to do with appointing or electing officers for the governments of Satan."<sup>32</sup> Harding's opposition to both is two-fold. First, it involves one in the government of Satan. It is a participation in the works of

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Harding, "Man Was Created to Reign for Ever and Ever," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (6 June 1905), 8.

<sup>27</sup>Harding, "Kingdom," 931.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 930.

<sup>29</sup>Harding, "Books," The Way 2 (May 1900), 71.

<sup>30</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, Interview, as quoted by Green, 119.

<sup>31</sup>Harding, "Shall I Vote in the Civil Elections?," Gospel Advocate 28 (28 July 1886), 465-6. Cf. J. N. Armstrong, "What Will Become of the Country," The Christian Leader and the Way 5 (16 July 1903), 724-5 and "Why We Do Not Vote or Otherwise Participate in the Civil Government," Gospel Herald 3 (3 December 1914), 1.

<sup>32</sup>Harding, "Kingdom," 931.

Satan. Harding "opine[s] it is easier for an elephant to go through a needle's eye than for a modern politician to be a sincere, faithful, humble Christian."<sup>33</sup> Second, it distracts the church from its proper mission. The church must "overcome" the world "by gentleness, by meekness, by teaching the doctrine of Christ and by living according to it." It must not use the sword of Satan or take up the reigns of Satan's governments. It is the mission of the kingdom of heaven to destroy these governments. Consequently, "you must worship Satan, or you will have no part nor lot in his governments."<sup>34</sup>

Our relationship to earthly governments as citizens of the kingdom of Christ is that of a "foreigner." We are aliens in this world because the kingdom of Christ has not yet been fully realized. As aliens, however, we have the same responsibilities as any other "foreigner" in a strange country. We "pay taxes," "submit to the civil authorities," and "pray for rulers."<sup>35</sup> These three particulars are required of Christians as aliens because God specifically commanded them in Scripture. "The New Testament is a perfect guide to the Christian; therefore all that it requires of us is due to civil governments we must give to them; beyond that we had better let them run their own affairs."<sup>36</sup> As Bell noted in an unpublished manuscript, Harding "felt that more than these three was inimical to God's fundamental, eternal interests, and worse than useless as a means to help the poor world to get out of its condemned state."<sup>37</sup>

Harding will even pray for the success of certain governments and the failure of others, but the principle upon which he prays is oriented toward the kingdom of God. When a nation, such as Great Britain or Germany, provides peace, security and freedom for gospel preaching, then he will pray for their success. But when the earthly government opposes the preaching of the gospel or persecutes the people of God, such as Russia or the Turks, then he will pray for their "downfall."<sup>38</sup>

The Christian's responsibility is to submit to the laws, pay taxes and pray because these are specifically enjoined upon believers. "I am sure," Harding writes, "it is not pleasing to him for his servants to be holding office in Satan's governments, or to be trying to run them." That would be a fundamental compromise of the eschatological structure of God's purpose. To side with Satanic governments is to oppose the kingdom of God. Consequently, we must abstain from all such participation in earthly governments. Harding exhorts that we "attend strictly to our business of serving Christ, and God will overrule all evil deeds, as well as good ones for our good" (Romans 8:28).<sup>39</sup>

### 3. The Millennial Reign of Christ.

Whether Harding was a premillennialist or not has been the subject of some debate in the second and third generations after Harding. However, the evidence is quite clear. Harding was a premillennialist. Though Jesse P. Sewell "never heard Harding teach premillennialism,"<sup>40</sup> R. C. Bell claims it was foundational to his theology and that he taught it "with both tongue and pen."<sup>41</sup> E. L. Jorgenson, one of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century teachers of premillennialism among the Churches of Christ, claims that the first sermon he ever heard Harding preach was entitled "The Millennium" and it "sank deep into my heart and mind."<sup>42</sup> Bell and Jorgenson are right and Harding's own

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<sup>33</sup>Harding, "Vote," 466.

<sup>34</sup>Harding, "Kingdom," 931.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 931.

<sup>36</sup>Harding, "Vote," 466.

<sup>37</sup>R. C. Bell, unpublished manuscript of a 1959 lecture in Lubbock, Texas, quoted by Green, 121.

<sup>38</sup>Harding, "The Article from the American," The Christian Leader and the Way 5 (8 October 1903), 915.

<sup>39</sup>Harding, "Kingdom," 931.

<sup>40</sup>Sewell, in Greene, 121.

<sup>41</sup>Bell, in Greene, 123.

<sup>42</sup>E. L. Jorgenson, Faith of Our Fathers (Louisville, KY: The Word and Work Publishers, n.d.), 309.

writings clearly demonstrate it. While Harding never writes an article explicitly on the millennial reign of Christ, his theological interests are evident when he discusses issues that touch on eschatology. Bell explains why this might be the case: "Brother Harding was too spiritually discerning and well balanced to make a hobby of these things, or to make them a test of fellowship, but as a free Christian he taught them when he thought there was an occasion to do so."<sup>43</sup>

Harding's eschatological scenario included these elements. At present the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan are engaged in a war for the hearts of people. Satan "dwells on the earth" to deceive the nations and devour Christians.<sup>44</sup> However, Christ will come again to destroy the works of Satan and fully establish his kingdom. He will come, raise the dead and rapture the saints with their immortal bodies. "When the saints are caught up to meet him, Christ comes on with them to the earth."<sup>45</sup> The kings of the earth will gather to do battle under the leadership of the beast, false prophet and Satan, and Christ will destroy them. While the false prophet and beast, along with the rest of the wicked on the earth are destroyed, Satan is chained and thrown into the abyss. During the time that Satan is bound, "Christ and his saints reign; but the rest of the dead live not again till the thousand years have expired."<sup>46</sup> During this "last thousand years of time, Christ and his saints shall reign unimpeded in the earth. Then the meek shall inherit the earth, the knowledge of God shall fill the earth as the waters fill the seas, and the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven."<sup>47</sup>

This millennial reign "will be on the earth" and it is the "Sabbath rest" for all the people of God and the earth.<sup>48</sup> According to Harding, the "seventh day was typical of the Sabbath rest that awaits the people of God when for a thousand years they shall rest from sin, temptation, pain and sorrow."<sup>49</sup> Since the earth labored and groaned for six thousand years under the burden of fallenness, the millennial reign is a rest for the earth as well as for God's people. Consequently, Harding is not above looking for the signs of Christ's coming in the present. While he rejects any kind of dating for the second coming, he still notes "that for the last fifty or sixty years many godly men have believed that the time of his coming is near," and he points to recent earthquakes and volcanoes as possible signs of that nearness.<sup>50</sup>

The millennial reign of Christ on earth will near its end when Satan is released from the abyss. Satan is loosed to "deceive the nations that are in the four corners of the earth. These must be, it seems to me, the disembodied spirits of the wicked, who inhabit the regions of the air."<sup>51</sup> These spirits gather to do battle with Christ and his saints, and they are defeated. This conflict and the Judgment Day to follow will involve a purging of the earth by fire where the wicked join Satan in the Gehenna into which he is cast. It is on the purified earth, then, that the righteous will reign with God on the "new earth".<sup>52</sup>

The new heaven and the new earth appear after the millennial reign of Christ and the final Judgment. In this reign "time...ends; a new heaven and earth appear; Christ retires from the throne and God the Father reigns."<sup>53</sup> Thus, when the new heaven and the new earth appear, "Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father."<sup>54</sup> The millennial reign of Christ

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<sup>43</sup>Bell, in Greene, 124.

<sup>44</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4 (22 May 1902), 57.

<sup>45</sup>Harding, "Kingdom," 930.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 930.

<sup>47</sup>Harding, "Man was Created," 8.

<sup>48</sup>Harding, "Kingdom," 930-1.

<sup>49</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4 (17 April 1902), 17.

<sup>50</sup>Harding, "The Second Coming of Jesus -- When Will It Be?," The Way 4 (25 September 1902), 203; reprinted "The Second Coming of Jesus--When Will It Be?," The Christian Leader and the Way 23 (March 16, 1909), 8-9.

<sup>51</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4 (22 May 1902), 57.

<sup>52</sup>Harding, "For What Are We Here?," 1042.

<sup>53</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4 (22 May 1902), 57.

<sup>54</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4 (17 April 1902), 17.

is not the end of the story but it itself anticipates the next "great epoch in the history of God's dealing with man."<sup>55</sup> While the Sabbath typifies the millennial reign of Christ, the "first day of the week foreshadows the glories beginning a new life in the everlasting kingdom of God."<sup>56</sup> But this new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem is not some celestial city, but it is itself a kingdom on the purified earth. In this way God's intent in creation to have children reign with him over the earth is accomplished. It is there that we will "reign for ever and ever" with God.<sup>57</sup>

## ***B. God's Relationship with his World.***

Harding offers this succinct definition of providence: "A providence is providing; a special providence is a special providing; a general providence is a general providing."<sup>58</sup> His starting point is not classical theology where "providence" is "to see before," but his starting point is the provision of God for his creation (general providence) and for his people (special providence). Harding claims that his approach to providence is indebted to his constant exposure to the story of the Bible through his daily Bible reading. That exposure impressed him with God's active role in the history of his world and in the lives of his saints. Indeed, he believes that Satan has been able to debunk God's providence because "comparatively few people are in the habit of reading the Bible, from first to last, over and over again, continuously."<sup>59</sup>

### **1. General Providence.**

Simply put, God reigns and he reigns with a purpose. As stated above, God's purpose is to enlarge his family and train his children in the ways of divine rule. Therefore, everything God does, he does to accomplish this purpose.

