

An Extraordinary Case of the Use of the Extraordinary Clause†

By Barry Waugh

The *extraordinary clause* is found in the first edition of the *Form of Government in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* which was published by the newly formed General Assembly in 1789. In Section IV on page 152 the statement reads, “That the most effectual measures may be taken, to guard against the admission of insufficient men into the sacred office, it is recommended, that no candidate, except in *extraordinary cases*, be licensed; unless, after his having completed the usual course of academical studies, he shall have studied divinity at least two years, under some approved divine, or professor of theology.”¹ This instruction was composed in the context of ministerial training that usually included a college education and subsequent tutoring in divinity by a minister or other theological educator. There were many variables in the education of candidates and the use of *except in extraordinary cases* was intended to allow for the inevitable variation in curriculums in the candidate’s preparatory years.

As the years passed, extraordinary clauses were added to other sections of the denominational constitutions. A current example is the use of the *extraordinary clause* several times in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) *Book of Church Order (BCO)* in the chapters regarding the education and trials required of a candidate, licentiate, and then an ordained minister. The first step in preparation for the ministry is for a prospective candidate to come under the care of his presbytery. The relevant statement is, “Every applicant for care shall be a member of the congregation whose session provides an endorsement for at least six months before filing his application, *except in those cases deemed extraordinary by the Presbytery*” (BCO 18–2). As the candidate studies in seminary and exercises pastoral gifts, the next step is for him to be licensed and serve an internship. With respect to the licensure of a candidate, the *BCO* says, “No Presbytery shall omit any of these

parts of examination *except in extraordinary cases*; and whenever a Presbytery shall omit any of these parts, it shall always make a record of the reasons therefor, and of the trial parts omitted” (19–2). In 2013, two paragraphs were added to 19–2 concerning the candidate’s subscription to the *Westminster Standards*. The final step in the process of becoming a minister is ordination after successfully serving in an internship. The *extraordinary clause* for ordination reads the same as for licensure except it adds that “a three-fourths (3/4) approval of the Presbytery” is required, and whenever “a Presbytery shall omit any of these educational requirements, it shall always make a record of the reasons for such omission and the parts omitted” (21–4-a). Then, at the end of 21–4-c following the specific listing of trials for ordination, “No Presbytery shall omit any of these parts of trial for ordination *except in extraordinary cases*, and then only with three-fourths (3/4) approval of presbytery.” Finally, in 21–4-h, the section “On Ordination Requirements and Procedures” ends with a final word of warning regarding the *extraordinary clauses*.

The *extraordinary clauses* should be limited to *extraordinary* circumstances of the church or proven

THE AUTHOR: Barry Waugh received his Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary, PA, and lives in Greenville, SC, where he researches and writes concerning Presbyterian and Reformed history. Dr. Waugh has written previously, “An Introduction to T. V. Moore through his Essay on Juvenile Delinquency,” v. 7 (2011), and “The Ministerial Shortage Problem in Presbyterian History...,” v. 4 (2008).

† This article is dedicated to the members, deacons, and elders of Second Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in America, in the historic West End of Greenville, South Carolina. Thank you to editors Chris Coldwell and C. N. Willborn for their holding the presses patiently for this article.

1. Whenever the word “extraordinary” or the full clause “except in extraordinary cases” is mentioned in this article, whether in the text or quotations from other sources, it will be in *italics*.

extraordinary gifts of the man. Presbyteries should exercise diligence and care in the use of these provisions in order that they not prevent the ordination of a candidate for whom there are truly exceptional circumstances, nor ordain (nor receive from other denominations, *BCO* 13–6) a person who is inadequately prepared for the ministry.

The PCA *BCO* allows for what should be the rare occurrences in which truly *extraordinary* circumstances are present; *extraordinary cases* should be truly *extraordinary*. The *extraordinary* might be a candidate who taught classical languages in a college and might not be expected to be tested in them, or the *extraordinary* might be a candidate who has a physical impairment that might require latitude with respect to some tests. However, there is potential for abuse when requiring appropriate, standard, and equitable educational requirements for all ministers, but then allowing the use of the *extraordinary clause* for some cases.

This article will examine the ministry of a man who was licensed with the *extraordinary clause* having been applied to some of his trials. It will consider his family background; the process of his candidacy, licensure, and ordination; his years of ministry as a Presbyterian and his change in doctrinal views; and the events and processes leading to the end of his work as a Presbyterian minister. The last section of this article will draw conclusions concerning the use of *except in extraordinary cases*, present some possible reasons for how the problems could occur in the particular pastor's ministry being recounted in the article, and then consider what it means for the current church.

Requirements for Licensure and Ordination

The *Book of Church Order* of the PCUS in use in 1879 provided the requirements and procedures for licensure in Section VI, which includes paragraphs 129–140.² At that time, the *BCO* assumed that one seeking licensure intended to eventually seek ordination to the Gospel ministry. However, men, often ruling elders, were sometimes licensed to preach even though there was no

intention of seeking ordination. Such licentiates provided a valuable ministry by leading worship in small and isolated congregations that could not be adequately served by the presbytery's busy pastors and evangelists. Ordinarily, licensure was intended to provide the opportunity for a candidate to prove his gifts for ministry including preaching and teaching the Word, and application of his learning in the various situations he might have to deal with in the daily lives of his sheep (129).

A candidate was to be of good Christian character and a faithful member of his congregation, as attested by references. It was expected that a candidate would be educationally prepared by the usual course of studies, which required the candidate to present a "diploma" for either a Bachelor or Master of Arts from a college or university, or testimonials from reliable sources affirming his acquisition of "a regular course of learning" (131). The minimum acceptable length of collegiate study was two years (131). The candidate was to be tried in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, mental philosophy, logic, rhetoric, ethics, natural and exact sciences, natural and revealed theology, ecclesiastical history, the sacraments, and church government (132). The candidate seeking licensure was also to provide an exegetical paper in which he demonstrated the critical ability to understand and explain a Bible text, a discussion in Latin of some thesis on a topic of divinity, a lecture or exposition on several verses of Scripture, and a sermon (132).³ Paragraph 133 provided the opportunity for the presbytery to add its own requirements until it had obtained full "satisfaction as to the candidate's piety, learning, and aptness to teach in the church." To say the least, the requirements for licensure presented in the book of 1879 were thorough when they were applied without *extraordinary* exceptions.

Once a licentiate had proven himself capable of pastoral ministry, he could seek a call, and then be ordained and installed in a local church according to the requirements of the *BCO*. The most stringent standards in the process from candidate to installed pastor were those used for the licensure trials. The educational requirements given in the *BCO* indicate that in the late nineteenth century there was still a strong sense that the licentiate seeking ordination was to be a learned man with a wider field of knowledge than the languages of Scripture and subjects of divinity alone.

Despite the equitable and thorough requirements presented in the *BCO* of that era, the words *except in extraordinary cases* were used both for truly *extraordinary cases* and for questionable if not disingenuous reasons. Certainly, reading the requirements for licensure

2. The number in parentheses when referring to the 1879 PCUS *BCO* is that of the paragraph and not the page number. The older editions, though chapters were used, simply number the paragraphs sequentially. Thus, chapter X may end with paragraph 33, but when chapter Y begins, it does so with paragraph 34.

3. Presbytery meetings of that time often lasted two or more days, and at least a part of the reason was because examinations were to be as comprehensive as possible.

from the 1879 BCO might impress readers with the denomination's belief that those who handle the pearls of the Gospel should be thoroughly prepared to do so, but the written standards were not always upheld, applied equitably, or used with an eye to the great care needed when applying the *extraordinary clause*. Then, as now, there were those who wanted to avoid areas of seminary education for any of a myriad of reasons. However, the correct and appropriate use of the *extraordinary clause* should not be abandoned because it is used inappropriately. Paragraph 134 provided for discretionary use of the thorough standards presented in the preceding paragraphs of the BCO.

No candidate, *except in extraordinary cases*, shall be licensed unless he shall have completed the usual course of academical studies, and shall also have studied divinity at least two years under some approved teacher of theology; and whenever any Presbytery shall see reason to depart from this rule, it shall always make a record of the fact upon its minutes, with the reasons therefor.⁴

The church intended to be gracious in applying its requirements so as not to create undue hardships for a gifted candidate that might have an *insurmountable* weakness, so the words, *except in extraordinary cases*, gave presbyteries flexibility. Just as a presbytery might add its own local requirements for examination due to a unique situation within their bounds, the *extraordinary clause* allowed for those unusual cases in which a requirement might be less stringent or excluded altogether. The church is founded upon God's gracious Gospel and is to exhibit grace itself, but it seems that whenever flexibility is allowed, abuse follows.

