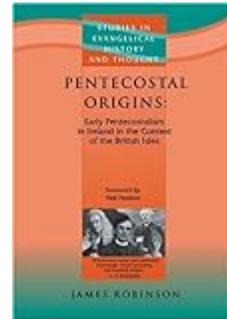
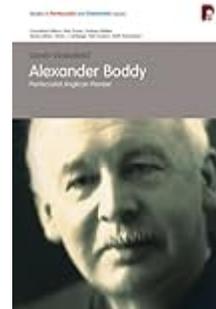




James Robinson. *Pentecostal Origins: Early Pentecostalism in Ireland in the Context of the British Isles.* Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005. xxvii + 360 pp.p. \$39.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-84227-329-6.



Gavin Wakefield. *Alexander Boddy: Pentecostal Anglican Pioneer.* Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007. xiv + 245 pp.p. \$32.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-84227-346-3.



Reviewed by William Kay

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Commissioned by Gene Mills (Florida State University)

Pentecostal Origins in the British Isles in Broad Strokes and the Particular

James Robinson's *Pentecostal Origins* and Gavin Wakefield's *Alexander Boddy* are a complementary pair. Robinson provides a broader background to the emergence of Pentecostalism in Northern Ireland and the British Isles, whereas Wakefield offers a detailed portrait of Alexander Boddy (1854-1930), the founder and organizer of *Confidence* magazine and the influential Sunderland conventions.

Robinson's book is substantial both in terms of the

extensive historical period that it covers and in terms of its detailed integration of a range of historical and theological sources. It uncovers the roots of Pentecostalism in Britain going back to Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church in the eighteenth century but also taking in the Keswick Convention after 1875. Equally, early Holiness preachers, like Phoebe Palmer, were influential in spreading a revised form of Methodist teaching on sanctification that prepared the way for a theology

of subsequence which became normative in Pentecostal circles. For her, there was a “shorter way” to entire sanctification through an attainable crisis experience within reach of every sincere believer. Later, the Welsh Revival of 1904-5 spilled over onto the Irish scene and revitalized what was already a thriving mixture of religion and culture. Ship building in Belfast generated class divisions resulting in both poverty and wealth, while the city’s religious heritage could boast a confusing mix of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican churches, and independent mission halls. In this world, the social and religious backgrounds of future Pentecostal leaders, like Robert Kerr, Alex Ferguson, William Boyd, and James Arnold, can be placed.

Having established in four chapters the complicated and multifaceted background to fervent Protestant religious life in Ireland, and particularly in Northern Ireland, Robinson moves to three substantial chapters on the Elim Pentecostal Church that began in a small way in 1915 with tent campaigns of the young Welsh evangelist, George Jeffreys. Jeffreys is given space to become a real figure within these pages. We sense his organizational ability, his dignified and persuasive rhetoric, his hard work, and his astuteness. At the same time, we begin to glimpse the potential for conflict between Jeffreys as a powerful revivalist preacher and the local elders within the churches he inspired or planted. As part of his strategy, Jeffreys set up an Evangelistic Band, men and women who committed themselves to working with the new or revived congregations and who formed a vital caucus of ministerial personnel that eventually became the Elim ministerial list. We see the initiation and training of members of the Band, and we watch the growing influence of Elim through its publications and its ability to negotiate a way past the “Troubles” that followed Irish partition. By the mid-1920s, Jeffreys was the most substantial force in Pentecostalism throughout the British Isles.

A final chapter takes us to the Apostolic Church in Ireland. This Pentecostal group contrasts with that of Elim. Whereas Elim saw charismatic gifts as part of the armory of the evangelist, the Apostolic Church was much more inclined to see charismatic gifts as focused on internal issues of church government. This contrast is not absolute in the sense that Elim certainly expected prophetic utterances to occur within their congregations, and, conversely, Apostolic ministers certainly preached evangelistically in the open air, especially in Ireland. Yet, the Apostolic Church, by elevating the authority of local prophets, produced a form of church government