This means that he not only provides his creation with resources for life, but that he also rules over nations in order to accomplish his ends. "God over rules in the kingdoms of men, and makes the wickedness of the wicked, as well as the righteousness of the good, work out glorious things."<sup>60</sup> God acts in human affairs and uses so-called natural laws in order to accomplish his goals.

Those who cannot see the work of God in history disturb Harding. For example, he reports a comment he heard about the Spanish-American War. Someone had remarked to him, "I do not believe God had anything to do with it." Harding's retort was: "It is safe to say that there are one thousand passages of Scripture, many of them in the Old Testament, many in the New, that are in direct and irreconcilable conflict with this idea."<sup>61</sup> Harding is incredulous. "Is it possible that the divine members of this great partnership have ceased to have anything whatever to do with its affairs, so far as this earth is concerned?"<sup>62</sup>

Harding particularly objects to any understanding that "natural law" is some kind of laissez-faire divine administration of the world. "Natural law," for Harding, is not some

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<sup>55</sup>Harding, "Man was Created," 8.

<sup>56</sup>Harding, "Scraps," *The Way* 4 (17 April 1902), 17.

<sup>57</sup>Harding, "Man Was Created," 9.

<sup>58</sup>Harding, "The Japan Missionaries and Special Providence," *The Christian Leader and the Way* 18 (15 March 1904), 8.

<sup>59</sup>Harding, "What Does the Promise 'Lo, I am with you Always' Mean to the Modern Evangelist," *The Christian Leader and the Way* 18 (16 August 1904), 8. See also "Does God Work Miracles Now?," *Gospel Advocate* 26 (5 March 1884), 154: "Allow me to suggest the chief reason that so many have no clearly defined views about special providence is that the entire Bible--Old and New Testament--is not studied regularly and consecutively as it should be. We should never forget that God is the author of the Bible; we should read it that we may know him."

<sup>60</sup>Harding, "God Did It," *Gospel Advocate* 27 (15 April 1885), 227.

<sup>61</sup>Harding, "The Evangelist, His Support, Etc.," *The Christian Leader and the Way* 18 (9 August 1904), 8.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

independent, autonomous order that God passively watches and cannot control. He rejects any idea that natural laws are simply parts of a clock that God has "wound up" only to watch run.<sup>63</sup> Quite the contrary, "natural law is nothing but the will of God."<sup>64</sup> It is God at work, and God controls the working of that law. It does not stand over against him, but is an expression of his interests and he uses it to accomplish his goals in the world and in the lives of his people. Just as we do, and much more, God uses natural law for his own purposes. God, therefore, is not delimited by natural law because he is the "Author of natural law; it is nothing else but the expression of his own will."<sup>65</sup>

Consequently, Harding explicitly rejects any kind of Deism, or any kind of distinction that God worked one way in the Old Testament and another way in the New Testament. The story of God's providence is consistent, and God is faithful to his own story. God is not a "silent partner." Anything less than God's active involvement, according to Harding, is "unbelief" and "more injurious to the Church" than any other lie Satan ever circulated.<sup>66</sup>

## 2. Special Providence.

God's special care for his people arises out of God's character and purpose. He quotes Richard Cecil with approval: "God denies a Christian nothing but with a design to give him something better." "Of course," Harding comments, "in the very nature of love, it could not be otherwise."<sup>67</sup> God intends the best for his children, so he will give them what best suits their needs. "We should pray to God to give us whatever is best for us, wealth or poverty, honor or humiliation, health or sickness, life or death; being sure that whatever he gives to his dutiful child will be a blessing."<sup>68</sup> God gives a person whatever best enables him to "glorify God" so as to fulfill God's purposes in the world whether it is affluence or poverty, whether death or life.<sup>69</sup> For example, Harding's first wife died on August 17, 1876 after five years of marriage. Sears, based on records no longer available to the historian, comments "Carrie's death, painful as it was to bear, Harding felt later was a blessing for both her and for him. With her feeble health he could never have accomplished the great work he was destined to do."<sup>70</sup> Harding understood that God's purposes are driven by his love for his people and his goal that they reign with him forever and ever. "He loves us and he allows no pain, no sorrow, no disappointment to come to us except it be for our own good."<sup>71</sup> In 1884, after Harding had lost two children and a wife to death before he was 25 years old, his faith could still advise one to pray "as God wills" because "God knows best."<sup>72</sup>

This care includes the promise of "temporal blessings," that is, the promise of food and clothing. It is a promise that was made in the Old Testament and extended in the New. God provides for his people and ensures that everything that happens to them works out for their good.<sup>73</sup> God has a special providing for those who love and trust him. "God will give [his saint] wisdom, guidance, strength, protection and any and everything else, material and spiritual, that he

<sup>63</sup>Harding, "What Does the Promise 'Lo, I am with you Always' Mean," 8.

<sup>64</sup>Harding, "Scraps," *The Way* 5 (2 July 1903), 690.

<sup>65</sup>Harding, "The Invisible Miracles of the Bible," *The Christian Leader and the Way* 18 (6 September 1904), 9.

<sup>66</sup>Harding, "Evangelist," 8.

<sup>67</sup>Harding, "The Love of God," *The Way* 2 (February 1901), 182.

<sup>68</sup>Harding, "Scraps," *The Way* 3 (27 February 1902), 370.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Lloyd Cline Sears, *The Eyes of Jehovah: The Life and Faith of James Alexander Harding* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1970), 32.

<sup>71</sup>Harding as quoted in Sears, 227.

<sup>72</sup>Harding, "Does God Work Miracles Now?," 154.

<sup>73</sup>Harding first defends this point in three articles in 1883; cf. "Temporal Blessings," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (5 September 1883), 570; "Temporal Blessings -- No. 2," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (12 September 1883), 586; and "Temporal Blessings -- No. 3," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (19 September 1883), 602.

needs for his welfare here."<sup>74</sup> God gives us daily bread and daily spiritual sustenance.

Three texts were particularly important to Harding as he taught special providence over his thirty years of writing. These three texts, along with "thousands" of others, should rid the Christian of all "anxiety."<sup>75</sup> First, Psalm 37 was one of Harding's favorites along with Psalm 34. In particular, Harding drew strength from God's plan for success in Psalm 37:5, "Trust in the Lord and do good." God is faithful and he will grant success to whoever follows that plan. Consequently, he describes it as "one of the most delightful passages in the Word of God."<sup>76</sup> Second, Matthew 6:33 was Harding's clarion call for the evangelist to devote himself to the interests of the kingdom without any anxiety about his food and clothing. "I have been working on the contract which the Lord proposes to us in Matthew 6:33," Harding writes, "and beyond a doubt it is the best financial arrangement any Christian can possibly make."<sup>77</sup> Of course, this promise extends to all of God's children, not just to the evangelist.<sup>78</sup> It applies to whoever operates "his business, whatever that may be, solely for the advancement of God's kingdom; if he should consider himself as being in the world simply and solely for that purpose, what a wonderful change we would have in the world!"<sup>79</sup> Third, Romans 8:28 was one of Harding's most often quoted texts. No matter what the circumstances it is certain that God is at work for the good of his children. Even in the midst of trouble, God is with his people working for their good and his goals. "If God is with him, though he may have poverty, persecution, hatred, imprisonment and contempt, he may confidently believed that all of these are blessings, and that sooner or later he will plainly see that they are, and will greatly rejoice in them. There is no exception to this rule; it is as eternal and unchangeable as God himself." Romans 8:28 is the "rule" to which he refers.<sup>80</sup>

God, therefore, has a special care for his people. Does Jehovah play favorites? Yes, he does.<sup>81</sup> Was not Abraham a divine favorite, or Joseph? Did not God favor David over Goliath? "God is no respecter of persons. He respects characters."<sup>82</sup> God's care for his people is not based upon a partiality driven by "personal and selfish considerations" (that would be "mean, sensual, devilish"), but his favor is "based on character, conduct, on devotion to God and to his holy church" (and that is "pure, grand and godlike").<sup>83</sup> God is with his people in a way that he is not with the world or the wicked. God's promise "I will be with you always" is not made to the servants of Satan, but to God's servants. This promise is made to Old Testament (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph) and New Testament (Matthew 28:20) saints alike.<sup>84</sup> That promise entails a special care for their material and spiritual needs. Therefore, the devoted saint has "no worries."

### 3. Miracles.

Harding consistently promotes the notion that miracles have not ceased. Indeed, he believes that Satan has supplied "two lies" to undermine any real sense of God's special providence. "One of them," Harding writes, "is saying, 'A miracle is a violation of natural law;'

<sup>74</sup>Harding, "How Does God Help His People?," The Christian Leader and the Way 20 (February 6, 1906), 8.

<sup>75</sup>Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 29 (20 April 1887), 252.