The following case study of how the use of the clause, *except in extraordinary cases*, had extensive effects in one South Carolina presbytery due to its use in the examination of a man for ordination may be unique in its scope and affects, but it is not a unique occurrence of misuse of the *extraordinary clause*.

The Case of N. J. Holmes and the Extraordinary Clause⁵ FAMILY BACKGROUND

Rev. Zelotes Lee Holmes was a prominent and well-respected member of Enoree Presbytery of the Synod of South Carolina, PCUS. Originally from New York State, Zelotes had moved to the South for health reasons. Believing he was called to the ministry, he prepared for the work by completing his divinity degree at Columbia

Theological Seminary. Zelotes served his first call in the Nazareth Church in Spartanburg County, but he later moved to Laurens and served as the organizing minister of the First Presbyterian Church in neighboring Clinton, continuing there for over twenty years. Along with his work in the Clinton church, Zelotes preached for some of the small rural congregations in the area, he was a professor in Laurensville Female College, and he was just briefly involved in the first years of Clinton College (Presbyterian College) after its founding in 1880. The point of this resume for Rev. Holmes is that he was a prominent, faithful, and respected member of his presbytery. Just as with the old E. F. Hutton advertising slogan, "When E. F. Hutton talks, people listen," Zelotes Holmes commanded a similar attentiveness from South Carolina Presbyterians.

Zelotes Holmes married Kate Nickels of Laurens County in 1844. They enjoyed the blessings of the births of a dozen infants, and were saddened by the deaths of five of them before they achieved their adult years. One of those children, born on September 9, 1847, was named Nickels John Holmes, the first-born son and second child, grew up with the pious influence of his mother who often led her children in prayer and devotions each evening due to the absence of a very busy father.⁶

In N. J. Holmes's autobiography, *Life Sketches and Sermons*, published posthumously by his wife in 1920, he tells about his life as a boy and how he skipped school preferring the family farmland in Laurens to the chalkboard and desk of the schoolhouse. He also recounts the beginning of his spiritual struggles that were eventually resolved by coming to understand the Gospel.⁷ During

4. *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Containing the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as Ratified by the General Assembly, at Augusta, Ga., Dec. 1861, Together with the Book of Church Order, Adopted 1879, the Directory for the Worship of God, with Optional Forms, Adopted 1894, Rules of Parliamentary Order, Adopted 1866* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, [n.d.]), 50; the copy used for the composition of this article is bound in leather and the 1879 BCO would be the version in use at the time of the following case study described in this article.

5. Thank you to Ruling Elder Melton L. Duncan of Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC, whose mention of the curious case of N. J. Holmes to me a few years ago stimulated the research for this article.

6. For some more biographical information regarding Zelotes Holmes and a photograph of his self-constructed concrete octagonal house, see the author's brief biography at <http://reformedforum.org/zelotes-l-holmes/>.

7. Citations to Holmes's book, *Life Sketches and Sermons, by N. J. Holmes and Wife* (Royston: Press of The Pentecostal Holiness Church, 1920), from this point on will be given at the end of the sentence thus, (Holmes, page number).

a service conducted jointly by his father and Rev. William Plumer Jacobs, Nickels believed he was confronted with the gospel message. He commented with respect to a conversation he had with his father following the service, "I do not remember whether I was converted before, but I remember that with tears and sorrow for my sins I confessed and professed faith in Christ, and took a definite and public stand for Christ" (Holmes, 27). The result of his profession of faith was uniting with the Presbyterian Church in Clinton. Along with his newfound Christian life, Holmes believed that he had his first sense of a call to the ministry.

After telling of his experiences as a soldier during the Civil War, Nickels wrote about his move to Europe to study in the University of Edinburgh beginning in the fall of 1866. The South was suffering from the economic collapse that occurred at the end of the Civil War, so an overseas education in an established and respected university seemed to be the best choice.⁸ He left Edinburgh in the spring of 1869 having completed two or three years of study. Holmes said that after his European education and travels he

wanted to work for God, but I did not want to be a preacher ordained and set apart to preach the gospel. I felt that there was a gap between the layman and the ministry that ought not be. I thought that if I could be a good layman and get into that gap, and help to fill it up by getting closer to the ministry ... I could do

8. Zelotes must have been able to hide some of his wealth during the Civil War to have enough for Nickels to be able to afford such an education.

9. Holmes says he attended three terms in the years 1867–69. His brief biography in Scott, *Ministerial Directory of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., 1861–1941*, summarizes his Edinburgh University experience as—"stu, UEdin, 66–9," which means "student, University of Edinburgh, 1866–69." Scott's book is not consistent with how it abbreviates its entries, but it appears that the "stu" abbreviation means the man studied but did not earn a degree. In some, but not all cases, when the minister graduated college the degree is noted in Scott as BA, AM, etc. Scott also sometimes describes a college education with the abbreviation of the institution and no mention of degree, which is intended to signify his graduation when the dates cover a four-year period. The only online catalogue of Edinburgh graduates located was found on Internet Archive and titled, *A Catalogue of the Graduates of the Faculties of Arts, Divinity, and Law, in the University of Edinburgh, Since its Foundation*, 1858, which unfortunately was published too early to include Holmes.

10. Thornwell Jacobs, ed., *Diary of William Plumer Jacobs* (Atlanta: Oglethorpe University Press, 1937), 152–53.

11. Thank you to Archivist Teresa Inman and Assistant Archivist Sarah Leckie of the Presbyterian College Archives, Thomason Library, Clinton, South Carolina, for their assistance with the minutes of several sessions of Enoree Presbytery's meetings.

Christian work and not really be called a preacher. I returned home with this thought and tried to work it out, but failed (Holmes, 57).⁹

A period of restlessness and a lack of vocational direction beset N. J. Holmes when he returned from Scotland to the family home in South Carolina. He farmed, taught school briefly at the Thornwell Orphanage in Clinton, but then decided to read law and worked with a local practice that not only provided Nickels with employment but also the joy of marriage to Lucy Elizabeth, who was the daughter of the founder of the firm, W. D. Simpson.¹⁰ Lucy was Nickels's third cousin.

N. J. Holmes's father died on January 17, 1885, which was a heavy blow to Nickels, the family, the Clinton Church, and the Laurens community in general. The fondness and respect for Z. L. Holmes carried considerable weight with many, if not all, of the presbyters when he was alive and his memory continued to exercise influence after he died. The Synod of South Carolina published a nearly four-page memorial for Zelotes. The family name of "Holmes" was one viewed with great respect by South Carolina Presbyterians.

N. J. Holmes relates that the call to preach the gospel he had sensed years ago had left him, which contributed to his decision to run in 1888 for the office of solicitor in his judicial district. However, after entering the race he recounts how he heard a message from the Lord, "You are seeking an office to prosecute men for crime. Had you not better seek to save them from the commission of Crime?" (Holmes, 61). This message, which so affected Nickels, was the one that would eventually drive his ministry of taking the Gospel to all; and to see persons redeemed from sin to live for Christ. Within a few days, his interest in law ceased. But at this time, he did not know what to do and was confused. He was aided in his turmoil by the counsel of some ministers. One of the pastors advised him to seek the advice of his presbytery. After much prayer and waiting for an answer from the Lord, N. J. Holmes gave up law and went to Enoree Presbytery, seeking to become a candidate for the ministry. At this point, Holmes had been a church member for 25 years, an elder for several years, and had been earning his living as a lawyer for about fourteen years.

CANDIDACY AND LICENSURE¹¹

Enoree Presbytery was organized in 1878, with churches transferred from Bethel and South Carolina presbyteries. At the time that Holmes sought candidacy, the

presbytery included the area that is today Cherokee, Spartanburg, Greenville, Union, and Laurens counties. The communicant membership numbered 2,520 and was distributed in forty churches pastored by nineteen ministers. It was not a large presbytery, but in those days it required more than a few giddy-ups of the horse to travel from church to church for some of the multiple-call pastors to preach the Word of God and shepherd the sheep in the rural congregations.

