

## A Gilded Age Modernist

*Reuben A. Torrey and the Roots of  
Contemporary Conservative Evangelicalism*

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The entry for July Thursday, July 2, 1882, proceeded like most others in this diary. “Read today in Darwin’s ‘Descent of Man.’ Dorner’s System of Christian Doctrine a German poem by Arndt and the Christian Union. Mr. Strong, Mrs. Payne and Gurney came this morning and stayed until after dinner. We had a pleasant teachers meeting & delightful prayer meeting this evening.” It was just another day in the life of a liberal Ohio minister. Subsequent entries chronicled more of the same: the books he read (Albrecht Ritschl and Charles Darwin), the sermon topics he selected, his visitation schedules, and later details of his theological studies in Germany. But when the same minister began a second diary in 1889, it promised more excitement. In the intervening years he had exchanged the life of books for faith healing, ecstatic spirit possession, and other miraculous demonstrations. “The Heavenly Father has of late shown me so many evidences of His love & care,” he began the first entry, “that it seems as though I ought to keep a record of His many kindnesses to me.” What followed was a record of his “living on

faith”—that is, his reliance on prayer alone for his financial needs without salary or any requests for money. Tellingly, he used an old ledger book for this diary: for it was to be his literal accounting of God’s miraculous provision.<sup>1</sup>

The minister publicly announced his intention to engage in this life of faith at the third annual meeting of the Convention of Christian Workers—a group he had chaired since its beginning in 1886. But this was no holiness revival; rather, it was one of the premier gatherings of socially active evangelicals in the Gilded Age. By this time it had gained the endorsement of Lyman Abbott and Josiah Strong and the active participation of several important figures in the future social gospel movement. Sessions included reports of urban evangelism intermingled with discussions of how best to provide material needs, social services, and wholesome entertainment for the poor. But regardless of emphasis, participants were united in their condemnation of traditional middle-class Protestantism—dogmatic and overly technical theological systems, denominational tribalism, pew rents, and fashionable dress codes. Only a thoroughgoing ecumenical and class-leveling reformation in the church would transform society and help bring the Kingdom of God to fruition.<sup>2</sup>

Higher criticism and ecstatic religious experiences, the social gospel and living on faith: the only thing more surprising than these combinations is that they were found in the life and work of Reuben A. Torrey. Torrey’s importance to the early fundamentalist movement is well established. He served as the superintendent of both the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, helped edit *The Fundamentals* and two other important fundamentalist periodicals, conducted massive worldwide revival tours that spread the fundamentalist message around the globe (while inadvertently cultivating the theological soil for Pentecostalism), and hosted the planning meeting that gave birth to the World’s Christian Fundamentalist Association. He wrote dozens of books, many of which still guide contemporary conservative evangelicals. Yet the development of Torrey’s theology and praxis has remained obscured in his Gilded Age ministry. A lack of source material forced scholars to rely on hagiographic biographical treatments created during his revival campaigns and by later fundamentalist admir-

ers, both of which minimized this key period. Unaware of the degree to which Torrey engaged liberal theology, scholarly consensus presumed Torrey's faith was a simple and naive continuation of old orthodoxies. William McLoughlin (who could not call Torrey "educated" without quotation marks) characterized his ministry as a "defense of evangelical Americanism against all that was modern" and "uncompromisingly 'old-fashioned.'" Martin Marty found Torrey emblematic of the "traditionalist" successors of the revivalist Dwight L. Moody, who were "more inflexible and intransigent" and "use[d] the social Christians as a foil." George Marsden's work, and the scholarship it inspired, has been more charitable to Torrey personally, but it still presumes his theology was a product of an earlier age. He exemplifies prototypical fundamentalist thinking—rooted in the science and philosophy of Bacon, Newton, and Scottish common sense realism, and the theologies of the Puritans, Finney, and Princeton Seminary.<sup>3</sup>

Marsden's essential work tracing the often-tangled roots of fundamentalism into nineteenth-century philosophy and evangelical theology demonstrated that the movement was much more than an irrational, modernity-induced paroxysm; rather, it was the continuation of a once-respectable tradition with a coherent internal logic. But over time this near-exclusive focus on continuity with past forms of Protestantism has led to its own distortions. Fundamentalism is too often equated with "traditional" Protestantism (or worse, an "orthodox" Protestantism that is never defined). The simple equation of fundamentalism with its antecedents distorts both the past and the present, especially when innovations of modern evangelicals are read back into the nineteenth century. Fundamentalists and liberals are dichotomized into nonoverlapping "antimodern" and "modern" camps. This schematic makes it difficult to investigate their shared modern characteristics: traits that distinguish both groups from their nineteenth-century forebears. It also obscures the distinctive lines of continuity to traditional Protestantism preserved by self-identified liberals, traditions from which fundamentalists deviated while acclimating to the modern world.<sup>4</sup>

Torrey's life adds to a growing body of research that challenges the antimodernity of fundamentalism and the surprisingly resilient "two-party" schematic that structures the study of fundamentalism.<sup>5</sup> Though

later partisans would rather forget it, scholars, including Marsden, have observed that Gilded Age evangelical networks were a heterogeneous mix of future fundamentalists, Pentecostals, and liberals.<sup>6</sup> Torrey's early life and theological development pushes this research further in two respects. First, it suggests that this was no coalition of convenience; future fundamentalists as much as modernists self-consciously positioned themselves in opposition to traditional, dogmatic Protestantism of the first half of the nineteenth century. Torrey found conservative preoccupations with denominational identity, formal theology, social respectability, and inward-looking piety stifling and largely irrelevant. Torrey also demonstrates that at least one important strand of fundamentalism was rooted squarely in the "modernist impulse" described by William R. Hutchison. Torrey read the same theologians Hutchison credits for the spread of modernism in America, and their fingerprints are found even on his fundamentalist belief and practice. He joined ecumenists in deconstructing traditional theological categories, in seeking a new practical, interdenominational theology reformulated in a modern idiom, and in jettisoning any part of traditional Christianity that he believed would impede its relational essence. He was also driven by the modernist impulses to conflate the natural and supernatural and to promote an activist agenda that would bring the Kingdom of God to earth. Although the beliefs and practices that he developed out of these first principles were ultimately irreconcilable with liberal modernism, Torrey's "old-time religion" bears the marks of modernity.<sup>7</sup>