<sup>76</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4 (June 19, 1902), 90.

<sup>77</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4 (10 April 1902), 10.

<sup>78</sup>Harding, "The Contract Which God Proposes to His Children," The Christian Leader and the Way 20 (20 November 1906), 8-9.

<sup>79</sup>Harding, "Three Contradictory Theories," The Way 3 (4 April 1901), 4.

<sup>80</sup>Harding, "Scraps. For God Was With Him," The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (2 February 1904), 8-9.

<sup>81</sup>Harding, "Jehovah's Favorites," The Way 4 (23 October 1902), 234-6.

<sup>82</sup>Harding, "Scraps," The Way 3 (20 February 1902), 361.

<sup>83</sup>Harding, "A Reply to Brother Elam," The Way 4 (20 November 1902), 268.

<sup>84</sup>Harding, "How Much Is There in It?," The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (26 April 1904), 8-9.

the other is the still more popular doctrine, 'The days of miracles are passed'.<sup>85</sup> Both of these points are important for understanding Harding's sense of special providence.

Miracles are not violations of natural law. "To me," Harding says, "it is inconceivable that God could violate natural law."<sup>86</sup> On the contrary, God uses natural law for his purposes and he uses it in ways that are inexplicable to human reason. "Natural law" is a human perception, but it is not God's. It is simply the way God works and he may work however he pleases. "God continually brings about results by means of natural laws in ways that are incomprehensible to us."<sup>87</sup> What we call a "miracle" is "something that God does," but the "how" of the doing of which is beyond human comprehension.<sup>88</sup> Whatever humans can understand and easily explain is "natural" to them, but whatever is inexplicable is "miraculous." But, to God, everything is "natural" because there is nothing that is "unexplainable" to him or which he cannot understand.<sup>89</sup> Thus, a miracle "is the manifestation of a power or sign which is evidently beyond the capability of man, unless the power of a superhuman being rests upon him."<sup>90</sup> So, while nothing is miraculous to God, almost everything in God's special providence for his people is miraculous to them. For them "there are, and doubtless always will be, miracles."<sup>91</sup>

Harding does distinguish between what God does through his special care and what he does through particular human representatives. God still works miracles today, but he no longer gifts individuals with miracle-working powers. During revelatory moments in history, when God acted in redemptive ways and interpreted his acts for his people, God equipped his messengers with authenticating powers. In those instances God "wrought miracles at the word of man, thereby attesting that these men were sent by him to the people to instruct and lead them."<sup>92</sup> The Bible makes such miracles unnecessary today. Since there is no need for authenticating miracles today, "God no longer performs miracles through men."<sup>93</sup> But God himself continues to work miracles.

Despite the consistent emphasis on the part of some that "the days of miracles are past," Harding insists that God is still at work in incomprehensible and miraculous ways for his people as he cares for them.<sup>94</sup> "Not a few people," Harding complains, "seem to be under the impression that all divine interventions have ceased since the death of the apostles, and that since then there have been no supermundane or super-human influences known on earth. They think God gave the word and stopped--a very low and very erroneous conception of the reign of Christ."<sup>95</sup> While God authenticated his messengers with miracles, "far oftener has he performed them I think, in protecting and blessing and guiding his children...God is ever with his saints in some way incomprehensible to mortal ken, protecting them, guiding them, supply their wants, and causing all things to work together for their good."<sup>96</sup> The people of God need those kinds of miracles as much today as they did in the apostolic age. Thus, God does "as much for his children as he ever did" even though that power is not manifested through man and as a work done by man.<sup>97</sup>

While "miraculous powers in men have ceased with the apostolic age," this does not mean that "God has ceased to answer prayer." And, according to Harding, "every answer to

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<sup>85</sup>Harding, "What Help Do We Receive From God in Answer to Prayer?," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (14 February 1905), 8.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>87</sup>Harding, "The Invisible Miracles of the Bible," The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (6 September 1904), 8.

<sup>88</sup>Harding, "Thought on Miracles," Gospel Advocate 26 (27 February 1884), 131.

<sup>89</sup>Harding, "The Most Perfect of All Societies," The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (2 August 1904), 8.

<sup>90</sup>Harding, "Help," 9.

<sup>91</sup>Harding, "Most Perfect," 8.

<sup>92</sup>Harding, "Thought on Miracles," 131.

<sup>93</sup>Harding, "Invisible Miracles," 8.

<sup>94</sup>Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 29 (20 April 1887), 252.

<sup>95</sup>Harding, "Prayer for the Sick," The Way 3. (9 May 1901), 41.

<sup>96</sup>Harding, "Thought on Miracles," 131.

<sup>97</sup>Harding, "Prayer for the Sick," 42.

prayer is a miracle."<sup>98</sup> Harding so thoroughly envisions God's active role in the world and the incomprehensible character of his work that everything God does creates wonder and awe in the hearts of people. Since God does things in answer to prayer that beyond our understanding, it is appropriate to say that answers to prayer are miraculous:<sup>99</sup>

We must answer in the affirmative; for, in the nature of things, we can never by our unaided human powers discover the rule by which the heavenly Father works in such cases, if there be any fixed rule. We cannot know how he reads the unspoken thoughts of the heart; how he moves upon the people making large bodies of them brave at one moment and cowardly at another; how he influenced the enemies of the Jews not to desire their possession while all their males were assembled at the appointed place for worship, three times a year.

God works in ways that we cannot fathom, and these ways are miraculous to us. Consequently, what we call coincidental or accidental is God's special providence, especially in answer to prayer.

### ***C. Holy Spirit.***

All of Harding's students have noted that he fully invoked the presence of the indwelling Spirit as the means of sanctification in the believer's life. For example, R. C. Bell testified that he "caught [Harding's] contagious enthusiasm for God as a Father who personally cares for each child in His family, for Christ as a Brother who personally identifies Himself with each of His own, and for the Holy Spirit as a Comforter who personally resides in and empowers every Christian."<sup>100</sup> R. H. Boll also noted that one of his most prominent teachings was "the actual, personal, indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian."<sup>101</sup> Students were impressed with the vitality of his doctrine of the Spirit. According to Jesse P. Sewell, "to him the Holy Spirit was as real as was the spirit in his own body."<sup>102</sup>

Harding's writings bear witness to this emphasis. In 1905 alone Harding penned ten articles on the indwelling of the Spirit as he engaged Dr. J. C. Holloway and others in a discussion of the subject.<sup>103</sup> Harding's perspective stood in strong contrast with some of his contemporaries, especially those who were influenced by the Firm Foundation and the American Christian Review. Indeed, Harding's emphasis was so strong and the influence of the Bible Schools so wide that many accused the Bible Schools of originating this emphasis.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>98</sup>Harding, "Invisible Miracles," 8.

<sup>99</sup>Harding, "Does God Work Miracles Now?," 154.

<sup>100</sup>Bell, Unpublished Manuscript, quoted in Greene, 113. Bell wrote something similar in his Studies in Ephesians (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, n.d.), ii.

<sup>101</sup>Robert H. Boll, "James A. Harding," Word and Work 15 (May 1922), 164.

<sup>102</sup>Jesse P. Sewell, "Sewell's Eulogy," in Faith of Our Fathers, 306.

<sup>103</sup>Harding, "What Help Do We Receive from God in Answer to Prayer?," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (14 February 1905), 8-9; "The Holy Spirit in the Church," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (28 February 1905), 8-9; "Lessons From the Falling of the Holy Spirit Upon Cornelius and Company," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (21 March 1905), 8-9; "Brother Crownover's Question Concerning the Holy Spirit," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (4 April 1905), 8-9; "The Holy Spirit: Does He Dwell in Us? What Does He Do for Us?," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (13 June 1905), 8-9; "The Gift of the Holy Spirit: A Reply to Dr. Holloway," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (18 July 1905), 8-9; "Notes on the Holy Spirit's Work, with a Remarkable Illustration," The Way 19 (1 August 1905), 8-9; "The Holy Spirit: A Reply to Dr. Holloway," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (22 August 1905), 8-9; "Another Effort to Get Dr. Holloway out of the Fog," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (10 October 1905), 8-9; "The Indwelling Presence of the Spirit and the Eternal God -- A . Campbell," The Christian Leader and the Way 48 (28 November 1905), 8-9.

<sup>104</sup>R. L. Whiteside, "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," Gospel Herald 1 (28 August 1913), 2: "Recently some writers have sought to make the impression that the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a new doctrine taught

Consequently, Harding's twenty years of teaching this perspective in the Nashville and Potter Bible Schools had a tremendous impact on forming a theological tradition where the Holy Spirit was understood as a vital, transforming and divine personal presence in the life of the believer.