The Enoree Presbytery meeting in which N. J. Holmes was to be examined for candidacy was called to order in the evening of April 11, 1888 by the outgoing moderator, Rev. E. O. Frierson, pastor of the Laurens Church, who delivered his sermon from Hebrews 2:10.¹² The new moderator elected was sixty-six year old Rev. Robert H. Reid, who was another minister in the presbytery who would have been respected similar to Zelotes Holmes.¹³ Reid, who would go on to be the pastor of Nazareth Church for forty years, had also established an educational community with schools for boys and girls that became the basis of the current town of Reidville. Father Reid would moderate until the presbytery ended sometime well into the evening of April 13.¹⁴

N. J. Holmes did not come before the presbyters until mid-afternoon of the second day when his pastor, A. M. Hassell, introduced him as an elder in the Lisbon Church and “as a Candidate for the Gospel Ministry.”¹⁵ Holmes and another man were examined and received as candidates.¹⁶ Later in the meeting, the presbyters “resolved to consider the case of Mr. N. J. Holmes as an *extraordinary* one, and to proceed to examine him at once for licensure.”¹⁷ The *extraordinary* trials from which he was relieved included “all written parts of trial,” but the examinations in Latin and Greek were found satisfactory by the Committee on Languages.¹⁸ Holmes was then examined by the Committee on Arts and Sciences, after which his examination was “unanimously sustained.”¹⁹ Per the requirements of the BCO, it was necessary to record an explanation for the use of the *extraordinary clause*, so his pastor was assigned the task of preparing a paper containing the reasons for its use “in the case of Mr. N. J. Holmes.”²⁰ The explanation provided by Rev. Hassell was adopted.

The Presbytery in licensing Mr. N. J. Holmes as an *extraordinary* case, according to Form of Government, paragraph 134, would make the following record:

Mr. Holmes is 40 years of age, enjoyed *extraordinary* advantages of education in early life, has been successfully engaged in the practice of law for 14 years, has been

a professor of religion from his youth, and an elder in one of our churches for some years, and has often sat as such in this Presbytery and the other courts of the Church. His high character, his exemplary piety, his religious zeal, and his wide intelligence in church matters, are familiar to the Presbytery, which has therefore felt justified in omitting the usual examination in Hebrew and the written parts ordinarily required, in admitting to licensure.²¹

The paper that was adopted notes that in addition to the exclusions from the trials mentioned earlier, there was another *extraordinary* omission, Hebrew.²² Then, as now, the *extraordinary clause* was often applied because of a candidate’s age, as with Holmes, or with respect to the languages of the Bible with Hebrew most often the language omitted. It was not unusual in that day for a man to have a call to the ministry and leave the study or practice of law. Law in itself may prove one’s general and vocational education, but it is not the best preparation for a minister. Serving as an elder is surely a helpful background and elders desiring licenses to preach as pulpit supplies with no view to ordination benefit a presbytery, but Holmes was entering the process with ordination in mind. It may be that Zelotes guided Nickels in his reading of theology and other subjects giving him some preparation for the ministry, but theological seminaries had been developed by the Presbyterians to provide consistent standards with an appropriate scope of subjects to prepare a candidate for ordination.

N. J. Holmes does not say much in his book about his

12. None of the Enoree Presbytery meetings that will be discussed was moderated by a ruling elder. Also, at the time, ministers were designated in the minutes as “ministers” and ruling elders were “elders.” In some cases the minister was listed as a “bishop.”

13. For a brief biography of R. H. Reid by the author of this article, see, <http://reformedforum.org/robert-h-reid/>.

14. This is “Father Reid” in the sense of “fathers and brethren,” he did not become a Roman Catholic in later years.

15. *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth and Thirty-Fifth Sessions of the Presbytery of Enoree* (Clinton: Thornwell Orphanage Press, 1888), 7; at some point Holmes had moved his membership from Clinton to the Lisbon Church; the first occurrence of Enoree Presbytery minutes for a session will have the full citation and the following uses will be in the form of, *Enoree*, sessions included in the pamphlet, year, page.

16. *Enoree*, 34th, 35th, 1888, 7.

17. *Enoree*, 34th, 35th, 1888, 8.

18. *Enoree*, 34th, 35th, 1888, 9.

19. *Enoree*, 34th, 35th, 1888, 13.

20. *Enoree*, 34th, 35th, 1888, 13.

21. *Enoree*, 34th, 35th, 1888, 14.

22. The avoidance of Hebrew by divinity students is so *ordinary* that perhaps the *extraordinary* student would be the one wanting to study the language.

experience with Enoree Presbytery and the processes for licensure and ordination. The matter is covered from his perspective with one sentence, “I went to Presbytery and stated the matter to them, and was licensed to preach without being required to attend Seminary at all” (Holmes, 64).

ORDINATION

Enoree Presbytery met in the Rocky Springs Church for its fall meeting, September 27–29, 1888. Licentiate N. J. Holmes informed the presbytery that he had been testing his gifts by filling the pulpit most of the summer in First Church, Spartanburg, because the pastor had gone on an extended trip to Europe.²³ At the time, no particular length of service by a licentiate was stipulated as a prerequisite for ordination; the BCO said that candidates were licensed “in order that, after sufficiently trying their gifts, and receiving from the Church a good report, they may, in due time, ordain them to the sacred office” (129). Thus, the presbytery was satisfied concerning Licentiate Holmes’s preaching abilities and ordination was the next step. As the meeting continued a bluntly recorded action was taken without it having been recommended by a committee, “Licentiate N. J. Holmes was elected Evangelist of this Presbytery.”²⁴ Later in the meeting, the moderator, Rev. B. F.

Wilson, announced to Holmes that he had been unanimously elected “to the office of Evangelist,” to which he affirmed his acceptance.²⁵ Presbytery called a meeting in Laurens for October “to ordain Bro. Holmes as Evangelist, if the way be clear,” and that he would preach his ordination sermon on Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”²⁶ This was a wonderful text for an ordination sermon, but the words, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” would take on special significance for Holmes as he wrestled with pneumatology and eventually left Reformed doctrine for a new way.

Later in the fall of 1888, the Synod of South Carolina was to meet in Greenwood beginning in the evening of October 12, so the meeting for ordaining Holmes by Enoree Presbytery began in Laurens late that morning with the examination and sermon, which was followed by the ordination service at 3:00 that afternoon. Greenwood is only about 35 miles from Laurens, so the Enoree Presbytery men bound for the synod meeting would have time to make it for the opening service in the evening after having ordained Holmes. Things went well for N. J. Holmes because his examination was sustained, the sermon approved, and he was enrolled as Enoree Presbytery Evangelist Nickels John Holmes. There was even an ecumenical touch to the service with Rev. J. D. Pitts of the Baptist Church, and Rev. T. E. Morris of the Methodist Church being invited to sit “as visiting members.”²⁷

The newly-ordained, Rev. N. J. Holmes made his way to Greenwood where he was enrolled in the Synod of South Carolina meeting as a minister from Enoree Presbytery. As a local paper reported, Holmes “was unanimously elected assistant clerk by acclamation.”²⁸ The stated clerk was Rev. T. H. Law, whose ministerial call was outside the bounds of presbytery as a field agent with the American Bible Society. The moderator that was elected, Rev. W. J. McKay, was going to have his hands full as he wielded the gavel—it was expected to be a busy and likely controversial meeting. As *The Abbeville Press-Banner* announced, the first order of business would be the report of the directors of Columbia Seminary. This would bring “the Woodrow question up in the first hour of the meeting and a lively discussion” was expected.²⁹ The Presbyterian Church in South Carolina was struggling through the controversy created by the removal of Columbia Seminary’s Professor James Woodrow from the Perkins Chair due to his views regarding Scripture and science. Even though Woodrow had been removed two years earlier after a divisive

23. *Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth, Thirty-Seventh, and Thirty-Eighth Sessions of the Presbytery of Enoree* (Clinton: Thornwell Orphanage Press, 1888), 6; the pastor of the Spartanburg church must have been one of the few ministers that was well paid.

24. *Enoree, 36th–38th*, 1888, 11.

25. *Enoree, 36th–38th*, 1888, 11.

26. *Enoree, 36th–38th*, 1888, 11; the King James Version has been used for this article because it would have been the English Bible of the day.

27. *Enoree, 36th–38th*, 1888, 18; the two visitors were not “visiting members” because they were not Presbyterians but were instead representatives from churches with episcopal and congregational polities. The presbytery was simply extending the courtesy of being recognized as visiting clerics.