#### FROM IRRELIGION TO LIBERALISM, 1856–76

Reuben Archer Torrey was born January 28, 1856, into an elite, non-evangelical family. His father, Reuben Slayton Torrey, was a banker in Hoboken, New Jersey. He suffered heavy losses in the financial panic of 1857 but switched to manufacturing and gained lucrative government contracts during the Civil War that allowed the family to retire to a lavish two-hundred-acre estate in Geneva, New York, in 1867. The Torreys' religious affiliations were typical of American elites. The elder Torrey was a Universalist, while his pious Presbyterian wife, Elizabeth

Swift Torrey, cultivated the family practice of daily Bible reading and prayer. Theirs was a sincere but distinctively nonevangelical Protestantism. Torrey's parents made no attempt to bring him into a converted state—a standard practice among evangelicals—and he claimed he “did not know what it meant to accept Christ” until seminary. He first explored formal religious affiliation, and then rejected it, on his own. “I was thirteen years of age,” Torrey later wrote, “in a large room . . . where we put the old books out of the library.” Here he noticed a copy of the covenant from his mother's church (tellingly discarded) and “wondered if I could not be a church member.” Ultimately, Torrey rejected the idea, since a Christian must submit to the will of God. He decided instead to seek after “a life of pleasure.”<sup>8</sup>

Two years later Torrey matriculated at Yale University, where he pursued “the card-table, the theatre, the dance, the horse-race, the champagne supper.” His hedonism was enabled by an indulgent father and his ability to “[learn] easily without much study.” But during his junior year he had a personal crisis and became deeply depressed. His behavior turned “very wreckless” [*sic*] and he began “drinking very heavily.” At the nadir of this crisis, Torrey recalled, “I awoke one night in awful agony and despair. In desperation I sprang out of bed, rushed to my wash-stand drawer and drew it open to take out of it the instrument that would put an end to the whole business, by committing suicide, but I could not find it and in the dark I dropped on my knees beside the open drawer and promised God that if He would take the awful burden off my heart I would preach the gospel.” Torrey incongruously treated this as his conversion experience, despite the fact he had only “settled” that he would become a minister. “I did not accept Christ,” Torrey recounted, “nor [decide] that I would become a Christian but that I would preach. I made no change whatever in my life, in fact I think my life, if anything, was wilder after that than it was before.” Torrey's Christianity was oriented with neither the head nor the heart; it was a matter of the will—his existential decision to submit himself to God. This “conversion” narrative essentially elevated the will above all other human faculties.<sup>9</sup>

Torrey slowly reformed his conduct over the following year and finally decided to make a confession of faith under the influence of two

books, both of which rejected traditional theology and denominational identities. *The Bay-Path* was an unremarkable work of historical fiction by Josiah G. Holland, the editor of *Scribner's Monthly*. Its primary purpose was to critique nineteenth-century Protestant dogmatism and middle-class propriety. True religion, it argued, was based in a love for God and others, demonstrated in pragmatic acts of kindness. Even more important to Torrey's theological development was John R. Seeley's *Ecce Homo*, a British biography of the historical Jesus that helped catalyze the social gospel movement in the United States. Seeley claimed to strip from Christianity the philosophical and dogmatic accretions of the last eighteen hundred years: he accepted only "those conclusions about him [Jesus] . . . which the facts themselves, critically weighed appear to warrant." Seeley defined the Christian faith as "a loyal and free confidence in Christ" rather than a theological system; likewise the church was not an institution but a group of believers who struggled to apply Jesus's teachings to the practical problems of society. Combined, these two books envisioned Christianity as a humanitarian and communal effort to bring good into the world.<sup>10</sup>

Torrey joined Yale's college church his senior year and attempted "to lead a Christian life, making a radical change in my conduct," but he encountered profound doubts upon entering the divinity school in 1876. He blamed his reading of "agnostic literature," including the eighteenth-century historian Edward Gibbon, which "utterly unsettled . . . [his] faith." *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* raised difficulties in Christianity caused by historical consciousness—problems that were particularly troubling to Protestants in the late nineteenth century. Using the techniques of textual criticism and comparative religion, Gibbon undermined the uniqueness and veracity of the biblical record and its moral credentials. The humanitarianism that Seeley and Holland naively presumed to be the core of primitive Christianity evaporated under historical scrutiny. Compounding these doubts was Gibbon's elegant dismantling of cessationism—the means by which Protestants sheltered biblical miracles from critiques of Enlightenment science. "I had not been interested enough in Christianity to be an agnostic before," Torrey recounted; but now, "I was utterly at sea." The dismantling of his initial faith triggered a crisis of religious certainty,

common among Gilded Age elites. “I made up my mind to find out to an absolute certainty the truth,” Torrey wrote. Christianity for Torrey had been a matter of the will. But now his continuing in the faith hinged on finding adequate answers to three questions: “If the Bible was the Word of God . . . if Jesus Christ was the Son of God . . . [and] whether there was a personal God.” He determined that he would “act accordingly” to whatever he discovered.<sup>11</sup>

### THE MODERNIST SOURCES OF TORREY’S THEOLOGY, 1876–84

Torrey spent the next seven years struggling to rebuild his faith—a process dominated by liberal influences. “Even after I was saved from agnosticism, I was very liberal,” he admitted, “in fact I think I may say that I was the leader of the new theology and destructive criticism wing in the Seminary while I was there.” He probably overstated his importance to Yale’s liberal community, but there is ample evidence of his solidarity with it. While many seminarians in Torrey’s graduating class defended theses such as “The Credibility of Our Lord’s Miracles” or “The Relation of Theology to Preaching,” Torrey’s thesis, in contrast, was “The Work of New England Transcendentalism.” “I read a great deal of Unitarian literature and got a great deal of help from it,” Torrey recalled, “because Unitarianism was more advanced toward the truth in its thinking than I was at that time.” He was “a great admirer” of William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, and “others of the same or similar schools.” A now-lost manuscript he wrote during this time reportedly espoused the higher critical views of William Robertson Smith. But even after he rejected liberal theology, Unitarian and transcendental categories continued to influence his mature assumptions about the Bible, God, and the divine/human relationship. Like Unitarians, Torrey believed that the Bible should be interpreted independent of any other authority, including theological systems and denominational traditions. Transcendentalism shaped Torrey’s understanding of the relationship between the believer and God. He insisted that God interacted directly with an individual believer independent any mediation except the Bible.