## 1. Two Extremes.

Harding believed that there were two dangerous extremes concerning the Holy Spirit. One extreme was to teach that the Spirit immediately and directly enters the heart of the sinner in order to convert it or change it prior to faith. The Spirit convicts the world of sin, but not by a "mysterious, miraculous, and irresistible power injected immediately into the heart."<sup>105</sup> Harding, along with the whole tradition of the Stone-Campbell Movement from its beginnings, opposed this "Calvinist" understanding of conversion. He called it "one of the most popular and hurtful errors in the religious world."<sup>106</sup> It was often a proposition Harding debated with opponents in public disputations. For example, Harding denied while J. B. Moody affirmed the following thesis: "The Scriptures teach that man is so depraved that he is unable without a direct enabling power of the Holy Spirit to obey the Gospel of the Son of God."<sup>107</sup> Harding, like most in the Stone-Campbell movement, believed that the Holy Spirit only enters a person after conversion and never before conversion. The Holy Spirit cannot enter a sinner, but he does make his abode with saints.

The other extreme equally concerned Harding. It was an extreme that he saw in his own fellowship and it greatly disturbed him. "Many readers of the New Testament," he notes, "stagger at the thought of the Holy Spirit entering into Christians and abiding in them. They seem to think that he enters into them only in his Word, and he himself remains on the outside."<sup>108</sup> Indeed, some seem to equate the Word and the Spirit<sup>109</sup> or to say that the Spirit dwells in the Word just as our human spirits dwell in our own words. Consequently, the Spirit dwells within us only in the sense that the word dwells in us because the Spirit dwells in the word. But Harding objects that the "Bible nowhere teaches, either expressly or by necessary implication, that the Holy Spirit dwells in the word."<sup>110</sup> Harding regards such a reductionistic view of the Holy Spirit as a "perversion" that is just as "sectarian" and "unjustifiable as any Methodist or Baptist perpetrated upon this much abused text [Acts 2:38]."<sup>111</sup> He waxes eloquent when he writes, "I am as far as the East is from the West from believing that neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Spirit can help us except by talking to us."<sup>112</sup>

"Of the two errors," Harding commented, "I do not know which is the worse."<sup>113</sup> One denies that anyone receives the Spirit and the other affirms that sinners receive the Spirit. Neither is biblical and both lead to troublesome errors. The former undermines sanctification and the other hinges justification on the mourner's bench. The former reduces sanctification to studying the word without the empowering presence of the Spirit. The latter forces the seeker to wait for some tangible expression of the Spirit's testimony before they obey the Gospel. Harding affirms a mediating position.

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principally by the Bible schools of the country."

<sup>105</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit -- A Bible Reading," The Way 1 (1 August 1899), 117.

<sup>106</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit -- A Bible Reading," The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (31 May 1904), 8.

<sup>107</sup>J. B. Moody and James A. Harding, Debate on Baptism and the Work of the Holy Spirit (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1955 reprint), 409.

<sup>108</sup>Harding, "The Indwelling of Demons and of the Holy Spirit," The Christian Leader and the Way 22 (12 May 1908), 8.

<sup>109</sup>Harding, "Brother Crownover's Question," 8: "...some seem to believe that the word and the Holy Spirit are identical."

<sup>110</sup>Harding, "Holy Spirit -- A Bible Reading," The Way, 115.

<sup>111</sup>Harding, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit. A Reply to Dr. Holloway," 9.

<sup>112</sup>Harding, "How Does God Help His People," The Christian Leader and the Way 20 (6 February 1906), 9.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

As Harding sees the problem, the two extremes have mixed oranges and apples. The "Calvinists" apply texts that are about Christians to sinners and the reductionists apply texts about sinners to Christians. Both make the mistake of leveling all texts concerning the Holy Spirit to one idea, and consequently both go to extremes. Harding offered this assessment in his debate with Moody:<sup>114</sup>

My friend is, I admit, at times a very ingenious apologist. And one of his most skillful tricks is, while affirming and trying to prove the direct operation of the Spirit on the *sinner's* heart in order to his conversion, to weave into his argument a large number of passages which speak about his dwelling in, working in, strengthening and helping *Christians*. Of course the ingenuity consists in so introducing these passages as to lead the unsuspecting hearer or reader to suppose that they apply to the sinner. That the Spirit dwells in the Christian, helps his infirmities, and makes intercession for him with unutterable groanings, the Scriptures clearly teach, and I believe as firmly as I believe any thing... You see, my friends, the temple must be holy before the Spirit will move in, and if it then be defiled he will move out. I repeat, no one is a stronger believer in the indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of God's children than I am; the faith fills me with joy; I believe he helps, guards, guides and strengthens me. he came to earth nearly two thousand years ago to remain till the end of time, and he is not here as an idler; he is the life (the sap) of the vine, the spirit of the body, the dweller in the temple. He does for us just what he did for the Christians in the apostolic age.

In the same way, reductionists apply texts about sinners to Christians. Harding argued that we should understand that sinners received the word and then became Christians through faith and obedience. Likewise, Christians receive the Spirit after faith and obedience. "The Spirit is received after faith and obedience; the Word before faith and obedience."<sup>115</sup>

## 2. A Biblical Theology.

Harding's deep impression of the Spirit's role in the history of redemption arises out of a biblical-theological construct of redemptive history. In a key article, which he reprinted several times with various changes, Harding lays out a redemptive-historical understanding of the presence of God among his people.<sup>116</sup> In this article Harding unfolds the progressive nature of God's presence. Israel experienced God's presence through the tabernacle and temple where God's angel was "God's representative on earth" (see Exodus 23:20-23; 32:34). Then God himself dwelt among us in Jesus Christ. The incarnate Son of God was the presence of God among his people. Jesus, in that sense, represented the Father through his incarnational presence. In this sense, God was "with" his people and, as John 14:17, the Spirit was "with" them in the ministry of Jesus.

However, something decisive happens at Pentecost that breaks open a new era. It is the "peculiarity of the new covenant" that God now dwells "in" his people through his Spirit. This was the promise of John 7:37-39 and it was fulfilled on Pentecost when God poured out his Spirit and made his dwelling in his people through the Spirit. God the Father, then, still has a representative on earth. But unlike his angelic presence with Israel, or the Son's incarnational

<sup>114</sup>Harding, Debate on Baptism, 478-9.

<sup>115</sup>Harding, "Another Effort to Get Dr. Holloway Out of the Fog," 8.

<sup>116</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit -- A Bible Reading," The Way 1 (1 August 1899), 114-8; The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (May 31, 1904), 8-9 and 18 (7 June 1904), 8-9; and Gospel Herald 1 (29 May 29 1913), 1.

presence, now God dwells in his people. God's representative on earth is now the Holy Spirit. He abides in the hearts of saints. God and Christ dwell representatively through the personal presence of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:22). Thus, "as in former dispensations God dwelt among his people, so does he now; then, in the presence of an angel, now, in the presence of the Holy Spirit;" then "with" his people, now, "in" his people.<sup>117</sup> "We are nearer to God than they were."<sup>118</sup>

Yet, even this is not the final story in the history of God's redemption. Just as "a greater age, a greater people and a greater temple required a greater representative from the Celestial City"<sup>119</sup> -- and we now have that by the presence of the Spirit in the church, God's temple -- so we anticipate a fuller presence of God in the new heaven and the new earth. This fuller presence is the presence of the Triune God among us in the everlasting kingdom. Though, "as far as we know," the baptism of the Spirit has only been "granted in the two cases referred to [apostles and Cornelius]," there, in the new heaven and new earth, all the saints will receive the full measure of the baptism of the Spirit just as the baptism of fire will be administered to all the wicked.<sup>120</sup>

Harding's theology of the Spirit, then, is partly a function of his eschatological structure. God dwelt with his people in Eden, but sin destroyed that communion. God could no longer dwell with a sinful people. Nevertheless, by his grace, God revealed himself and represented his presence among his people by an angel, and then God came among them through the incarnate One, the Christ. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within the church in the present stage of redemptive history. But the millennial reign is the time when Christ will return to dwell among his people, and the new heaven and new earth will be the time when God himself returns to Eden. The history of redemption is the history of God's progressive presence among his people to restore them to Eden and thus fulfill his original intent. The denial of the personal presence of the Spirit in the Christian, then, undermines the very structure of Harding's theology. It is no wonder, then, that he regarded the denial of that personal presence as perverted and tantamount to a denial of the reign of Christ in the world.

### 3. The Function of the Spirit.

Harding believed that sanctification is as much a struggle for the Christian as it was for the Jew in the Old Testament. "Under Christianity no man can do right any more than he could under Judaism" and "the Christian has precisely the same sort of struggle as did the faithful Jew in trying to do the will of God." But there are basically two differences between Judaism and Christianity when it comes to the command "Do and Live." The first is the atonement of Jesus Christ in the light of which "there is no condemnation; in him all these shortcomings are overlooked; in him our sins are blotted out." As long as we remain in Christ, his blood covers us and there is no condemnation, and the Christian "remains in Christ just as long as 'he wills to do his will;' as long as he strives earnestly and prayerfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil."<sup>121</sup>

The second advantage the Christian has in this struggle against sin is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. According to Harding, the Spirit is an enabling presence in the life of the Christian. By the strength of the Spirit the Christian is able to do things he could not otherwise do. Does all the Christian's strength for the struggle against sin come through the Bible alone? Harding responds: "Dr. Holloway ridicules the idea of any man getting any help from God

<sup>117</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit in the Church," 8.

<sup>118</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit -- A Bible Reading," The Christian Leader and the Way, 18 (31 May 1904), 9.

<sup>119</sup>Harding, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit. A Reply to Dr. Holloway," 8.