28. *The Abbeville Press-Banner*, October 17, 1888, 4; *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina, at its Annual Sessions, held at Greenwood, S.C., October 12–16, 1888* (Spartanburg: Published by Order of Synod, 1888), 3. The first occurrence of synod minutes will have the full citation and the following uses will be in the form of, *Synod of SC*, city held, year, page. It appears that at the time electing one to serve as assistant clerk was considered a secondary honor for one who did not have the seniority to be elected moderator. For a very brief biography of T. H. Law, see *The Confessional Presbyterian* 9, 80–81.

29. *The Abbeville Press-Banner*, Abbeville, South Carolina, Wednesday, October 17, 1888, 4; the report had been borrowed by the Abbeville paper from the Greenwood paper, credit given, which was published in the town where the synod meetings were held and explains why the date is several days after the news occurred.

fight, related issues requiring synod action came before the judicatory in 1888. One of the issues addressed in the meeting was the announcement of Woodrow's replacement, Rev. F. R. Beattie of Ontario, Canada, who accepted the position and was awaiting confirmation by the synods.³⁰ As the synod neared adjournment, it was time to elect two directors for Columbia Seminary to fill vacancies. Rev. N. J. Holmes, who had not attended seminary at all, and a Columbia Seminary alumnus, Rev. J. G. Richards, were selected to serve three-year terms.³¹ When the report to the synod by Enoree Presbytery was delivered, the licensure of N. J. Holmes earlier that year and his recent ordination "to labor in the unoccupied territory" of the presbytery were noted.³²

MINISTRY

Rev. N. J. Holmes continued as Enoree Presbytery Evangelist for about four years. During that time he filled pulpits, preached in evangelistic meetings, was involved in and attended Bible conferences both as an instructor and a student, and organized churches.³³ During this period, his views regarding the work of the Holy Spirit began to take a different direction. In his book, Holmes recounts how he had preached the Law of God, the doctrines of grace, and the Gospel "as I had received it," which referred to his Presbyterian upbringing by his parents and church (68). Holmes expressed frustration with his work as an evangelist because he would start churches and then find the members continually struggling with Christian living and feelings of impotency regarding obedience. He found the solution to his problem "with a little book of Mr. Moody's, *The Secret of Power*," which made him hungry for the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁴

I saw from reading that little book what I had not seen from reading books on Theology. That there was a remedy, and that we did not have to pass on without it. That the difficulty was opened up in the work of the Holy Ghost. So we got hungry for the truth and the light. We went to Northfield, Massachusetts in the summer of 1891, and attended two conferences. First the World Students' Conference, and then two weeks later the General Conference for Christian Workers (Holmes, 70).

Moody's "little book" had been published in 1881 and enjoyed a large distribution not only in America but also in Britain. Holmes mentioned that the resolution to his Christian living issues was "opened up in the work of the Holy Ghost." Though Moody affirmed that the

Holy Spirit is necessary for salvation and that all Christians are indwelt by the Spirit, he believed there was a coming of the Spirit in power as a secondary blessing of His ministry. Christians need filling with the power of the Spirit and the Bible affirms this, but Moody saw the coming of the Spirit with power as an additional ministry available only to those emptied of self and living in love. Moody stopped short, however, of teaching the use of unknown tongues and there was no mention of divine healing as a miraculous gift, nor was there teaching about baptism in the Spirit.³⁵ N. J. Holmes would eventually go beyond Moody's teaching regarding the Holy Spirit presented in *Secret Power*.

Holmes' interest in Moody led them to attend the World Students Conference at Northfield, Massachusetts in July 1891 which included daily lessons from D. L. Moody as well as lectures from Christian leaders of the day. Moody had gathered an august group of speakers that included John G. Paton, the New Hebrides missionary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland; William R. Harper, President-elect of Chicago University, whose background included teaching Semitics in Baptist Union Theological Seminary; Presbyterian minister W. W. Moore who at the time was Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Union Seminary, Virginia, where he would go on to serve as the president for twenty-two years; Professor of Greek Exegesis and Biblical Literature William G. Moorhead of Xenia Seminary of the United Presbyterian Church; Rev. John Smith of the Broughton Place Church, Edinburgh, United Free Church of Scotland;³⁶ President James W. Bashford of Ohio Wesleyan University; and Presbyterian minister Robert Ellis Thompson, who would write *A History of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States* in 1895.³⁷ It was an interesting mix of speakers for a Bible conference coordinated

30. *Synod of SC, Greenwood, 1888, 6*; confirmation of the faculty appointee was required by the Synods of South Carolina and Georgia.

31. *Synod of SC, Greenwood, 1888, 27*.

32. *Synod of SC, Greenwood, 1888, 8*; at least Ezekiel had dry bones for a congregation, but Holmes had nary a soul in his "unoccupied territory."

33. The 1879 BCO, says of the minister serving as an evangelist that "to him may be entrusted power to organize churches, and ordain Ruling Elders and Deacons therein" (40).

34. Holmes is referring to, D. L. Moody, *Secret Power; The Secret of Success in Christian Life and Christian Work* (Chicago: F. H. Revell, 1881).

35. Moody, *Secret Power, 1881, 15, 33, 34, 35-36, 44-45, 46, 110*.

36. The John Smith biographical information was found in *Thirty Years of Broughton Place United Free Church* (Edinburgh: Howie & Seath, 1914), 35-56.

37. "Mr. Moody's Student Conference," *The New York Times*, June 15, 1891.

by an interdenominational evangelist, but with nearly all the speakers being Presbyterians, N. J. Holmes must have felt right at home.

The Christian Workers Conference followed the World Students Conference and took on a less denominational and more interdenominational-parachurch-populist-generically Evangelical atmosphere with speakers including Moody; Adoniram Judson Gordon of Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston, whose Boston Missionary Training School was the forerunner of Gordon College; and Rev. F. B. (Frederick Brotherton) Meyer of Regent's Park Chapel, London, who had written *Elijah and the Secret of His Power*, 1890, and would write *the Secret of Guidance* in 1896. As the conference closed on August 9, with a crowd of over 2,000, Gordon preached on "Christ's Redemption as Seen in Three Gardens," and Meyer spoke concerning the transfiguration of Christ, which was followed by Moody preaching on Christian obedience. Gordon "baptized several converts by immersion in Wanamaker Lake" on the Northfield property.³⁸ For both N. J. and Lucy Holmes, the Moody conferences were *eureka* events.

We soon saw that it would not do to throw ourselves back on human creeds, and cold systems of Theology. What we needed was the pure unadulterated Word of God, and that if we could get right into the heart of it, and get it deep down into our hearts it would make its own way and cut like a two edged sword through our whole being and life. That was what we wanted, and not the task of reconciling and untangling the vast differences in the maze of human systems of theology, in the vain effort to make the Word of God harmonize with those systems and theories (Holmes, 72).

This reflection by N. J. Holmes in later years upon the events at Northfield in 1891 shows that he did not regard Reformed doctrine concerning the work of the Holy Spirit as an accurate interpretation of the teaching of the

Bible. Though affirming Presbyterian doctrine when he was licensed and ordained, he shortly thereafter found himself frustrated by what he saw as a lack of progress in his own life and the lives of other Christians. "N. J. Holmes found the resolution to his struggle with living a consistent Christian life in the teaching of D. L. Moody and other popular evangelists of the day. However, he continued his work as Enoree Presbytery Evangelist after Northfield as he moved on from Moody's teaching into perfectionism and the Holiness Movement.

In 1892, he left his call as Evangelist Holmes for installation as Pastor Holmes of Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville. As an evangelist, he had organized the West End congregation in the spring of 1892 with the membership coming chiefly from the Washington Street Presbyterian Church (First). Greenville was growing as the textile industry expanded in South Carolina. During Rev. Holmes's brief ministry, the church moved from a temporary meeting place on the top floor of the Alliance Cotton Warehouse to a simple frame building holding a congregation that would grow from 26 to 116 members via 50 additions by examination and 56 by transfer.³⁹ When Holmes decided to resign from the church after a few years as pastor, he said of his call that, "It was indeed a short pastorate, but I can say with my whole heart that it was fraught with far more blessing to me than the years would indicate. No pastor could wish to be more cordially received, more hospitably entertained, or more genuinely sustained" (Holmes, 80). Presbytery concurred with Holmes's resignation and it took effect on November 25, 1895, after which he was allowed to "labor within and without the bounds of Presbytery till the next regular meeting of Presbytery" without a call.⁴⁰ At about the time Holmes left Second Church, he commented in retrospect, "All this time since we left Northfield the Holy Spirit ... was revealing to me the truth of the Bible, on the subject of sanctification, holiness, divine healing, and the work of the Spirit in a new light" (Holmes, 82). One of the points of doctrine Rev. Holmes might have learned if he had attended seminary was the difference between "revealing" and "illuminating" with respect to how the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding to comprehend the completed revelation of his Word.