“When you read a verse of scripture hear the voice of the living God speaking directly to you in these written words,” Torrey told later readers. “There is new power and attractiveness in the Bible when you have learned to hear a living, present person, God, our Father, Himself talking directly to you in these words.” Even as a fundamentalist, Torrey insisted that “William Ellery Channing [was] a great thinker,” despite his going “astray in his thinking.” The main failing of Unitarians, by Torrey’s estimation, was not that they rejected tradition but that “they tried to love God as a matter of duty.”<sup>12</sup>

Torrey’s time in divinity school was not devoid of conservative influences, but these encounters had little effect at the time. Traditional Congregationalism remained in the academic mix at Yale (though it was increasingly challenged by positivist science and social Darwinism); Torrey simply found it unconvincing. “The professors in Yale Seminary at that time were all orthodox (according to present day test they would have been called extremely orthodox),” Torrey reported, “but I was not.” He was also first exposed to the evangelist Dwight L. Moody, who held revival services in New Haven during Torrey’s final year at seminary. But Moody’s theology was also nontraditional. Raised among New England Unitarians, he formulated a modern Protestantism outside any denominational constraints, combining a “plain meaning” of the Bible and a radically individualized divine-human relationship. Like many evangelical liberals, Torrey was favorably disposed to Moody. He worked at his New Haven inquiry meetings and found this “personal work” deeply satisfying. He later read Charles Finney’s *Biography and Revival Addresses* and became convinced that “the normal state of a church was revival.” But it would be nearly a decade before he accepted many standard conservative tenets like a literal hell.<sup>13</sup>

Torrey’s first pastorate in Garrettsville, Ohio, had the hallmarks of a liberal ministry. Upon accepting the call, he sent a letter to gauge his congregation’s spiritual condition. Without mentioning a personal conversion experience or the practice of evangelism it emphasized instead “the establishment of His kingdom in the world” and their responsibility “to observe his ordinances and to walk worthy of your calling by a life of piety and benevolence.” His diary cataloged a modernist reading list, including Charles Darwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the *Christian*

*Union* (a liberal periodical edited by Lyman Abbott), and the German theologian Isaac A. Dorner.<sup>14</sup> Extant correspondence from this time was a single letter to the liberal clergyman Phillips Brooks acknowledging “the debt I owe you for inspiration in my individual religious experience and in my public word.”<sup>15</sup> Torrey’s sermon topics were dominated by humanitarian and ethical topics like “How Christians Can Help the Lord,” “Fruit Bearing,” and “Duties to the State.” He only occasionally strayed into subjects like “The New Birth,” and was surprised when a sermon entitled “Traditional and Personal Faith” was well received.<sup>16</sup> An early sermon manuscript argued that true religion was simply the teachings of Jesus. “Buddhism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism all have some truth in the [*sic*] them; and in so far as they agree with the religion of Christ the Episcopalians, Methodists, Universalists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists all contain truth. . . . But any person in any of them that places his faith in Jesus Christ, and believes he is the son of God and tries to work out the natural results of his faith will surely be saved.” Faith in Christ was essential to salvation, but his amorphous definition of this faith considered a practicing Buddhist who “tries to work out the natural results of his faith” in Jesus to be saved.<sup>17</sup>

If Torrey’s primary intellectual influences were secular and liberal, his praxis was affected increasingly by the evangelicalism of his congregation. One member, Clara B. Smith, was particularly influential, especially after marrying Torrey in 1879; but there were others. Torrey’s diary was devoid of a personal evangelical piety, but many entries ruminated on his parishioners’ relational conception of God. He was taken by one woman’s testimony that she had been “in great distress” over not being able to visit her sick father but that after prayer “it seemed to her that God said ‘I will hold him in the hallow of my hand’ & she felt perfect peace and rest.” He occasionally experimented with his own attempts to follow God’s direct leading: following random impulses to hold spontaneous prayer meetings in saloons, for example, and various union meetings with the town’s other churches.<sup>18</sup>

Torrey’s ministry in Garrettsville flourished, but he became increasingly troubled by the dissonance between the supernatural basis of his piety and the naturalistic basis of his theology. In July 1882, he began reading Isaac A. Dorner and quickly became “deeply interested” in his

*System of Doctrine*.<sup>19</sup> Dorner proposed bridging the natural and supernatural through the “central fact” of Christianity: “Jesus Christ, who is . . . a personal unity of the divine life and the human, the Redeemer and the Perfector of humanity” and “in whom the perfect personal union of the divine and human appeared historically.”<sup>20</sup> In August, perhaps inspired by this reading, Torrey contemplated postgraduate study in Germany; in a matter of months, he was on his way to Leipzig, family in tow, to clarify his thinking. Torrey began attending theological lectures in November and quickly acclimated to German university life.<sup>21</sup>

In Leipzig, Torrey studied with several noted biblical scholars but was frustrated by their tendency to separate, rather than unite, the natural and the supernatural. Torrey studied under Franz Delitzsch, who had a reputation early in his career as a “bulwark of conservatism.”<sup>22</sup> But by Torrey’s arrival, Delitzsch had changed his mind on most issues and maintained his confessional Lutheranism only by imposing a strict separation between personal piety and scholarship—the very gap Torrey was attempting to bridge. After a seminar discussing “the question of the late origin of [the] Day [of] Atonement,” Torrey noted with frustration that Delitzsch “seemed to regard it difficult if not impossible—of resolution.”<sup>23</sup> His only advice on how to keep “scientific questions of authorship” from disrupting the faith of laypeople was not to bring them up. “We tried to make him understand that in America men investigated these things & the preacher had to deal with them,” he wrote, but recorded no satisfactory response.<sup>24</sup>

Around this time, Torrey reported reading a gloss of Edward von Hartmann—a philosopher of science who used modern atomic theory and mathematics to connect mind and matter.<sup>25</sup> This led to ruminations about “the great problem of where the natural passes over into the Supernatural & where natural reason ceases & inspiration begins. Are the dividing lines as clearly drawn as some think?”<sup>26</sup> Torrey’s extrapolation of Von Hartmann made the material world radically dependent upon the spiritual—as though the natural order was held together by the abstract mathematics in the mind of God. Torrey’s later views of miracles reflect this influence. Responding to the objection that miracles are impossible “if the laws of nature are fixed,” he argued that “God is the author of the laws of nature,” which merely “indicate God’s customary

ways of working.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, a miracle was God’s choosing to improvise. And since the world was radically dependent on the mind of God, it followed that humanity might best understand reality—both physical and spiritual—through the Bible, the best representation of God’s thoughts. Thus for Torrey, the biblical text became the starting point of all knowledge, to which all other areas must align. “I have come to the fork in the road more than fifty times,” Torrey would say in terms unimaginable to most conservative Protestants, “and in every instance where my reason and common sense differed from the Bible, the Bible had proved right and my reason wrong.”<sup>28</sup>