<sup>120</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit -- A Bible Reading," The Way, 118.

<sup>121</sup>Harding, "What I Would Not, That I Do," Gospel Advocate 25 (1 July 1883), 442.

except what he gets by studying the Bible. Does the Doctor never pray?"<sup>122</sup> The struggle against sin involves the personal work of the Spirit and without that strength we could not remain faithful. "When Paul teaches that 'the Spirit helpeth our infirmity,' I understand that he supplies to us that which we need for the greatest efficiency in the Christian's life, but which we, unaided, can not secure."<sup>123</sup>

Thus, Harding emphasizes the human inability to "do right." We are unable to remain faithful on our own strength. "Who does not know that he is unable to care for himself, to guide, to guard and to strengthen himself?," Harding asks.<sup>124</sup> Further, we are not even able to do the "best we can." The test of faithfulness is not doing the best we can, but the willingness to do God's will. "I have yet to meet the man who does the best he knows. If Brother Clark's definition is correct, there are no Christians; for, of all men, Christ is the only one who did the best he knew how. What we need is a Savior to save people who have not done the best they knew, to save sinners; and Christ came to do that."<sup>125</sup> It is the faithfulness of Christ then that saves us from our own weaknesses and failures. There is no condemnation in Christ for those who seek to do his will. But it is precisely because we are weak and unable to fulfill the will of God that the Spirit dwells within God's saints to help their infirmities and to strengthen them. Believers who deny this presence evoke Harding's pity:<sup>126</sup>

I feel sorry for those who are afflicted by these dreadful, blighting, semi-infidel, materialistic notions, that leave God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the angels wholly out of the Christian's life--for those who think all these spiritual beings left us when the Bible was finished, and who think that we now have to fight the battle alone. Some of these people pray, but what they pray for is more than I can tell, unless it is for the 'reflex influence': and when they are praying for that they are praying to themselves, not to God.

What, then, does the Spirit do? He helps our infirmities in the sense that he strengthens us in our fight against sin. "Do we not feel the need of divine help every day?," Harding asks. "No man is competent to direct his own steps, to express his own thoughts, to do the simplest duties, to pray the shortest prayer, without divine help. I am glad in believing that in each child of God the Divine Helper dwells."<sup>127</sup>

What does the Spirit do? He guides us in our daily walk and in our ministries. In Harding's first printed article (as far as I have been able to discover) he affirms his resolve "to go from day to day where it appears we can do the most good, and where in the providence of God we are led."<sup>128</sup> This language is not uncommon for Harding. He will often speak of being "led" by God to do something or to go somewhere. For example, he thanked God that the Lord "led" him to the American Missionary Society convention in Lexington, Kentucky in 1883.<sup>129</sup> Claiming the promise of Matthew 6:33, Harding suggests that all evangelists pray "Father, lead me where I can do the most good in thy service. 'My times are in thy hands.' Do thou direct my steps."<sup>130</sup> Harding links this divine "leading" to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and does not shrink back from calling it "miraculous." Indeed, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is itself "an incomprehensible, miraculous thing necessary to the well being of the Christian and the

<sup>122</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit. A Reply to Dr. Holloway," 9.

<sup>123</sup>Harding, "Another Effort to Get Dr. Holloway Out of the Fog," 8.

<sup>124</sup>Harding, "Notes on the Holy Spirit's Work," 8.

<sup>125</sup>Harding, "From Exchanges," *The Way* 2 (April 1900), 50.

<sup>126</sup>Harding, "Does God Help His People," 20 (6 February 1906), 8.

<sup>127</sup>Harding, "The Indwelling of Demons and of the Holy Spirit," 8.

<sup>128</sup>Harding, "The Church of Christ, Plum St., Detroit, Mich.," *The Old Path Guide* 3 (May 1881), 266-8.

<sup>129</sup>Harding, "Inconsistencies," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (1 March 1883), 131.

<sup>130</sup>Harding, "Bro. Metcalfe's Question Answered," *Gospel Advocate* 24 (21 December 1882), 806.

church."<sup>131</sup>

What does the Spirit do? The Spirit aids in the understanding, application and teaching of the Bible. Harding writes: "The greatest need that I feel in living the Christian's life is divine help to handle aright the word of truth. I constantly realize my inability in and of myself to say what I ought to say, as I ought to say it, to whom I ought to say it. I feel no lack of truth, for I have in the Bible all the inspiration man needs. But to remember that truth, to apply it to saint and sinner as it should be applied, to handle it aright at all times, is far beyond my unaided powers."<sup>132</sup>

This does not undermine the sufficiency of Scripture because we "are limited absolutely to the Bible for instruction in righteousness. It is abundantly sufficient to lead the sinner to Christ, and to guide the Christian all along the way to heaven." It is sufficient for knowledge, but it is not sufficient for that which it was never intended. It supplies sufficient knowledge, but wisdom comes from God through prayer. Harding asks, "has not Dr. Holloway yet learned that we need more than knowledge?"<sup>133</sup> 1 Timothy 3:16-17, then, "does not teach that the Bible alone thoroughly furnishes the man of God for every good work, but that the Bible in addition to what had already been given does so."<sup>134</sup> God has given us Scripture and he has given us his Spirit who equips his people through leading, strengthening and guarding them.

God, then, through his Holy Spirit, is present among his people to help them. He has provided a text that guides us, but we need more than cognitive information. Harding writes: "we need more help from God than knowledge. We need love, wisdom, protection from unseen dangers, our daily bread; we need to be guided where we can do the most good; we need to be strengthened to do what good we can get there."<sup>135</sup> God gave us Scripture but he also gives us much more. With Scripture and through the power of the Holy Spirit the saints of God are enabled to live faithful lives before God as they seek to do his will.

## **D. Conclusion**

Within the lifetime of James Harding himself, or at least during the initial twenty years of the Bible School movement (1891-1911) when Harding was a President of either the Nashville Bible School or the Potter Bible School, a theological tradition existed which formed a coherent paradigm. It is epitomized by James A. Harding though substantially shared by others (including David Lipscomb, J. N. Armstrong, R. H. Boll). Richard Hughes has called this an "apocalyptic" tradition.<sup>136</sup> Whatever we call it, it is correct to understand the Lipscomb-Harding tradition as a particular theological frame that shaped a generation of preachers at the Nashville and Potter Bible schools.

This theological paradigm included not only an appreciation of the gospel of grace, but also a preference for the poor, a strong view of providence and prayer, opposition to rebaptism, millennial eschatology, an insistence on the personal work of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of the believer, pacifism, non-participation in human governments, sociological sectarianism in distinction from both denominations and the world, and an inclusive approach to racial concerns.

What was at the heart of this "apocalyptic" vision of the kingdom of God? What gave coherence to this vision so that we might perceive it as a distinctive theological tradition which shapes every thought it embraces? Every component of this tradition, as listed in the above paragraph, reflects a central concern, and it is this center that serves to frame and shape the

<sup>131</sup>Harding, "Thought on Miracles," 131.

<sup>132</sup>Harding, "The Holy Spirit. Does He Dwell in Us? What Does He Do For Us?," 19 (13 June 1905), 9.

<sup>133</sup>Harding, "Another Effort to Get Dr. Holloway Out of the Fog," 8.

<sup>134</sup>Harding, "Does God Help His People," *The Christian Leader and the Way* 20 (6 February 1906), 8.

<sup>135</sup>Harding, "The Prayer of Faith," *The Christian Leader and the Way* 20 (April 10, 1906), 8.

<sup>136</sup>Cf. Hughes, 141, as it applies to Harding.

understanding of each of those components. While it is difficult to formulate a sentence that embraces and fully entails that center, I would suggest the following: God is dynamically introducing his kingdom into the fallen world. God takes the initiative (grace). God is dynamically active to care for his people and advance his kingdom (providence, prayer, miracle, Holy Spirit). God opposes the Satanic kingdoms of the fallen world (apocalyptic eschatology). The theological tradition is theocentric, eschatologically structured, and kingdom-oriented. It entails pacifism, non-participation in human governments, sociological sectarianism, cultural separatism, opposition to materialism (including a preference for the poor), and even a understanding of faith and baptism that focuses on trust in Christ rather than the design of baptism as the central concern.

This paradigm did not remain intact. Indeed, it was never a dogmatic creedalism, but more of a fundamental consensus. But this consensus broke down during the mid-20th century. Indeed, the consensus was under attack from many within the Churches of Christ at the turn of the twentieth century as the disputes within the various periodicals on special providence, rebaptism, miracles, the Holy Spirit and the role of earthly governments demonstrate. The consensus collapsed by the mid-twentieth century. A subtle Deism emerged among Churches of Christ. Pacifism almost disappeared. The Lipscomb-Harding understanding of rebaptism became a minority position, even in Tennessee. Premillennialism was driven out. The personal indwelling of the Spirit became the minority view. Special providence was ridiculed and secularism dominated. The Churches of Christ became middle class and nationalistic citizens of the United States. We embraced segregation instead of integration. The church as a whole moved across the tracks and gained cultural respectability as a "denomination" in the 1940s-50s. This breakdown was a slow process, but by the late 1940s it was rather complete. By that time a new consensus had replaced the old and it would dominate the Churches of Christ until the beginnings of a new paradigm(s) arose in the 1960s.