Why did Rev. N. J. Holmes leave Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, if he had enjoyed a beneficial and convivial ministry? No reason is recorded either in the sessional records of the church or in the published minutes of Enoree Presbytery, but a family friend and Christian mentor from the days of Zelotes's ministry in Clinton can provide some information. William Plumer Jacobs, the minister who had preached with

38. "Christian Workers. Last Day of the Conference at Northfield Seminary," *New York Times*, Aug. 10, 1891; John Wanamaker was a wealthy Presbyterian who had made his fortune in retailing in Philadelphia. He was one of several prominent and wealthy Christians who supported the meetings of D. L. Moody and other evangelists.

39. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, With an Appendix*, Vol. IX, A. D. 1893, 1894, 1895, and 1896 (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1896), 123, 319, 503, 689.

40. *Minutes of the 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, and 77th Sessions of the Presbytery of Enoree. Held at Rock Hill, Laurens, Greenville, Second, Union and Fountain Inn Churches* (Clinton: Thornwell Orphanage Press, 1896), 6.

Holmes's father when young Nickels professed his faith in Christ, wrote in his diary on September 20, 1895 regarding Holmes and the evangelistic tent meetings he was conducting. At the time of this quote, Holmes was still a member of Enoree Presbytery and Jacobs's comment was made just before Holmes left Second Church.

The town of Clinton is being flooded with "holiness" doctrine by Rev. N. J. Holmes. This man was the first man I ever tried to lead to Christ and that I ever spoke to on the subject of religion. He was for years my warm personal friend. His father founded my church [First Church, Clinton], was nine years its pastor and led me to become its pastor, introduced me to the noble woman that became my wife. It is hard to think that his son is here, trying to undo all his father's work and to damage it sorely.⁴¹

Dr. Jacobs had taken pride in the licensure of N. J. Holmes not too long ago because of his having grown up in the Clinton Church,⁴² but the pride had turned to shame and anger as he considered how Nickels's tent meetings might have embarrassed Zelotes, if he was still alive, and angered him because his son's revivals competed with the Presbyterian churches in the area. Perhaps the resignation of Holmes from Second Church had something to do with his change in views.

W. P. Jacobs referred to N. J. Holmes's teaching as "holiness" teaching. The Holiness Movement had its origins early in the nineteenth century, but its form at the time of N. J. Holmes had existed since after the Civil War. Its thrust was to preserve the emphasis on entire instantaneous sanctification and Christian perfectionism, held by John Wesley and other early Methodists and the Presbyterian Charles Finney. Usually, during an emotional event at a revival or special service, the person is said to have experienced entire sanctification instantaneously. The person is cleansed so that life can be lived without conscious or deliberate sin; the movement did not teach the Christian would become sinless and no longer have a sinful nature. As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, Pentecostalism grew first as a branch of the Holiness Movement and then as a separate entity, emphasizing unknown tongues and faith healing aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry. The later years of the nineteenth century saw the rise of terminology like "baptism of the Holy Spirit" or "baptism with the Holy Spirit" to describe the "second blessing" which brought about entire sanctification. In some circles, speaking in tongues was seen as a sign of the second blessing, especially among the Pentecostals as their

movement grew early in the twentieth century. Thus, during Holmes's years of ministry in the Presbyterian Church, he would have been identified with the Holiness Movement and its teaching regarding a second work of grace by the Holy Spirit resulting in entire, and instantaneous sanctification, but in the years after he left the PCUS he moved more into the perspective of Pentecostalism.⁴³

By 1896, Holmes had fully laid hold of his new views regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit, which resulted in his doctrine being "questioned by some of the brethren of Presbytery" (Holmes, 82). However, as the presbytery met in the Fountain Inn Church in April, suspicions about Holmes's teaching did not stop his peers from electing him moderator.⁴⁴ As the session progressed through the committee reports, Rev. Holmes informed his fellow presbyters regarding his work as an evangelist without a call saying that, "he had been holding meetings, his time having been fully occupied." He continued his report and requested "permission to continue his evangelistic labors within or without the Presbytery, till the next meeting of Presbytery," which was granted.⁴⁵ During the report of the Committee on Education, a few students in college preparing for the ministry were "urged to greater diligence" with respect to their studies of Greek and Latin and warned that future poor reports of their studies would "be considered grounds for action by this Presbytery."⁴⁶ However, when the ordination examination of Licentiate Samuel C. Todd for a call to the Wellford Church came up on the docket, the concern for diligent studies was not applied to his trials.⁴⁷ As a man in his early twenties, Todd had been licensed in the September meeting⁴⁸ and he was a *protégé* of Holmes who assisted him with evangelistic meetings. The *extraordinary clause* was applied

41. Jacobs, *Diary*, Sept. 20, 1895, 328.

42. Jacobs, *Diary*, April 15, 1888, 270.

43. H. E. Raser, "Holiness Movement," and R. G. Robins, "Pentecostal Movement," in Daniel G. Reid, ed., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990); Donald W. Dayton, "Holiness Movement, American," and Robert G. Clouse, "Pentecostal Churches," in J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 1978.

44. *Enoree*, 73rd-77th, 1896, 10.

45. *Enoree*, 73rd-77th, 1896, 15.

46. *Enoree*, 73rd-77th, 1896, 26.

47. Samuel Charlton Todd, 1870-1908, attended the University of South Carolina but it is not clear whether he graduated. According to his brief biography in Scott, no seminary attendance is mentioned. E. C. Scott, *Ministerial Directory of the Presbyterian Church, U. S., 1861-1941* (Austin: Published by Order of the General Assembly, 1942).

48. The presbytery minutes for this meeting were unavailable.

to his ordination trials to exempt him from testing in Greek, Hebrew, and Philosophy.⁴⁹ On the one hand, candidates in college were rebuked for poor language studies, but on the other hand, S. C. Todd, who was a young man, was exempted from some language testing completely. His trials were approved by presbytery and Holmes appointed himself to the commission to ordain and install Todd and then deliver the charge to the new minister.⁵⁰ When the presbytery minutes were reviewed by the Synod of South Carolina, one of the exceptions taken by the synod was Enoree Presbytery applying the *extraordinary clause* to the examination of Todd, excusing him from the Greek, Hebrew, and Philosophy examinations.⁵¹

By the September 1897 meeting of Enoree Presbytery, not only was the ministry of Holmes coming into question, but that of his *protégé*, S. C. Todd as well. The following letter, received by Enoree Presbytery, just after its spring meeting, was read to the elders.

Walhalla, S. C., April 20, 1897
To the Clerk of Enoree Presbytery,

Dear Brother—The following action was taken by the South Carolina Presbytery at its recent session in Anderson:

Whereas this Presbytery has been informed that the doctrine of entire instantaneous Sanctification in this life has been preached in one of our pulpits by Rev. S. C. Todd, an ordained minister of Enoree Presbytery. Resolved 1st, That this Presbytery does hereby protest against such preaching in our pulpits as contrary to the Scriptures as interpreted in our standards and to the ordination vows of our ministers.

Resolved 2nd, That the Presbytery of Enoree be informed of this matter that it may take such action as it may think proper to vindicate the truth of God and prevent the propagation of error. (See section 180 *Book of Church Order*).

49. *Enoree*, 73rd–77th, 1896, 17.

50. *Enoree*, 73rd–77th, 1896, 15, 31; the meeting was held on April 14–16, 1896.

51. *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina at its Annual Meeting, Held at Orangeburg, S. C., October 27–30, 1896* (Clinton: Presbyterian Job Office, 1896), 11.

52. *Minutes of the Eighty-Second, Eighty-Third, and Eighty-Fourth Sessions of the Presbytery of Enoree, Held at Clinton, Union, and Darlington Churches* (Clinton: Thornwell Orphanage Press, 1897), 6.