But making the biblical revelation the foundation for all other avenues of rational inquiry required absolute certainty in one’s interpretation. And so, with Delitzsch’s blessing, Torrey moved to Erlangen to study with Franz H. R. Frank, known for his enterprising theory of Christian certitude.<sup>29</sup> He also immersed himself in mediating theology, rereading Dorner in the original German and endorsing it even more enthusiastically as “a work of depth, scholarship & power,” which “has opened to me many new vistas of truth.”<sup>30</sup> Although he grew impatient with Frank’s technical theology (he described his mentor’s magnum opus as “interesting & instructive” but “written in an exceedingly obscure & wearisome style”), he adopted his and Dorner’s underlying premise: that certitude was rooted in personal experience rather than externally verifiable scientific or philosophical evidence.<sup>31</sup> Frank asserted that God literally recreated the believer’s personality and that a comparison of the self before and after conversion would lead the believer to certain knowledge of regeneration. Torrey’s later advice for dealing with “honest skeptics” reflected this assumption. Rather than using traditional apologetics, he recommended that the skeptic read the Gospel of John “a few verses at a time” with “a willingness to believe,” having first asked God to directly lead them in this reading “and promise[d] to act upon so much as you see to be true.” But Torrey went even further, asserting that biblical inerrancy could be known with certitude only through one’s personal experience of living as though it were true.<sup>32</sup> “I believe that there is a God who answers prayers on the conditions stated in the Bible,” Torrey wrote, “I believe this because I have put it to the test of practical experiment.”<sup>33</sup> In contrast, he regularly

denigrated the usefulness of reason or common sense in biblical interpretation. God required “the unquestioning acceptance of its [the Bible’s] teachings when definitely ascertained, even when they may appear unreasonable or impossible.”<sup>34</sup> Faith preceded evidence; action came before understanding.

But how were the Bible’s teachings to be “definitely ascertained” if not through reason? Part of the solution came from an ingenious, if not entirely faithful, appropriation of the liberal German theologian Albrecht Ritschl. Torrey read *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung* (*Justification and Reconciliation*) in Erlangen and considered it “an interesting & profitable book, both in what one believes & what he has to combat.” Though he dismissed some of Ritschl’s exegesis as “absurd,” he described other parts as “fresh & convincing,” and he concluded, “I do not know when I have had a book from which I have received more profit both by its direct teachings & by lines of thought which it suggested.”<sup>35</sup> Torrey was vague on specifics, but one certainly sees Ritschl’s desire to reform “Protestant dogmatics on the basis of . . . ‘Scripture alone’” and his insistence that the Bible should be “primary source for commentary on itself.”<sup>36</sup> Torrey combined Ritschl’s biblicism with a second idea from Frank: that in each age of human history God gave specific requirements for a faith community to enter into relationship and associated promises if they faithfully met those requirements. The fulfillment of those promises then ushered in a new era with another set requirements and promises. This promise/fulfillment structure helped Frank address problems of historical development in ways similar to dispensationalism.<sup>37</sup> Torrey adopted it in part for that reason but also redirected it into a radically individualistic way of reading the Bible. If nineteenth-century evangelicals conceived of the Bible as largely a divine companion to God’s revelation in nature, Torrey conceived of the Bible as a collection of legal postulates: a contract consisting of promises and their requirements for fulfillment. And by his reading, almost any verse or phrase might become a promise. The sole verse Torrey wrote in the flyleaf of his personal Bible was “Thou, God, seest me”: the words of Hagar that he took as God’s personal promise to know and meet his own needs.<sup>38</sup> Biblical promises were given to individuals, not groups; thus Torrey told his readers to search the Bible “for promises and appropriate them as

fast as you find them—this is done by meeting the conditions and risking all upon them. . . . This is the key to all the treasures of God's grace."<sup>39</sup>

Torrey left Germany without a degree, but the relational theology he forged there still inspires conservative evangelicals. Once he had formulated it, he exchanged the circuitous route through German theology for a simpler and more biblical justification for his approach. The Bible declared itself not only "God breathed" (which Torrey interpreted as "inerrant") but also "useful" or "profitable."<sup>40</sup> This pragmatism fundamentally transformed the Bible from a theological text (knowledge of God for its own sake) to a success manual for Christians. He would claim the Bible was accurate historically and otherwise, but these concerns were of secondary importance. An interpretation was confirmed primarily by personal experience: by practical and demonstrable results. And the cumulative effects of these results, he believed, would transform the world.

#### FAITH IN ACTION: TORREY AND THE EARLY SOCIAL GOSPEL MOVEMENT, 1883–89

Torrey returned to America in October 1883 with a new drive to undertake practical Christian work. He accepted a call to the Jefferson Street Church in Minneapolis, a mission plant designed to reach the largely immigrant working classes. The local Congregational newspaper characterized his theology as "more old school than progressive," but it anticipated his being "a great addition to the working force of the city." Soon after, the church opened the Immanuel Mission, which provided a variety of social, educational, and religious services to the surrounding neighborhood. The church began with only eleven members in 1884 but grew eightfold in three years. As urban missions took an ever larger part of his time, he eventually resigned his pastorate and began a non-denominational church named the "Open Door," designed primarily for working-class converts who had received the cold shoulder in established middle-class churches. Like other congregations in the larger "open" or "free church" movement, they eliminated pew rents

(a hindrance to working-class participation) and instead gathered “contributions for church expenses by weekly offerings pledged upon pledge cards.”<sup>41</sup>

Like other socially oriented evangelicals, Torrey’s life among the poor led to his growing criticism of the “respectable” status quo. His only published article in Minneapolis was a scathing critique of conventional Protestant attitudes toward finances. Taking the words and life of Jesus literally, he condemned the purchase of “magnificent and luxurious homes,” acerbically commenting. “If Christ should visit our land to day . . . He would be welcomed in the homes of His followers to elegant suites of apartments finished in costly woods and furnished in the highest style of the upholsterer’s art.” To this, Torrey contrasted the “homes of earnest Christian men supporting families of six or seven or more upon \$1.25 a day in summer and what odd jobs they could pick up in winter.” The article reflected Torrey’s turn to a woodenly literal and exclusively personal biblical hermeneutic: for example, he asserted that the condemnation of “the one who *hid* his Lord’s money in the *ground*” in the Parable of the Ten Talents forbade only “certain forms of real estate investment.”<sup>42</sup> But this literalness had prophetic bite. To respectable tithers, he suggested they “give eight-tenths more. Yea, ‘sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven.’ The spirit of this injunction is binding upon all and a very literal interpretation would be desirable on the part of many.”<sup>43</sup>