### ***E. Discussion Questions***

1. What parts of Nashville Bible School theological tradition still function in your own theology?
2. What do you think contributed to the breakdown of this coherent vision that Harding and Lipscomb shared?
3. Have contemporary churches exchanged “divine dynamics” for “human mechanics”?

### III. Lecture Three: Transformation and the Four Means of Grace.

"The life of a successful Christian is a continual growth in purity, a constant changing into a complete likeness to Christ."<sup>137</sup> Also, "The greatest desires of every Christian should be (1) to grow more and more into the likeness of Christ, and (2) to accomplish more and more continuously for his cause; these two desires are practically one. I am striving and praying that they may be my absorbing passions."<sup>138</sup>

This attributed to the "four great means of grace"<sup>139</sup> or "habits that save."<sup>140</sup> He writes: "He who uses these means faithfully will surely become stronger continually. Unceasingly is he being conformed to the image of God's Son. He who habitually neglects these great means of grace need not expect to be able to stand. It is literally and absolutely impossible."<sup>141</sup>

"Will God hold us responsible for little mistakes?" inquires a reader of THE WAY. God will hold everything against us we do that is wrong, whether it be in ignorance, weakness or willfulness, if we are not in Christ. If we are in Christ and abide in him, he holds nothing against us. All who live and die in Christ will be saved....So the matter of being delivered from our sins, great and small, depends on our being in Christ." If one develops the four habits "as he ought...he will surely abide in Christ. These four are God means of grace to transform a poor, frail, sinful human being into the likeness of Christ...He who faithfully uses these means unto the end of life can not be lost; he who neglects any of them endangers his soul's salvation."<sup>142</sup> Indeed, those who "neglect Bible reading, the fellowship, the Lord's table and prayer; and if their neglect is continued, the falling away is sure."<sup>143</sup>

Harding believed that the church was weakened by the lack of these spiritual disciplines. "Our greatest trouble now is, it seems to me, a vast unconverted membership. A very large percent of the church members among us seem to have very poor conceptions of what a Christian ought to be. They are brought into the church during these high-pressure protracted meetings, and they prove to be a curse instead of a blessing. They neglect prayer, the reading of the Bible, and the Lord's day meetings, and, of course, they fail to do good day by day as they should. Twelve years of continuous travel among the churches have forced me to the sad conclusion a very small number of the nominal Christians are worthy of the name."<sup>144</sup> In other place, he critiques contemporary revivalist preachers: "'I have observed that those speakers as a rule secure the greatest number of accessions who dwell most upon escaping hell and getting into heaven, and least upon the importance of leading lives of absolute consecration to the Lord; in other words their converts are much more anxious to be saved than they are to follow Christ."<sup>145</sup>

Acts 2:42 lists them in their "order of importance."<sup>146</sup> Harding lists these as:

- Bible Study
- Fellowship, "diligence in ministering to the needs of others," ministering to the poor

<sup>137</sup> Harding, "Scraps," The Way 5.14 (July 23, 1903), 735.

<sup>138</sup> Harding, "Scraps," The Way 5.27 (15 October 1903), 945.

<sup>139</sup> Harding, "Questions and Answers," The Way 4.16 (July 17, 1902), 123.

<sup>140</sup> Harding, "The Habits that Save," The Way 4.41 (February 5, 1903), 353-56.

<sup>141</sup> Harding, "Questions and Answers," The Way 4.16 (July 17, 1902), 123.

<sup>142</sup> Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4.44 (26 February 1903), 401-2.

<sup>143</sup> Harding, "Ira C. Moore on the Validity of Baptism," The Christian Leader and the Way 23.20 (18 May 1909), 8.

<sup>144</sup> Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 27 (1887), 88.

<sup>145</sup> Harding, "About Protracted Meetings," Gospel Advocate 27 (1887), 588.

<sup>146</sup> Harding, "The Habits that Save," The Way 4.41 (February 5, 1903), 356.

- “Regular attendance every Lord’s Day at the Lord’s Table,” or “promptness in attending to the meetings, ordinances and appointments of the Lord’s house,” breaking bread.
- Prayers

Sometimes Harding thinks of these as activities on the Lord’s day,<sup>147</sup> but generally understands Bible study, ministering to the poor and prayers to daily spiritual disciplines. These are modes of transformation or spiritual disciplines for Harding. We may think of them as Lord’s Day meeting combined with daily study, ministry and prayer.

## **A. Bible Study.**

### **1. Spiritual Discipline.**

- "Allow me to suggest the chief reason that so many have no clearly defined views about special providence is that the entire Bible--Old and New Testament--is not studied regularly and consecutively as it should be. We should never forget that God is the author of the Bible; we should read it that we may know him."<sup>148</sup>
- Bible reading is the “first rule of success...It is expressed in these words: Delight in the law of the Lord; meditate in it day and night....Observe, we are not only to read the law of the Lord, we are to delight in it. A taste for Bible reading must be cultivated.”<sup>149</sup>
- Bible reading is the “most important duty of life.”<sup>150</sup>
- “The most important thing in the world is daily, diligent, prayerful study of the divine word.”<sup>151</sup>
- An indication of why it is the most important: “What inefficient preachers, elders, deacons and churches need above all other things are faith, knowledge and wisdom. The diligent, persistent study of the Word, combined with a whole-hearted continuous, prayerful effort to walk therein, will supply the knowledge and develop the faith; and then one is in the proper condition of mind and heart to pray for wisdom, and to receive it in answer to his prayer.”<sup>152</sup>
- In Harding’s last known original published article, he wrote: “read it, delight in it, meditate on it, memorize striking passages; read them over and over and over again.”<sup>153</sup>

### **2. Harding’s Personal Habit.**

- Harding recommended that a preacher should “find four to six hours per day for the study of the word.”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Harding, "Questions Concerning the Way to Heaven," The Way 4.42 (February 12, 1903), 370.

<sup>148</sup> Harding, "Does God Work Miracles Now?," Gospel Advocate 26.10 (1884), 154.

<sup>149</sup> Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 29 (1887), 120.

<sup>150</sup> Harding, "What Way? How Do You Get Into It? How Do You Travel It?," The Way 1.1 (26 January 1899), 2.

<sup>151</sup> Harding, "The Great Increase of Bible Study in America," The Christian Leader and the Way 22.45 (10 November 1908), 8.

<sup>152</sup> Harding, "The Whiskey Traffic and an Inefficient Eldership," The Christian Leader and the Way 22.50 (15 December 1908), 8-9.

<sup>153</sup> Harding, "How to Fall in Love with the Bible," Gospel Herald 3.27 (20 May 1915), 1.

<sup>154</sup> Harding, "The Preacher and His Pay," Gospel Advocate 30 (18 January 1888), 3.

- "I divided the number of pages in my Old Testament by 365; this showed that by reading two pages and a half daily I would go through in a year. ...I divided the New Testament into 182 divisions so as to read it through twice a year....four pages daily be read."<sup>155</sup>
- In 1889, Harding stated: "I read the Bible through three times last year, five times the year before, and not fewer than three times per year for a number of years. I believe it to be the chief duty of the teacher in the Church to lead people to the daily, diligent, prayerful study of the Word, and I devote more time and energy to that one point than to any other whatever. If God enables me to do it, I intend to read the through his Holy Word at least as often as once each year as long as I live."<sup>156</sup>
- In 1903, Harding claimed that for 18-20 years he had read the OT once a year and the NT twice; "sometimes I have read through the entire Book twice, three times, four times, and in one year I read the OT through five times and the New six."<sup>157</sup>
- As of 1914, Harding had read the OT 60 times and the NT 130.<sup>158</sup>

### 3. Bible Reading Habit.

- Encouraged people to read three and a third chapters a day in order to read the whole Bible in one year.<sup>159</sup>
- Formed Bible reading classes where he goes; he collects "Bible reading cards." "When we take up the Bible to read, we should always remember to pray for wisdom and understanding and strength. And, upon finishing a paragraph or chapter, it is well to pause, and to endeavor to call up in the mind the things that have been taught therein.." Read daily—3 chapters per day out of the OT (and 5 chapters on Sunday), and read one chapter per day out of the NT. You will read the OT once and the NT twice each year at less than 30 minutes per day.<sup>160</sup>
- Harding recommends consecutive, regular reading rather than topical concordance study. "Partisans" favor the later because "they enjoy discussion rather than worship... The man who confines himself to the study of topics can never have the broad, full and comprehensive appreciation of the plan of salvation that he would have were he to read the Bible oftentimes from the beginning of it to the end."<sup>161</sup>

## B. Ministry to the Poor.

### 1. Tithing.

- "...give one tenth to the Lord's cause (and certainly no Christian in good health should do less."<sup>162</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Harding, "Scraps," *The Way* 3.25 (19 September 1901), 193.

<sup>156</sup> J. B. Moody and J. A. Harding, *Debate on Baptism and the Work of the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1955 reprint), 38.

<sup>157</sup> Harding, "The Higher Criticism: Some Wonderful Things About It," *The Way* 5.1 (23 April 1903), 530.