53. *Enoree*, 82nd–84th, 1897, 16.

54. *Enoree*, 82nd–84th, 1897, 16.

Done in Presbytery the 15th day of April, 1897.

G. G. Mayes

Stated Clerk of South Carolina Presbytery⁵²

The letter was referred to the Bills and Overtures Committee, which reported to the presbyters that they had a “full discussion” of the issue. Though there is no mention of the issues addressed during the “full discussion,” they may have revolved around the embarrassment and/or indignation of Enoree Presbytery because of their having been rebuked by an adjoining presbytery. However, South Carolina Presbytery was acting responsibly in showing concern for their sheep with respect to their hearing teaching in conflict with the church standards of Scripture and the *Westminster Confession*. When the committee report was debated, a substitute was proposed but voted down, and then the committee report was adopted.⁵³ Maybe South Carolina Presbytery saw the preaching of Rev. Todd within its bounds as the opportunity to deal not only with his views but also to bring to mind for Enoree Presbytery the Holiness views N. J. Holmes was preaching. Whatever the case may have been, Enoree Presbytery came to an agreement regarding the letter from the sister presbytery and adopted a response.

The Presbytery of Enoree sincerely and profoundly regrets that any minister laboring under its commission should enter the bounds of a sister Presbytery and there promulgate doctrines which are not in accord with our Standards, or which may have been offensive to our brethren or disturbing to their peace. And we assure South Carolina Presbytery that the matter complained of has been entirely without our knowledge or consent.

And as a Presbytery we would take this occasion to put ourselves on record as in no wise affirming or countenancing the doctrine of entire instantaneous sanctification in this life, which doctrine, whether presented under the name of “the Second blessing” or “the Spirit filled life,” we believe to be in conflict with the plain teaching of the Word of God, as interpreted in our Standards, and dangerous in its tendency. The propagation of such doctrine in the name and by the authority of this Presbytery cannot therefore be approved.⁵⁴

Eating crow is never a pleasant experience, and it can be seen why there was a “full discussion” of Enoree’s letter responding to the communication from South Carolina in the committee. The issue of concern to South Carolina Presbytery was not that Todd had crossed a

geographic line bounding the presbytery, but was instead that he had crossed the geographic line *teaching improper doctrine*. The second paragraph of Enoree's response is questionable in that it is extremely unlikely that there was not common knowledge of the views of both Holmes and Todd with respect to the Holy Spirit's ministry, given that it had been two years since W. P. Jacobs complained about Holmes and his tent meetings. Tent meetings and revivals were often reported in the multitude of local community newspapers existing at the time, and reports of a meeting in one town by a paper were often copied in other newspapers of the area. The last sentence says that the "propagation of such doctrine in the name and by the authority of this Presbytery cannot therefore be approved," but the presbytery had been *approving* the teaching by not officially confronting Holmes about his views. Further, S. C. Todd was now following in Holmes's footsteps. Later in the meeting, Holmes requested the opportunity to join with others that might be interested to enter a protest against the letter of response at the adjourned meeting of Enoree Presbytery scheduled to meet when the Synod of South Carolina convened in October.⁵⁵

At some point before the synod meeting began in the evening of October 29, Enoree Presbytery met and addressed the protest presented by Rev. N. J. Holmes against the letter that had been sent by the presbytery in response to South Carolina Presbytery's letter. As it turned out, the only signers of the protest against the recent action of Enoree Presbytery were Holmes and S. C. Todd. Their protest was not so much concerned with opposing Enoree's response to South Carolina Presbytery's letter, but instead with the way their view had been described.

To the Presbytery of Enoree: Dear Brethren: As we have been connected directly or indirectly with your action in the response to the Overture from the South Carolina Presbytery, on the subject of sanctification, we desire to say to the Presbytery that we have given the matter very earnest and prayerful consideration seeking to reach a correct interpretation of the phrase, "entire, instantaneous sanctification in this life," as used in that reply. And we have reached the conclusion that the Presbytery meant thereby to describe a state of perfection in this life, in which there is no further need at any time of cleansing from sin for additional growth in grace, which would be absolute or sinless perfection, a state of grace which we do not believe is ever reached by any man, in this life, and which we do not preach.⁵⁶

The protest was in accord with the Holiness Movement teaching regarding entire and instantaneous sanctification presented earlier in this article, but Holmes and Todd did not clarify for Enoree Presbytery exactly what it was they believed in writing other than it was not appropriately described in the letter. Though it cannot be discerned from either the presbytery letter to South Carolina Presbytery nor the Holmes and Todd protest, the presbytery understood the words "entire, instantaneous sanctification in this life," one way, but Holmes and Todd understood them differently. The protest by Holmes and Todd required a response and Enoree Presbytery adopted, "the Presbytery admits the paper to record without accepting the definition it gives as the only and necessary meaning of the phrase 'entire instantaneous sanctification in this life' used in the paper adopted by Presbytery."⁵⁷

The 1897 Synod of South Carolina meeting took place in Darlington beginning October 29. The synod was to hear its first report from the Home Missions Committee which had been established the preceding year. Holmes had been elected Synod of South Carolina Evangelist in the fall of 1896 and he began his duties in January of 1897. The chairman of the committee was N. J. Holmes, which means he was in charge of the committee that was overseeing his work as synod evangelist. If Lewis Carroll's Alice was a Presbyterian and not an Anglican, she might say of the events, "Things are getting curiouser and curiouser!" Holmes went on to report that he had "visited sixty-four churches and raised \$4,841. His salary was 1500.00, 200.00 of which he returned to the denomination as a gift. The preaching done to interest the people in his special mission has resulted incidentally in the conversion of seventy persons, fifty-eight of whom have joined the Presbyterian Church."⁵⁸ He had also been involved in organizing a church in Georgetown and the Home Missions Committee was particularly delighted with the free rail travel he had been able to obtain to alleviate expenses for the presbytery.⁵⁹

By the September 1898 stated meeting of Enoree Presbytery in Spartanburg, Holmes had been working as an independent evangelist since the termination of his work with the Synod of South Carolina in April. He reported, technically as a minister without call,

55. *Enoree*, 82nd–84th, 1897, 16.

56. *Enoree*, 82nd–84th, 1897, 23.

57. *Enoree*, 82nd–84th, 1897, 23.

58. *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina, at its Annual Meeting, Held At Darlington, S. C., October 29th—November 1st, 1897* (Clinton: Presbyterian Job Office, 1897), 11.

59. *Synod of SC, Darlington, 1897*, 35.

that he had been preaching constantly, as he had invitations.⁶⁰ It looked like all was well with Rev. Holmes and his work as a member of presbytery. The bump in the road created by South Carolina Presbytery's letter about the teaching of Rev. Todd had been smoothed over, but the situation was about to change. This time, the question raised came by way of an overture questioning the doctrines preached by Revs. Holmes and Todd. The overture was referred to the Committee of Bills and Overtures.⁶¹ When the committee gave its report concerning the overture, the minutes recorded the events.

The order of the day viz, the report of the Committee on Bills and Overtures on the overture of H. W. Burwell and others was taken up. A substitute for the Committee's paper was presented by Rev. T. B. Craig, which was discussed until the time of recess, when the session was extended. The substitute was adopted and is as follows:

Resolved: That a committee be appointed, consisting of Rev. Messrs. J. S. Watkins, Robt. Adams, W. L. Boggs, H. W. Burwell, And T. H. Law, to consider and discuss fully with Rev. Messrs. N. J. Holmes and S. C. Todd all the points involved in their alleged departures from the doctrinal standards of our Church, in order that all supposed misunderstanding and differences may be removed and that these beloved brethren, in their beliefs and teachings, may be established in perfect accord with the Word of God as interpreted in our Church standards; or failing to conform their views to our standards to report to Presbytery to what extent and in what respect they diverge, and to determine and report to Presbytery what should be done; that this Committee be instructed to report to the adjourned meeting of Presbytery to be held in Lancaster during the meeting of Synod.

Respectfully submitted, Thomas B. Craig.⁶²

The extended discussion of the response to the overture may be indicative of the division within the presbytery

60. *Minutes of the Eighty-Sixth, Eighty-Seventh, and Eighty-Eighth Sessions of the Presbytery of Enoree, Held at Spartanburg, S. C., September 15, 1898, Spartanburg, S. C., September 27, 1898, Lancaster, S. C., October 19, 1898* (Union: Allan Nicholson Printers, 1898), 8.