Torrey’s growing social consciousness led to his leadership of the International Christian Workers Association—an important precursor to the social gospel movement started by his Yale classmate John C. Collins. An urban missionary in New Haven, Collins convinced Torrey to chair the annual convention proceedings for the duration of the organization. Topics at the first convention in 1886 ranged from the use of statistical analysis to increase Sunday school attendance, to a defense of “the right of women . . . to preach or be pastors.” Josiah Strong—organizer of the Evangelical Alliance—pledged his support and participated in the New York City convention the following year; Lyman Abbott’s *Christian Union* gave these meetings extensive coverage. By 1891 the convention was attracting prominent participants like Jacob Riis and Anthony Comstock.<sup>44</sup> Torrey’s talks increasingly emphasized

evangelism, but of a relational sort such that “no people . . . are to be converted to certain doctrines.” When his street preaching was interrupted with a question on the nature of the Trinity on one occasion, he reportedly replied, “Never mind about the blessed Trinity; what we are concerned with here is that you have a soul to be saved.” This ecumenism was broad enough that he discouraged “all attacks upon Romanism. ‘Let the man be converted, and the doctrines will take care of themselves.’”<sup>45</sup>

The “plain” interpretation of the Bible that fueled Torrey’s social concerns also led to expectations of supernatural encounters and miraculous demonstrations. As Torrey searched the Bible for promises to claim (and read holiness writers like Phoebe Palmer), he became convinced that a believer might enter into a heightened state of direct communion with God through a “Baptism of the Holy Spirit.” Like other types of religious knowledge, certainty of this experience for Torrey came from first accepting the fact through faith. But after this, the believer would receive empirically verifiable evidence—a “new power, a power not his own, ‘the power of the Highest!’”<sup>46</sup> In 1886 Torrey became convinced, on the basis of a passage in the book of James, that this power included physical healing through faith. A brief foray into a faith healing ministry was cut short when his failure to heal a young woman with leukemia led to her mother’s attempting a resurrection. He ceased public healings after the grisly incident was reported in several metropolitan newspapers, but he continued the practice privately on his family.<sup>47</sup>

Then in 1888, after reading George Müller’s *Life of Faith*, he edged toward a second public experiment with the miraculous. Pairing the biblical requirement “that it was wrong to run in debt to any man (Rom. 13.8)” with the promise “that if we trusted God and took our stand upon his plain word of His He would see to it that our wants were met . . . I resolved to go no further in debt & to pay up the old as fast as possible.” After a string of apparent answers to prayer, Torrey decided to run the Minneapolis City Mission and the Open Door Church as a “faith work.” Rather than expecting God to bless human efforts with natural increase, Torrey concluded God would provide directly, in answer to specific petitions, because he “stepped right out to trust the

Lord.”<sup>48</sup> The early months of these arrangements were exceedingly successful. His unusual stipulation that he would not solicit funds from anyone other than God in prayer attracted coverage in the religious and secular press—and with this attention, unsolicited donations. But as the press lost interest, and unsolicited donations slowed to a trickle, he faced difficult questions—especially when he did not have the funds he needed. Over time, Torrey’s prayers were answered through increasingly tenuous accounting tricks, as when he remembered “that we had enough in our S. S. treasury to meet the deficiency” for another part of the mission’s budget.<sup>49</sup> Later God’s provision came by way of two forgotten silver dollars in his desk—suggesting that better office organization would have made the miracle unnecessary.<sup>50</sup> On another occasion, a gift came after a coworker broke Torrey’s ironclad principle never to solicit funds to tell a new convert of the mission’s financial need.<sup>51</sup> Even more bafflingly, he once credited God’s miraculous provision by way of a gift from his wife Clara.<sup>52</sup>

By the summer of 1889 Torrey’s experiment of living on faith teetered on the edge of collapse for reasons both practical and conceptual. Since God’s provision was predicated on his avoiding debt, financial difficulties necessarily meant he had somehow (even inadvertently) violated that principle. Torrey’s diary oscillated erratically as he tried various combinations of saving and spending to demonstrate his unwavering faith while avoiding debt. He first believed that saving was irrelevant since “God can provide for the future” but then determined to “lay by in store day by day . . . as it seems like running in debt to have your house a month & no provision for the rent,” and then later to “pay wholly in advance.”<sup>53</sup> But when the promises of God still seemed to be failing he concluded “on thinking it over” that paying his landlord in advance “was putting him in debt to me.”<sup>54</sup> The source of the radical conclusion that prepaying (or lending money) was transgressing the principle of indebtedness stemmed from his continuing attraction to John Seeley’s vision of the church being an organic, interdependent community.<sup>55</sup> But with his certitude grounded in a direct and radically individualistic relationship with God, his communal proclivities led him into a philosophical cul-de-sac. Indeed, from an interdependent perspective, it was impossible to avoid entanglement in debt—either one

was indebted to another or one placed another person in debt. This made the entire modern economy—investments, banks, commodities, and futures—a violation of God’s biblical requirements. Rents and wages became an insoluble dilemma: Should payments be broken into hourly, minute-by-minute, or second-by-second rates—to be paid simultaneous with use? No wonder that his final diary entry confessed deep confusion. “I am now in straits personally and so is the work. My rent is due and must be paid. I have not paid in advance. I am not clear about this.”<sup>56</sup> What had begun as a bold proclamation of God’s faithful personal care independent of natural means had become an ambiguous whisper.<sup>57</sup> He would be forced to choose between individualism and the social, certitude and interdependent community.