that was much less predictable and less obviously strategic than the method used by Elim. Jeffreys went from place to place to preach, gather converts, leave elders in charge, and send members of the Band to minister and report back to him; the Apostolics resorted to meetings at which the local prophet spoke, often with surprisingly detailed instructions about who should do what and under which circumstances. Contentions over prophecy inevitably arose. Could an elder go to another congregation and look for prophetic guidance from the prophet there, or should he only consult his own prophet in his own congregation? Rules were formulated to prevent stray prophets from exercising authority outside their own geographically determined bounds. So, although there were remarkable instances of prophetic accuracy that appeared to justify Apostolic usage of charismata, there were also anomalies. For, if prophecies were divinely given by the Holy Spirit, why should it matter which congregation a prophet considered to be his home? And, if prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit, what authority did constitutional rules have to hem them in? Such considerations resulted in criticisms of Apostolic governance by other British Pentecostals.

This is a good book. The balance between background and foreground, between the life of individual congregations and the religious ethos of Ireland, is well maintained. The text is clear and extremely well referenced. Robinson has a respect and affection for the people he describes and empathizes with their problems and circumstances. This is not a critique of Pentecostal oddity but a sober and sympathetic account of serious men and women who, against the odds, formed churches and denominations that survive to this day.

Boddy has long deserved a full-length biographical treatment. He was an evangelical Anglican vicar: he belonged to the established church, which gave him social status, and he was evangelical at a time when evangelicalism was in a subordinate position within Anglicanism as a whole. As a young man, he attended the Keswick conventions where it is likely he passed through a spiritual crisis. Although he had been offered partnership in a legal firm, he decided to train for the ministry. He went to Durham and then prepared for ordination under Bishop Lightfoot. Soon afterward he was given a difficult parish to handle, one that had been almost ruined by its previously alcoholic incumbent and that was located near noisy and polluting shipyards. Unusually, Boddy had been an enthusiastic traveler in his younger days and achieved academic distinction by writing detailed accounts of his sightings. When he heard of the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Norway, he sent for T. B. Barratt, who arrived in England at the end of August 1907 and stayed over one month. By the time Barratt left, several dozen people had been baptized in the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues. This was the beginning of the Pentecostal movement in Britain. Boddy, as an Anglican, never conceived of Pentecostalism as a separate movement outside existing denominations; it was to be a renewal movement bringing believers into brotherly collaboration. In the beginning, when the movement was small, such an issue hardly arose. In 1908, Boddy founded a magazine, *Confidence*, which was soon distributed all over the world and contained reports of the Pentecostal outpouring.

In the same year, he organized the first of the seven Sunderland conventions. These conventions occurred annually until the summer of 1914, when World War I broke out. His magazine, which ran until 1926, is an invaluable source of British and European Pentecostalism, and it also provides important firsthand accounts of Pentecostalism all over the world. People sent Boddy reports, wrote articles for him, and came to Sunderland, and he traveled to them. Boddy's chairmanship of the Sunderland conventions produced an ordered and spiritual forum where Pentecostalism could be discussed and divergent views evaluated. Many of the discussions were recorded verbatim in the magazine's pages, allowing us to discover the detailed concerns of participants of these international gatherings.

When war came, Boddy, like many Anglicans, believed that it was the duty of the British Empire to stand up against the bullying tactics of the kaiser. Boddy ministered in the field hospitals behind the trenches. Many British Pentecostals were, however, pacifist, some being imprisoned for their beliefs. When the war ended, the leadership of the incipient Pentecostal movement had passed from Boddy. Younger Pentecostals formed themselves into several classical Pentecostal denominations, and Boddy, who remained within his beloved Anglican communion, retired to a small parish in the country where he carried out his duties conscientiously until he died in 1930.

Boddy's qualities of leadership, his largely balanced positions on Pentecostal topics, and his literary heritage are wonderfully explored and documented here by Wakefield, who is to be commended on the accuracy of his scholarship and the judiciousness of his assessments. We learn here about Boddy's childhood, training, geographical writings, faith, and family, as well as his own pastorally sensitive theological position on contentious issues. Wakefield provides extensive appendices with a timeline, a family tree, and valuable bibliographical information. We begin to appreciate the magnitude of the challenges Boddy confronted and scale of his achievement, including his impact on German and Dutch Pentecostalism and his cofounding in 1909 of the Pentecostal Missionary Union, probably the first Pentecostal missionary society in the world.

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