61. *Enoree, 86th–88th*, 1898, 11.

62. *Enoree, 86th–88th*, 1898, 17–18.

63. *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina At Its Annual Meeting, Held At Lancaster, S. C., October 18–21, 1898* (Union: Allan Nicholson Press, 1898), 33.

64. *Enoree, 86th–88th*, 1898, 31–32.

regarding Holmes and Todd. Whether the report that had been presented by the committee was more or less severe towards Holmes and Todd is not known, but it would be likely that the Bills and Overtures Committee, which had one of the signers of the overture, Rev. H. W. Burwell, as a member, would have had a stronger action in mind based upon the common knowledge of the teaching on the Holy Spirit by Todd and Holmes.

However, despite the extensive travels and evangelistic efforts of Rev. Holmes applauded in the synod meeting of 1897, when the 1898 meeting in Lancaster convened in the evening of October 18, things had changed. The Committee on Synodical Evangelization reported that Holmes had been "employed... as general Evangelist for a little more than two months during the year, in which time he did faithful service." The committee added that it thought it was best to discontinue the services of a "general Evangelist" and that there were not any synod evangelists in the field since April 1898.⁶³ Enoree Presbytery held its adjourned meeting during the days of the synod sessions to hear the report of the committee appointed to discuss the views of Holmes and Todd. The report was adopted by the presbytery as presented by Rev. John S. Watkins, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg.

After full conference with Revs. N. J. Holmes and S. C. Todd, these brethren notified the committee of their intention to withdraw from the PCUS, and the committee recommend that the request be granted. ... The report was received and adopted.

Lancaster, S. C., October 20, 9 a.m.
Messrs. N. J. Holmes and S. C. Todd,

Dear Brethren:

Enoree Presbytery, upon the report of the committee appointed to confer with you, notifying the Presbytery of your decision to withdraw from connection with the Presbyterian Church in the United States, consents to your withdrawal without further proceedings in the matter of your views and teachings. And in thus severing your official relations with our church, the occasion for which we sincerely regret, the Presbytery cheerfully bears testimony to your good character and piety while members of our body, and bids you an affectionate adieu.

In behalf of and by order of the Presbytery.
THOS. H. LAW, Stated Clerk.⁶⁴

Despite ending the clerk's letter as though Holmes and Todd were being given *bon voyage* with "an affectionate adieu" as they embarked on a tour of Europe, both sides recognized that there was a difference between them regarding the teaching of the church standards on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Although there is no mention of the discussions, the guess is that the committee heard the Holmes-Todd doctrines and said, "Either change your views or leave, because if you do not, you will be tried for your doctrine." There was no action taken to explain the Holmes-Todd views or refute them in the minutes. Thus, Enoree Presbytery allowed them to withdraw, which allowed Holmes and Todd to be in the odd situation of continuing as Presbyterian ministers that were not members of a presbytery and were not under the jurisdiction of any of the PCUS courts. This compromise made between Enoree Presbytery and Holmes-Todd would not go over well with the Synod of South Carolina, but synod action would not occur until 1899.

When the Synod of South Carolina convened in October 1899 in historic Newberry, Rev. William Gordon Neville of the church in York was elected moderator. Late in the afternoon of October 25, Enoree Presbytery was ordered to meet in the afternoon "for necessary business," the nature of which was not noted.⁶⁵ On the fourth day of the meeting following the report of the Committee on Bills and Overtures, the case of Revs. Holmes and Todd came before the synod by way of resolution.

Inasmuch as there is a degree of indefiniteness as to the present ecclesiastical status of Messrs. N. J. Holmes and S. C. Todd, formerly members of Enoree Presbytery, but whose names were dropped from the roll of Presbytery at their own request.

RESOLVED: That it is the mind of this Synod that they have been divested of all authority derived from the Presbyterian Church to exercise the functions of the ministry, and our churches are advised of this fact and warned not to encourage their efforts in preaching and teaching in their midst.⁶⁶

The synod, recognizing the ambiguous situation Holmes and Todd had entered with respect to their ordinations when the compromise was accomplished with Enoree Presbytery, divested them of office. The synod's announcement that the two were divested was made without due process, which was a fact that was not missed by Holmes. He commented that he had been treated unjustly, that the divesting had taken place over a year

after he and Todd had been granted letters of dismissal, they had not been summoned to appear before the synod, and he "did not recognize the action of the Synod or its jurisdiction over" him (Holmes, 97–98). Why the Synod of South Carolina did not address the Holmes-Todd case via review of the Enoree Presbytery minutes, which had been approved by the synod earlier in the meeting, is bewildering, unless the synod did not want to wait another year for Enoree to respond to an exception to the minutes.⁶⁷ The resolution adopted by the Synod of South Carolina not only established that Holmes and Todd were no longer Presbyterian ministers, but it warned the churches that they should not allow them in their pulpits.

When Holmes left the PCUS, he became the minister of the Brewerton Independent Presbyterian Church, which was a PCUS church that had voted unanimously to leave Enoree Presbytery. He served its pulpit one Sunday per month and spent the other Sundays in evangelistic work. In 1898, N. J. and Lucy had founded Holmes Bible College in the old Altamont Hotel on Paris Mountain near Greenville, but the Holmes school had to make a few moves to different properties over the years until it settled on its current new campus. As the years passed, Holmes was a leader in the Pentecostal movement in South Carolina. He continued his tent meetings and work in the churches with Lucy always at his side. *The Greenville Daily News* reported regarding one of his revivals in 1900, that in response to the criticism of sheep stealing, Holmes said, "We are not in this work to break up churches.... Let me say to you that if you don't belong to some church already, be sure to join some branch. It doesn't make any difference to me which it is. Suit your own choice about that."⁶⁸

Nickels John Holmes died December 17, 1919 and was buried in the Laurens Cemetery, where Lucy would be interred next to him in 1922. Over the years since N. J. Holmes's death, those who remember his contributions to Holiness/Pentecostalism have sometimes gathered for memorial services on the date of his death at his grave in Laurens. Holmes Memorial Church has been or soon will be razed and a memorial chapel has been constructed on the new site of Holmes Bible College.

65. *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina Held at Newberry, S. C., October 24–27, 1899* (Spartanburg: W. F. Barnes, Book and Job Printer, 1899), 9.

66. *Synod of SC, Newberry, 1899, 24; The Newberry Herald and News* reported the synod action with regard to the divesting of Holmes and Todd, October 31, 1899.

67. *Synod of SC, Newberry, 1899, 10.*

68. *The Greenville Daily News*, Tuesday, June 26, 1900, 5.

Concluding Thoughts, etc.

Probably the most perplexing and difficult question raised by N. J. Holmes's years as a Presbyterian minister is, Why did Enoree Presbytery allow Holmes to continue ministry for several years knowing that his views were not consistent with those of his denomination? Surely, at least in the later years of his Presbyterian work, his views must have been common knowledge in the Synod of South Carolina. Holmes visited Northfield in 1891 and W. P. Jacobs complained about Holmes's Holiness teaching in tent meetings in Clinton just before Holmes resigned from Second Presbyterian Church in late 1895. However, Holmes went on to be elected the South Carolina Synod Evangelist for about fourteen months beginning in 1897, six years after Northfield and two years after Jacobs's comment. Could it have been the ever-present memory of Zelotes Holmes that led the presbyters to wink at Holmes's pneumatology? When presbyters saw Nickels did they think of dear Zelotes and just did not have the heart to make an issue over his son's views. Was N. J. Holmes so gregarious and likable that the presbyters found it impossible to oppose him? Was he such a captivating preacher that he enraptured all listeners with his silver-tongued sermons so that they subconsciously suppressed his Holiness teachings? Could it be that since he had started several churches during his years as Enoree Presbytery Evangelist, increased the membership in the presbytery, influenced several young men to become candidates, excelled at raising money, that the presbyters believed it was better to keep him than lose him over something like *the doctrine of the Holy Spirit*? Only motions adopted are recorded in minutes, so maybe there were other attempts to counsel and discuss Holmes's views for clarification but the motions to do so were defeated. The answer to this perplexing question might involve all or none of the above suggestions, or combination of any of them, perhaps with some new theories. Surely, it would be a mistake to draw a hard and fast conclusion about why the judicatories did what they did based on the limited information in court minutes and in Holmes's autobiography, but it is still clear that he had wandered regarding pneumatology and it is extremely unlikely that at least some, like W. P. Jacobs, did not know there was a problem. However, there is one possibility that might be the best....