#### FROM SOCIAL GOSPEL TO FUNDAMENTALISM, 1889–1907

Given the difficulties of faith work, it is not surprising that in the fall of 1889 Torrey accepted D. L. Moody’s offer to serve as dean of what would become the Moody Bible Institute and a steady salary. Though it is known today for its role in the fundamentalist movement, its beginnings were rooted in a milieu of social activism. Moody began his own career as a city missionary in Chicago and had debated founding a training school since the late 1870s. The Chicago Evangelization Society that he organized in 1887, embodied a business-friendly religious individualism. And given that the trustees of the Institute consisted of Chicago business leaders like Cyrus McCormick, the Moody Bible Institute/Chicago Evangelization Society avoided the structural critiques launched by social gospelers and some working-class Christians. But this did not equal an otherworldly faith; its aims were firmly grounded in this world. Moody and the trustees wanted to efficiently solve the growing social problems of the modern industrial city but through urban evangelism rather than substantial economic reform. Torrey’s evangelistic success in Minneapolis, his academic credentials, and his executive skill made him an appealing candidate to head the Institute. Torrey was as eager to start as Moody was to have him; within weeks of a brief interview he moved to Chicago.<sup>58</sup>

Historians have regularly contrasted Torrey's conservative dogmatism with Moody's ecumenical openness; but this characteristic appeared in force only after he came under the influence of conservatives that surrounded the famed revivalist. Torrey's address to the convention of Christian Workers in 1890 provides a striking contrast to his earlier positions. An extensive ten-point "Outlines of Doctrine Essential to Leaders and Teachers in Christian Work," included "the *absolute* and *infallible* authority of the Bible from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation" and the belief that "the death of Jesus Christ is a substitution for the punishment of man's sin that met all the claims of God and His law against the sinner."<sup>59</sup> Such doctrinal specificity and intense focus on conversion as the catchall solution to complex social problems were in marked contrast to Torrey's views just three years prior. But many of his "essential" doctrines (the most important to him being the baptism of the Holy Spirit) were not traditional orthodoxy. Moreover, he gave pragmatic reasons for their importance; they safeguarded Torrey's relational conception of Christianity, and in each case they brought "power," whereas a deviation from them would impede a worker's effectiveness.<sup>60</sup> And regardless, he continued to cooperate with liberals. The future president of the University of Chicago, William R. Harper, and settlement house advocate Graham Taylor held leadership roles in the Convention of Christian Workers under Torrey. In 1894, he joined arch-liberal David Swing, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, and Unitarian minister Jenkin Lloyd Jones in leading a citywide Federation of Ministers that resulted from British journalist William Stead's critique of Chicago's social conditions catalogued in *If Christ Came to Chicago*.<sup>61</sup>

Though tensions in the Gilded Age evangelical coalition had been building through the 1890s, the definitive break, at least in Moody's circle, was caused by a tragic failure of faith healing. In 1898 Torrey lost his young daughter to diphtheria after shunning the widely available and effective antitoxin for prayer alone. Rumors spread about the circumstances of her death, and soon afterward the Chicago YMCA asked for Torrey's resignation from a weekly teaching engagement. A year later several Chicago newspapers reprinted letters Torrey had sent to the now-notorious faith healer John Alexander Dowie asking for prayer. Moody was horrified by the incident and shifted the Institute to a

harder-edged dispensationalism—a system that relegated miracles to the past. But the side effect was that Jesus’s social teachings were swept aside with his miracles, despite claims of a literal interpretation of the Bible. Liberals, especially in Chicago, concluded that the tragedy was caused by interpreting the Bible plainly without the guidance of higher criticism and modern science.<sup>62</sup> The heartbreaking and humiliating failure of God’s promises in preserving the life of his daughter led Torrey to downplay God’s direct intervention, but he continued to insist on its possibility and to root his personal certainty in his past experiences of God’s faithfulness. Only now he warned that the Devil might suggest “all manner of difficult or even ridiculous things as the will of God” and that “many an honest soul . . . finds that the thing that he did at great sacrifice he was not called upon to do.”<sup>63</sup> However, his only advice for discerning God’s voice from the devil’s was to “wait for God to make the way perfectly clear.” He gave no criteria for evaluating “clarity” other than one’s intuition.<sup>64</sup>

Torrey’s participation in social activism waned after the turn of the century, and soon his once-cordial relations with liberals soured into sometimes-bitter animosity. But he never abandoned his desire to make the coming of Christ’s kingdom a physical reality—even despite his premillennialist convictions. This impulse, combined with disagreements with the Institute’s trustees, led Torrey to begin a worldwide revival tour in 1902, stretching from Australia, to China, Japan, and India, before settling into a three-year campaign in the British Isles.<sup>65</sup> His British meetings were more successful numerically than Moody’s but also more controversial. Liberals opposed Torrey’s teachings on the baptism of the Holy Spirit and his recently adopted conviction that there was a literal hell. His growing combativeness and dogmatism (the dark side of religious certitude) made matters worse. Especially when these were combined with his reliance on personal experience for evidence, it is no wonder that his claims of certitude were interpreted by critics as “audaciousness” and as an overreliance on “his own personal authority.”<sup>66</sup> Yet these feelings were not yet universal among liberals; Torrey reportedly received the “unfeigned co-operation” of “some of the most vigorous modern thinkers in the American pulpit” when he returned to the United States in 1906 to conduct meetings in Philadelphia, Toronto,

and Atlanta. And more importantly, his new worldwide fame put the faith healing controversy (troubling to conservatives and liberals alike) to rest.<sup>67</sup>

The expanding Pentecostal movement in the early twentieth century ultimately became the wedge that forced evangelicals who wanted to maintain their middle-class respectability to choose affiliation either with the coalition of dispensationalist and denominational conservatives or with modernist liberals and social gospelers. As Torrey circled the globe, working-class and “plain-folk” Pentecostals made the expectation of God’s immanent intrusion in the world their own and combined it with distinctive practices like speaking in tongues that contravened “respectable” middle-class mores.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, continuing success ultimately convinced Torrey that this worldwide revival interest was part of the “latter rain”—an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would bring about the physical return of Jesus. This phrase soon became associated exclusively with Pentecostalism, as did “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” and other language Torrey used to describe the deeply personal and intuitive relationship between the believer and God.<sup>69</sup> With Pentecostalism following close behind Torrey’s meetings, he felt a need to distinguish himself from the movement and to critique—often in harsh terms—what he believed were its excesses. He also presented himself publicly as the dry, scholarly champion of “old-time religion” without Pentecostals’ undignified “enthusiasm.” But he refused to modify his core beliefs. He was critical of dispensationalists who excluded the possibility of modern miracles—“They are mutilating the Word, and stealing from the greater part of God’s children what really belongs to them.” Neither did he waver from his conviction that God was immanently present in the world, that the Bible was so miraculously composed that it addressed specific issues in a person’s life (without complex interpretive systems), or that the Holy Spirit communicated directly to the believer—in ways that might overrule both common sense and traditional biblical interpretations.<sup>70</sup>

Historian Grant Wacker has noted, in reference to the acrimony between Pentecostals and their conservative evangelical opponents, that “feuds within religious families, no less than within biological families, often prove the bitterest of all.”<sup>71</sup> This was certainly true for Torrey’s relationship with Pentecostals, but also for his relationship with liberals.