<sup>158</sup> Don Carlos Janes, "J. A. Harding," *Gospel Herald* 2.27 (14 May 1914), 1.

<sup>159</sup> Harding, "The Bible," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (1883), 666.

<sup>160</sup> Harding, "The Two Bible Readings," *Gospel Advocate* 28 (1886), 51.

<sup>161</sup> Harding, "Regular Reading vs. Topical Study," *Gospel Advocate* 29 (1887), 481.

<sup>162</sup> Harding, "Is He Able and Willing," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (1883), 8.

- "I am satisfied that the Christian should give a tenth of his income at least....How can we lay by in store from week to week, as God prospers us, unless we give a fixed per cent of our incomes?...Remember also that every thing seems to indicate that the tenth is the proper amount to give."<sup>163</sup>
- "We should do as much in supporting Christianity as the Jews did in sustaining Mosaism....The Holy Scriptures thoroughly furnish the man of God for every good work. Without the Old Testament the New cannot be properly understood and appreciated. While our law is found in the New, the old is just as much the word of God."<sup>164</sup>
- The title is for "ministering to the poor and helping others to preach the gospel."<sup>165</sup>
- He defends tithing as a means of caring for the poor and trusting God for his care. "My brother, do you believe this doctrine? Then you will give liberally, and, as your faith grows, you will give more and more. You will not long be content with giving a tenth; soon you will give fifteen cents on the dollar—then twenty..."<sup>166</sup>
- "...only once in the twenty-four years has my family found it necessary to decide between going in debt and making a meal on potatoes alone...I have never worked for a stipulated salary for my preaching. Between twenty-five and thirty years ago I began to give a fixed percent of my income to the Lord regularly. I have increased this per cent about eleven times, and it seems the more I have given the more I have been able to give."<sup>167</sup>
- "If they, servants as they were, gave a tenth to support their religion surely we, who are through Christ sons of the Eternal God, ought to give much more instead of less for our glorious religion. I would be afraid of failing to attain to everlasting life if I were to give less than a tenth of my income to the support of the church of God."<sup>168</sup>
- "Every Christian ought to put at least a tenth of his income into the Lord's treasury."<sup>169</sup>

## 2. The Use of Wealth.

- "Every dollar that he has he holds as a trust from the Lord of which he is to give an account. He has sought and found the kingdom of God, and now it only remains for him to seek faithfully the righteousness of God; if he does that, he has the word of the Master for it, that food, raiment, and whatever he may need will be added to him."<sup>170</sup>
- "If a life of affluence will enable a man the better to glorify God, God makes him rich, as in the cases of Abraham and Job; if a life of poverty would be better, he makes him poor, as in the cases of Jesus and his apostles; if wealth, might, honor, high station would the better enable him to glorify God, Joseph, David and Daniel; if, in connection with poverty, disease and humiliation would be better, these also are given, as in the case of the last days of Lazarus...We should pray to God to give us whatever is best for us, wealth or poverty, honor or humiliation, health or sickness, life or death; being sure that whatever he gives to his dutiful child will be a blessing; resting in the faith that for all

<sup>163</sup> Harding, "The Churches and the Societies—A Contrast," *Gospel Advocate* 25 (1883), 794

<sup>164</sup> Harding, "The Tenth," *Gospel Advocate* 26.1 (1884), 10.

<sup>165</sup> Harding, "On Giving," *Gospel Advocate* 29 (1887), 376.

<sup>166</sup> Harding, "A Bible Reading on Giving," *The Way* 1.1 (26 January 1899), 11.

<sup>167</sup> Harding, "Scraps," *The Way* 4.2 (10 April 1902), 10.

<sup>168</sup> Harding, "Scraps," *The Way* 5.12 (9 July 1903), 706.

<sup>169</sup> Harding, "Giving and Tokyo Bible School," *The Christian Leader and the Way* 20.21 (22 May 1906), 8.

<sup>170</sup> Harding, "Questions and Answers," *The Way* 3.34 (21 November 1901), 265.

that we sacrifice or suffer for him we may expect a hundredfold reward, even in this present time."<sup>171</sup>

### 3. Preference for the Poor.

- "When we reflect that professed Christians spend more for useless adornment by a hundredfold than they do in caring for the poor and in saving sinners, it begins to look like one of the weightier matters of the law."<sup>172</sup>
- "The things of this world are ours to use. He who uses the most of the goods of this world, therefore, is the richest man; not he who stores up the most of them, nor he who wastes the most of them...He only needs to use judiciously that which comes into his hands, in supplying the wants of his family, and in ministering to the poor."<sup>173</sup>
- "When brethren spend more money for tobacco, that filthy weed which no Christian ought to use, than they do for the cause of Christ, I think surely you do not see yourselves often enough in the mirror.....for gold ear-rings and bracelets for their daughters...."<sup>174</sup>
- "And it may be, my brother, if you and I have had a hard time now and again in our money matters, it is because we have not given to the poor in the systematic, liberal way in which we should have done. Have you ever made it a rule to give a fourth of your income regularly to the Lord? or two tenths? or even one tenth?....So if we want money in abundance to supply our families with what they need, and fill up our own wants, while we are preaching, let us see to it that we give a very liberal per cent of our income to the poor."<sup>175</sup>
- "I believe that Christians should use their surplus promptly for the poor, the sick and the kingdom of God."<sup>176</sup>

### 4. Greed and Materialism as Primary Sins.

- "The meanest sin among the professed followers of the Lord is covetousness; and no doubt it is damning more of them, by many thousands than any other crime."<sup>177</sup>
- The sin of covetousness is idolatry and it "hurts the church more than any other..." We hate the extreme, but we tolerate the subtle when it is the "chief end and aim in life" to make money, where he "comes to meeting with tolerable regularity, lives well, dresses well, and gives about two percent of his income publicly to the Lord's cause" but thinks of making money ten times more than anything else. Such a man "trusts in money" and "he heaps it up" because he does not trust God to take care of him or his family.<sup>178</sup>
- "God has certainly opened the windows of heaven and poured out upon this people the most abundant blessings. But, sad to say, few of them use them as they should be used....The style of living is such that a man is often required to spend two or three times as much per year as his actual comfort and convenience demand....burden by the continual pressure of debts.....The road to financial success is so simple and plain...(1) in

<sup>171</sup> Harding, "Scraps," The Way 3.47 (27 February 1902), 370.

<sup>172</sup> Harding, "Sundries," Gospel Advocate 25 (1883), 163.

<sup>173</sup> Harding, "The Road to Wealth," Gospel Advocate 25 (1883), 410.

<sup>174</sup> Harding, "The Bible," Gospel Advocate 25 (1883), 666.

<sup>175</sup> Harding, "Reflections Suggested by Simon," Gospel Advocate 29 (1887), 540.

<sup>176</sup> Harding, "Reflections Suggested by My Trip to Odessa, MO," The Christian Leader and the Way 22.8 (25 February 1908), 8.

<sup>177</sup> Harding, "Not Satisfied," Gospel Advocate 25 (1885), 262.

<sup>178</sup> Harding, "Two Dreadful Sins that are Very Prevalent," Gospel Advocate 29 (1887), 658.

diligence in business, (2) in judiciousness in expenditures, and (3) in paying for what you get when you get it. These are the great principles of success taught by the Lord, and they are infallible; he who goes by them will succeed....avoid debt as he would a deadly viper...Duty to God and honest toward our fellowmen demand that we should live within our incomes....It seems to me to be a foolish thing to be putting money into lands, railroads, banks, etc., when we have such abundant opportunities to lend it to God. Who pays such an interest as he? and who is so certain to pay?...If Christians are wise, they will be diligent in business; and then, when they have money, they will use it with a free hand in ministering to widows and orphans, in caring for the poor, in having the gospel preached, or to sum it all up, in lending it to the Lord....Lend your money to the Lord, and it is safe; you will be sure to get it when you need it."<sup>179</sup>

- "No doubt this sad state of affairs is largely due to the improper way in which protracted meetings have been conducted. Party spirit is strongly developed in most of us, and we see it both in the churches and in the evangelists; the church wants to be increased in numbers, respectability and financial strength; hence the members talk and act as though the great end of the protracted meeting should be to secure as many influential, respectable and wealthy converts as possible. I have more than once seen no little chagrin manifested by the members of the church when some one came forward who would add neither to the respectability nor to the wealth of the body."<sup>180</sup>
- "The Christian should take pleasure in making money by honorable diligence that he may spend it for Christ."<sup>181</sup>
- "If every Christian in the world would run his business, whatever that may be, solely for the advancement of God's kingdom; if he should consider himself as being in the world simply and solely for that purpose, what a wonderful change we would have in the world."<sup>182</sup>
- "If all the wealth of the world should be equitably distributed, and if all the people would work faithfully for the common good, this would be a paradise indeed."<sup>183</sup>

### ***C. Lord's Day and Lord's Table.***

- "We are nowhere commanded to meet on the first day of the week to break bread in the New Testament. We do it because the apostles and the first Christians did...[They] taught by example."<sup>184</sup>
- "Apostolic example requires us to meet upon the first day of the week."<sup>185</sup>
- "We certainly should follow the Bible in the division of time in doing the Lord's work; that is, we should remember that the first day of the week begins with sunset on Saturday and ends with sunset on Sunday."<sup>186</sup>
- "...the seventh day was typical of the Sabbath rest that awaits the people of God, when for a thousand years they shall rest from sin, temptation, pain and sorrow; the first day of the week foreshadows the glories beginning of a new life in the everlasting kingdom of

<sup>179</sup> Harding, "Scraps. Wealth and How to Use It," Gospel Advocate 26 (1886), 674.