During the years that N. J. Holmes was a Presbyterian minister, Enoree Presbytery showed steady

growth. For the eleven years from 1888 through 1899, the presbytery grew from 18 ministers, 41 churches, and 2520 communicant members to 28 ministers, 57 churches, and 4026 members. The number of ministers in the presbytery increased by 55%, the churches by 39%, and the rolls by 60%. Much, if not the great majority, of this growth can be attributed to N. J. Holmes's work as an official presbytery evangelist, his work as an evangelist while the pastor of Second Presbyterian Church, and his work as a minister without call conducting his own tent meetings. Even if only half of the growth can be attributed to Holmes, it still shows a remarkable numerical success. However, what appears to be steady and blessed growth needs to be adjusted by a few other bits of information. During that same period, 2269 were added to the church rolls by "examination," which would include covenant children, first time professions of faith, and what might be called today reaffirmation of faith, and then added to those received by examination were 1602 members added by "certificate," which indicates their transfer from another congregation. There were a total of 3871 members added to the flocks in the Enoree Presbytery churches, but by the end of the eleven years, the actual growth of the presbytery was 1506 members. What happened to the other 2365 members? Some would have died, others transferred to other churches, and others left with N. J. Holmes and S. C. Todd when they left the presbytery (this could have been a large number), but these reasons for the loss would not be sufficient to explain all 2365. The atmosphere often found in revivals or tent meetings is an emotional hot-house environment conducive to professions of faith, but the problem is that many of those professing faith in such a situation exemplify the seed that fell upon rocky soil in Jesus' parable of the soils in Luke 8:4-15, Matthew 13:1-23, and Mark 4:1-20. When the seed fell upon the rocky ground, the plants sprouted, grew quickly, and withered because they did not have a root system sufficient to sustain life. Jesus likened this to the one who hears the Gospel, embraces it with zeal, but then loses that initial exuberance and abandons what had been professed. Without systematic and faithful preaching from the Word of God for growth in sanctification, the ones professing their faith during revivals often do not continue in the church. Sadly, those many missing members may have withered due to a limited root system incapable of sustaining life. Systematic and foundational preaching was not provided to feed and bring them to maturity.⁶⁹

Once one gets past the mystery of the judicatories'

laxness with N. J. Holmes, there are a few positive lessons that can be learned. The first lesson is that the *extraordinary clause*, currently *clauses* in the PCA BCO, should be used only in truly *EXTRA-ordinary* situations. Recent changes to the PCA BCO have reinforced the idea that the clause should be used with great care and infrequency. Would the story of N. J. Holmes have been different if he had been required to follow the full letter of the BCO with respect to ministerial education? Would his attendance in class, study of theology, and discussions with professors and students have *guaranteed* that he would not have adopted the views he eventually chose? No, of course not, but it would have given Holmes the opportunity to learn from teachers professing and teaching Reformed Theology rather than the generically Evangelical sources he was choosing on his own. The questions that Holmes had regarding the weakness and frustration that he, his wife, and the members of churches were experiencing would hopefully have found resolution in good, sound, doctrinal teaching. On the other hand, if Holmes had followed fully the BCO regarding education in preparation for the ministry, at least Enoree Presbytery could have had a clear conscience and taken comfort in the fact that they had done all they could to prepare Holmes for ordination by requiring him to conform fully to the BCO. Maybe the application of the *extraordinary clause* to Holmes was a reason why he was not confronted officially about his views; some Enoree presbyters may have felt at least partially at fault regarding his adoption of second blessing views because they allowed the *extraordinary clause* to be used.

Second, another aspect of the problem is that the use of the *extraordinary clause* can cause a ripple effect. The churches of Enoree Presbytery were giving money to presbytery to support a Presbyterian evangelist during Holmes's early ministry and then later to the Synod of South Carolina to support him at that level. The congregation members trusted their elders to behave with piety, discernment, and concern for the truth of their system of doctrine, but instead, the funds were being used to expand the Holiness Movement and build Holiness congregations. Yes, Holmes organized several churches, but one has to wonder whether they were merely connectional Presbyterian congregations with Holiness theology. Another ripple cascading from the use of the *extraordinary clause* is the young man today sitting in a presbytery meeting as a newly accepted candidate for the Gospel ministry. As one who is ready to go to seminary in the fall, he sees a candidate being examined for licensure and

the *extraordinary clause* is applied to relieve him of the arch nemesis of many a seminary student, Hebrew. The new young candidate then thinks to himself, "I don't want to take Hebrew, so maybe the *extraordinary clause* is the way out!" Finally, probably the biggest wave of the ripple effect is the tsunami that reaches the congregation because the inappropriate use of the *extraordinary clause* may provide a congregation with a minister who is not equipped to shepherd their souls and minister the Word of God. Like many decisions, to use or not use the *extraordinary clause* is a decision that cannot be made in isolation.

Third, Presbyterian connectional polity works. In the Holmes case, it may look like it did not work, but even though it lacked efficiency, *it did work*. As Holmes progressed in his acceptance and preaching of Holiness teaching, it is not recorded that Enoree Presbytery officially confronted him about his views at any point until the South Carolina Presbytery addressed the problem by corresponding with their sister presbytery regarding S. C. Todd. One presbytery said to another presbytery, "This is irregular and it is not according to our standards." Enoree Presbytery had to respond to the correspondence, and as it did so, it was confronted with its own laxness in the situation. Presbyterianism also came through within Enoree Presbytery when some elders overtured the court regarding the Holmes-Todd situation and brought the issue before the judicatory. By bringing up the issue via overture, *a response of some sort had to be made*. No matter what the response, even if it was inadequate, the synod would have had the opportunity to address it during the review of the presbytery minutes. Although the group that submitted the overture may have hoped for something more firm than allowing Holmes and Todd to resign, leave the denomination, and go their own way, *the matter was on record in the minutes*. In the Synod of South Carolina meeting for 1899, even though the Enoree Presbytery minutes of the preceding year were approved without exception, the issue of the status of Holmes and Todd was confronted on the floor of the synod. Synod said that the men were divested and no longer should be allowed in the denomination's pulpits. The key aspects of connectional Presbyterian polity and discipline came into play in that there was the mutual submission of the brethren at the presbytery and synod levels, which was brought to light first by South Carolina Presbytery confronting Enoree Presbytery, then by the elders that

69. The statistics were gathered from the presbytery reports to the Synod of South Carolina and the statistical tables in the appendices of the synod minutes from 1888–1899.

overtured Enoree Presbytery, and finally by the Synod of South Carolina through the instrument of a motion that divested the two men. Presbyterian connectionalism worked, not as well as it should have, not perfectly, not fully according to the *BCO*, but it worked.

Fourth, when cases are such that the *extraordinary clause* should be used because of truly *extra-ordinary* reasons, work should be done to see that the excused item is included in the examination in some way. If a man truly has great difficulty dealing with the right-to-left flow and right-to-left characters of Hebrew because of some handicap, a blanket exemption should not be made. Some way should be found to require *something* of the candidate. Memorizing the Hebrew alphabet, some paradigms, and at least trying to coordinate English meanings to Hebrew words via one of the English concordances that are numerically keyed to the Hebrew could be a start. Or, even better, the candidate should be required to audit (of course, with required attendance; for one to *audit* one has to *hear*) the Hebrew classes and at the end of each semester write a

thousand word essay titled, “What I learned in Hebrew Class this Semester.” The point is to *require something*. Presbyterian and Reformed churches have required the biblical languages because a minister needs to be equipped to open-up, exposit, explain, and apply the Bible as a complete revelation including both Old and New Testaments and Hebrew is essential to Covenant theology and Redemptive-Historical preaching.

Fifth, if readers of this article are presbyters, they should remember the case of N. J. Holmes the next time a Candidates or Credentials committee chairman asks the presbytery to apply the *extraordinary clause*.

“Presbyters should determine if the request for an extraordinary exemption is truly *extra-ordinary*, or should the presbyters instead have the man follow the full requirements as set forth in the *BCO*. If the case is judged to be *extraordinary*, then thought should be given as to how the man could be required to do something in the area of exemption so that he is better equipped for the ministry. *Carte blanche* exemptions should be avoided.” ■



Nickels John Holmes, circa 1895–1900.