The sources of Torrey's theology and the issues it sought to mitigate bear the stamp of a modern mind, and his claim to have been brought to fundamentalist belief *through* (rather than *despite*) his engagement with liberal sources bears consideration. The animosity of liberals to Torrey might be explained in the same way. Although liberal Protestants ignored the Amish (the true antimoderns) and mocked Pentecostals, they attacked fundamentalists as a potent enemy. To suggest some core similarities between fundamentalists and modernists does not deny the real differences between these groups, but it does challenge the ways we define "modernity" and the sources of the heated religious debates of the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>72</sup> Torrey suggests at once the modernity of Pentecostalism, the social engagement of pietistic fundamentalism, and the literalness of some forms of modernism. His theological development suggests that at least one strand of conservative evangelicalism was more a product of modernity than a reaction to it. His mature theology was conservative to be sure, but it was also distinctively modern.

## NOTES

1. Reuben A. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," Collection 107, Ephemera of Reuben Archer Torrey Sr., box 3, folder 1, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, July 2, 1882, p. 1; Reuben A. Torrey, "Diary, 1889–1890," Torrey Family Papers, Montrose, PA, April 18, 1889 (personal copies of the Torrey Family Papers are in possession of author). The published form of this diary, released after Torrey's death by the Moody Bible Institute, has significant redactions of the original. On Torrey and spirit possession, see Reuben A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1968), 244. For an example of Torrey's practice of faith healing during this time, see "Raising the Dead to Life," *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press* (hereafter *PP*), February 12, 1887, 6, and his own recollections in Reuben A. Torrey, *Divine Healing: Does God Perform Miracles Today?* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), 21–24.

2. *Proceedings of the Third Convention of Christian Workers in the United States and Canada* (New Haven, CT: Christian Workers Convention, 1888). On the significance of the International Christian Workers Association (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943), 95.

3. William McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald Press, 1959), 373; Martin E. Marty, *Righteous*

*Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial Press, 1970), 182; George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelism, 1870–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). Two dissertations were written on Torrey. See Roger Martin, “The Theology of R. A. Torrey” (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 1975), and Kermit L. Staggers, “Reuben A. Torrey: American Fundamentalist, 1856–1928” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986). Martin, a committed fundamentalist, corresponded with Torrey’s son and later published the only modern biography. It contains valuable biographical information, despite some interpretive limitations. See Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976).

4. The standard dichotomistic framework is best encapsulated in Martin Marty’s “two-party” interpretation of American Protestantism in *Righteous Empire*. Marty posited a long-standing contest between “private” Protestantism—which focuses on personal conversion and the afterlife at the expense of social action—and “public” Protestantism, which is both liberal in its theological proclivities and socially engaged. In fact the source of this theory was theological modernists—whose proponents dominated the major divinity schools in the early twentieth century and, as a result, wrote the first draft of the histories of both fundamentalism and liberalism. This model remains persistent in studies of liberal Protestantism. See, for example, Gary J. Dorrien, *Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Douglas Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger, eds., *Re-forming the Center: American Protestantism, 1900 to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), maintains Marty’s basic continuum but argues that most Protestants are found between these extremes.

5. On dispensationalism, see Brendan Pietsch, “Dispensational Modernism” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2011). On Pentecostalism, see Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), and Roger Glenn Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson: Plainfolk Modernist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The modernity of fundamentalism and conservative evangelicals after World War II has been well established (especially as it relates to modern business and politics). See Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (Norton, 2011); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); John G. Turner, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Robert Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Darren Elliott Grem, “The Blessings of Business: Corporate America and Conservative Evangelicalism in the Sunbelt Age,

1945–2000” (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2010); Sarah Ruth Hammond, “‘God’s Business Men’: Entrepreneurial Evangelicals in Depression and War” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010).

6. The heterogeneous nature of socially engaged Gilded Age evangelicalism has been noted with increasing frequency. Abell, *Urban Impact*, first connected future fundamentalists and modernists. Ferenc M. Szasz, “The Progressive Clergy and the Kingdom of God,” *Mid-America: An Historical Review* 55 (January 1973): 3–20, also noted “conservative” and “liberal” social gospel involvement but concluded they were “two versions masquerading as one” (6). Grant Wacker, “The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age in American Protestantism, 1880–1910,” *Journal of American History* 72 (June 1985): 45–62, asserted that “new theologians and higher life leaders . . . emerged from the same religious womb, and, like biological twins, matured in formally comparable ways precisely because they inherited similar genetic blueprints.” Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 27–32, focuses on the Blanchard and Beecher families to represent the early unity of Gilded Age evangelicalism and their later “diverging paths.” However both families were largely outside the networks that these other scholars have examined. The sole survey of the Gilded Age to my knowledge that incorporates these findings is Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865–1905* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 183. The opponents of this heterogeneous evangelical coalition (the “real” conservatives, in a sense) were the “churchly” Protestants described by James D. Bratt, “The Reorientation of American Protestantism, 1835–1845,” *Church History* 67, no. 1 (March 1998): 69–76.

7. William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 2, 8–9, 44–48, and 79, 86. By his telling, “modernism” was the “conscious, intended adaptation of religious ideas to modern culture”; the belief that God works immanently in the world (what he calls “cultural immanentism,” but a broader rejection of the natural/supernatural distinction that was presumed by Protestant orthodoxy); and finally, “a belief that human society is moving toward realization . . . of the Kingdom of God.” That liberal modernism might result in a modern supernaturalism is explored by Robert Bruce Mullin, *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

8. Information on Torrey’s family is found in Reuben A. Torrey, “Biographical Notes for The National Cyclopædia of American Biography,” Torrey Family Papers; George T. B. Davis, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of a World-Wide Revival: A Record and Study of the Work and Personality of the Evangelists R. A. Torrey, D.D., and Charles M. Alexander* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 19; Staggers, “Reuben A. Torrey,” 13–15. The narrative of his religious exploration comes from “Autobiographical Notes for R. A. Torrey,” R. A. Torrey Files, Moody Bible Institute Archives, Chicago (hereafter MBI Archives). This

document was created in response to a questionnaire from 1908 by an unknown individual at the Moody Bible Institute (in preparation for its twenty-fifth anniversary). It requested a variety of personal data and information on the early years of the Moody Bible Institute. The document is Torrey's unvarnished personal construction of his life, but it has the typical limitations of autobiographical material. He "omitted three or four [questions] that do not seem important," including "Circumstances of anointing by the Holy Spirit, date," and "Date and circumstances of anointing with 'fire,'" which he answered with a curt "I can hardly give that here." See Dr. R. A. Torrey to Mr. A. P. Fitt, October 23, 1908, Reuben A. Torrey Letters 1907–8, Biographical Files, MBI Archives. Other questions he answered in great detail—attaching several single-spaced typewritten sheets. Overall, the document is striking in the degree to which it ignores important conventions of fundamentalist conversion narratives of the time.