<sup>180</sup> Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 27 (1887), 88.

<sup>181</sup> Harding, "A Bible Reading on Giving," The Way 1.1 (26 January 1899), 11.

<sup>182</sup> Harding, "Three Contradictory Theories," The Way 3.1 (4 April 1901), 4.

<sup>183</sup> Harding, "What Does the Lord Want John Smith To Do?," The Christian Leader and the Way 20.2 (6 January 1906), 8.

<sup>184</sup> Harding, "Circumcision Again," Gospel Advocate 25 (1885), 150.

<sup>185</sup> Harding, "When Should We Meet and What Should We Give?," Gospel Advocate 26 (1886), 120.

<sup>186</sup> Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 26 (1886), 504.

God, when the new heaven and new earth shall have appeared, and Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father."<sup>187</sup>

### **D. Prayer.**

The combination of Harding's understanding of special providence and God's miraculous work for his people energizes a dynamic understanding of prayer. It means that prayer must pervade the believer's life because God is constantly engaging his people through his care in answer to prayer. Prayer, then, touches every aspect of human existence. For example, Harding quotes a sentence from the Western Recorder approvingly, "No temporal blessing is either too great or too small for us to carry to a throne of grace."<sup>188</sup> The Christian can, and should, pray about everything--whether great or small.

While "we do not understand the philosophy of prayer"<sup>189</sup> (that is, there is something mysterious about how God relates to his people), we know the fundamental promise of God. Harding writes:<sup>190</sup>

Indeed, all prayer is based upon the idea that God takes cognizance of us and in some way above our comprehension works in our affairs. We pray for food, for strength, for guidance, for deliverance from temptation, for the extension of Christ's kingdom, for the welfare of our families, and so on; now if these prayers avail at all, in any way, in securing for us food, strength, guidance, and deliverance from temptation....it is because in answer to them there is put forth, in some way, a power incomprehensible to mortals.

In other words, God does do something in answer to prayer. He provides for his people. Prayer is a mechanism of special providence. "When a man believes in God, and looks to him as a child to a father, believing that God will give him anything that is good for him, anything that can be given to him in righteousness, his prayers are listened to and his petitions are granted. God never withholds from such a man anything unless it be to give him something better."<sup>191</sup> This is the confidence of faith and it serves to confirm faith experientially. Thus, "the man who is accustomed to pray, and to receive prompt answers to his prayers, knows that God is, and he blesses those who love him."<sup>192</sup>

Harding's writings on this topic respond to a growing Deism that he senses among the churches. For example, he tells about a person who told him that prayer is only good because it is a "reflex influence on him who prays." Harding thought that seemed like "pure infidelity" and that soon that person would stop praying.<sup>193</sup> On another occasion he heard someone say that we should "endeavor to answer our own prayers." Harding responded: "That idea is altogether wrong. God is the hearer and the answerer of prayer. Our business is to please him, to live towards him so that our hearts shall not condemn us."<sup>194</sup> In another example, Harding offers this extended report:<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Harding, "Scraps," The Way 4.3 (17 April 1902), 17.

<sup>188</sup> Harding, "The Love of God," The Way 2.12 (February 1901), 182.

<sup>189</sup> Harding, "Pray Ye to the Lord of the Harvest," Gospel Advocate 25 (11 January 1883), 38.

<sup>190</sup> Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 29 (20 April 1887), 252.

<sup>191</sup> Harding, "Praying for Rain," The Way 3 (28 November 1901), 276.

<sup>192</sup> Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate 29 (20 April 1887), 252.

<sup>193</sup> Harding, "What Help Do We Receive From God in Answer to Prayer?," The Christian Leader and the Way 19 (14 February 1905), 8.

<sup>194</sup> Harding, "Kingdom of Christ V. The Kingdom of Satan," 931.

<sup>195</sup> Harding, "Praying for Rain," 276.

We should be careful not to pray for what we do not expect. A brother was accustomed to pray at the opening of meetings in which I was to speak, that God would bless me and help me, and that I might speak as the oracles of God, and so on; but on one occasion when I told him I believed God had helped me in answer to the prayer, and that I had been providentially led to speak what I did speak and to leave out some things I had been accustomed to preach when discussing that subject, he was incredulous. He did not believe God had anything to do with my leaving out what had been omitted. He seemed to think that prayer was a form which should be complied with but that we need not expect it to bring any blessing from God. Nor would it have brought anything from God but indignation and wrath, if none of us had believed any more than he did. We need not expect the prayer of doubt or of unbelief to be answered with a blessing.

Harding believes that the Deistic understanding of prayer is a form of infidelity. It is more "deadly" than any sectarian doctrine<sup>196</sup> and through it the Christian becomes a "veritable unbeliever".<sup>197</sup> It is no wonder, according to Harding, that the kingdom of Christ is stumbling when its churches are filled with people who neither read the Bible nor pray. Indeed, for Harding, the greatest hindrance to evangelism is a lack of Bible reading, prayer and trust in God's special providence.<sup>198</sup> The denial of the dynamic of prayer is a denial of the power of God at work in Christ's kingdom.

Other significant quotes from Harding on prayer:

- "Indeed, all prayer is based upon the idea that God takes cognizance of us, and in some way above our comprehension works in our affairs. We pray for food, for strength, for guidance, for deliverance from temptation, for the extension of Christ's kingdom, for the welfare of our families, and so on; now if these prayers avail at all, in a any way, in securing for us food, strength, guidance, and deliverance from temptation.....it is because in answer to them there is put forth, in some way, a power incomprehensible to mortals."<sup>199</sup>
- "The prayer itself should be an earnest asking for the things you want, with a confident expectation of getting them if it should be really good for you to have them; and it should be accompanied by heart felt thanksgiving for blessings already received, and for the assurance that those you ask for will be received at the time and in the way it will be best for you to have them."<sup>200</sup>
- The Christian receives "help from God different in kind or degree from that which the alien, who is seeking Christ, receives. If he prays for wisdom to guide him in solving the problems of the Sunday-school question, will he receive anything which he would not receive just as fully from the study of the Word without the prayer? Does the Holy Spirit do anything now except what the Word does? Do we get any help, of any kind or in any way, from God except what we get by studying the Bible?...Does God answer our prayers by saying, 'Study the

<sup>196</sup>Harding, "Saving Souls, Special Providence, Dr. Holloway," The Christian Leader and the Way 21 (29 January 1907), 8.

<sup>197</sup>Harding, "The Evangelist, His Support, Etc.," The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (9 August 1904), 8.

<sup>198</sup>Harding, "The Most Perfect of All Societies," The Christian Leader and the Way 18 (2 August 1904), 9; "If it is so, Account for these Facts," The Way 3 (January 23, 1902), 330-2; "Scraps," The Way 4 (April 10, 1902), 9-12; "What Is It To Trust in God -- Who Does It?," The Way 4 (July 31, 1902), 137-40; "Questions about Special Providence," The Way 4 (April 16, 1903), 514-16 and "Why This Unbelief?," Gospel Herald 1 (May 8, 1913), 3, 6

<sup>199</sup>Harding, "Scraps," Gospel Advocate (1887), 252.

<sup>200</sup>Harding, "What Way? How Do You Get Into It? How Do You Travel It?," The Way 1.1 (January 26, 1899), 2.

Bible and in so doing get all the help I give to mortals accept that which comes from the operation of the forces of nature, with which I never interfere?"<sup>201</sup>

- Harding encouraged his students to pray in secret three or four times a day,<sup>202</sup> and suggested "morning, noon, evening and night, and at other times when occasion requires it."<sup>203</sup>
- "All this to say...prayer is an important part of the evangelization of the world and God's care for his people. God is ready to answer and he is the power that moves the evangelization of the world."<sup>204</sup>

### ***E. Discussion Questions***

1. What are the primary spiritual disciplines in the life of the contemporary church? Would you be willing rank their importance as Harding did?
2. Has the concern for consecutive, sequential reading of the Bible been lost in the contemporary church? If so, what harmful effects are evident?
3. Which of the above spiritual disciplines are lacking or are the most neglected in your own spiritual life?
4. What would Harding say is the greatest spiritual danger facing the church in 2003 if he were alive today?

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<sup>201</sup> Harding, "What Help Do We Receive From God in Answer to Prayer?," The Christian Leader and the Way 19.7 (Feb. 14, 1905), 8-9.

<sup>202</sup> Harding, "What Way? How Do You Get Into It? How Do You Travel It?," The Way 1.1 (26 January 1899), 2.

<sup>203</sup> Harding, "Questions and Answers," The Way 4.16 (17 July 1902), 123.

<sup>204</sup> Harding, "The Most Perfect of All Societies," The Christian Leader and the Way 18.31 (2 August 1904), 9.

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