9. Torrey's crisis stemmed from multiple sources. His father's finances took a turn for the worse because of a series of factory fires and the financial panic of 1873. Torrey was rejected from a top academic or social society at Yale. Finally, he claimed he was haunted by the thought he would become a minister. Reuben A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does and How to Know Him in All the Fullness of His Gracious and Glorious Ministry* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1927), 78; Martin, *R. A. Torrey*, 27–37; Davis, *Torrey and Alexander*, 22; "The Box Factory Fires," *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 14, 1873; Reuben Torrey, *Revival Addresses* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1903), 105; "Autobiographical Notes for R. A. Torrey."

Torrey regularly referenced this incident as his conversion. "I became a minister of the gospel simply because I had to, or be forever lost," he later recounted. "My becoming a Christian and accepting Him as my Saviour turned upon my preaching the gospel. . . . The night I surrendered to God I did not say, 'I will accept Christ,' or 'I will give up my sins,' I said, 'I will preach.'" Torrey, *Holy Spirit*, 36. See also Reuben A. Torrey, *How to Pray* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1900), 11. Staggers, "Reuben A. Torrey," 38, treats this incident as Torrey's conversion to traditional conservative evangelicalism, but this homogenization cannot account for his later agnosticism and liberalism. See Christopher G. White, *Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance, 1830–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 126–27, for a similar focus on the will among other religious liberals.

10. J. G. Holland, *The Bay-Path; A Tale of New England Colonial Life* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864); John R. Seeley, *Ecce Homo: A Survey of The Life and Work of Jesus Christ* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1867), 2, 351. Holland helped prepare the way for the practical, antidogmatic, interdenominational Protestantism on which the early social gospel was based. Though he was a social conservative, opposing any substantial economic or political reform, he regularly attacked "the theological rigidities of the denominational 'machines.'"

Robert J. Scholnick, "J. G. Holland and the 'Religion of Civilization' in Mid-Nineteenth Century America" *American Studies* 27, no. 1 (1986): 55–79, quote on 70. Seeley awkwardly combined Christian socialism, romantic primitivism, and an ostensibly scientific positivism, though it largely ignored current biblical scholarship. Deborah Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the Uses of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. 21–40 on *Ecce Homo*; and John Kent, "Religion and Science," in *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*, ed. Ninian Smart et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1–36. On Seeley and the social gospel in the United States, see Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865–1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 22–23; Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (1949; repr., New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 150.

11. All of Torrey's statements here are from his "Autobiographical Notes"; see also Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury, 7 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1914). Gibbon observed that the most humane aspects of Christianity, like universalism, were recent and controversial additions: the primitive church, for its part, "delivered over, without hesitation, to eternal torture, the far greater part of the human species" (2:28). Of cessationism, he noted that any period chosen to end miracles is contradicted by "the insensibility of the Christians who lived at that time" that miracles no longer occurred (2:33). Any time chosen for cessation would have had Christians who had witnessed authentic miracles; their inability to detect fraudulent miracles, Gibbon argued, suggested that all miraculous claims were suspect. Gibbon's relationship to religion is still a matter of debate, but his historical approach to Christianity was clearly critical. See B. W. Young, "'Scepticism in Excess': Gibbon and Eighteenth-Century Christianity," *Historical Journal* [Great Britain] 41, no. 1 (1998): 179–99. On the crisis of historicism among American Protestants, see Grant Wacker, *Augustus H. Strong and the Dilemma of Historical Consciousness* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985). On cessationism, see Mullin, *Miracles*. Torrey insisted, "I was not an atheist but an agnostic, not an infidel but a sceptic [*sic*]." He made this distinction because his crisis of faith occurred *after* his conversion; he maintained a will to believe, despite being unconvinced of its rational, even ethical, viability. On Gilded Age crises of faith, see James Turner, *Without God, without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thoughts, 1870–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

12. Torrey's thesis subject found in *The Yale Banner* (New Haven, CT: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor, 1878), 46; Torrey, "Autobiographical Notes," 2–3. On Torrey and higher criticism, see Martin, "Theology of R. A. Torrey,"

115. Torrey's son (as Martin reports) claimed Torrey's views mirrored those of William Robinson Smith in Smith's entry "The Bible," in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th ed. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1878), 634–48. R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for the Greatest Profit* (New York: F. H. Revell, 1896); Reuben A. Torrey, *The God of the Bible; the God of the Bible as Distinguished from the God of "Christian Science," the God of "New Thought," the God of Spiritualism, the God of "Theosophy," the God of Unitarianism, the God of "the New Theology," the God of Modern Philosophy, and the God of Modernism in General* (New York: George H. Doran, 1923), 73; Reuben A. Torrey, *Power of Prayer*, 101.

Unitarians were pioneers of the "plain meaning" of the Bible. See Nathan O. Hatch, "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 59–78. This conviction was reinforced by Albrecht Ritschl, as we will see later. Torrey ties Channing and Parker more closely together than some (though certainly not all) students of transcendentalism would. See Joel Myerson, ed., *Transcendentalism: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Torrey also mentioned his appreciation for James Freeman Clarke and Edward Everett Hale (Reuben A. Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible* (New York: George H. Doren, 1924), 74). On the controversy of W. R. Smith, see Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), esp. 11–27, and Brevard S. Childs, "Wellhausen in English," *Semeia* 25, no. 1 (1982): 83–88.

13. Torrey, "Autobiographical Notes"; Davis, *Torrey and Alexander*, 23–27. On Moody's Unitarian background, see James Findlay, *Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 36–38. On positivism at Yale in the 1870s, see Charles D. Cashdollar, *The Transformation of Theology, 1830–1890: Positivism and Protestant Thought in Britain and America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

14. R. A. Torrey to "Beloved," February 1, 1879, Torrey Family Papers, folder 17. On Torrey's reading habits, see Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," July 28, 1882, August 31, 1882, July 20, 1882, July 19, 1882, July 6, 1883, and July 18, 1882. Torrey seriously engaged Charles Darwin's *Descent of Man* and agreed only reluctantly with a critique by George Jackson Mivart (Darwin's most scientifically sophisticated British critic). "Mivart points out [radical] defects in Darwin's Theory which Darwin did not sufficiently notice or seem to apprehend in his later editions," he admitted to his diary, but he noted that "this portion of Darwin's work lacks the acuteness and discrimination of other parts." Staggers argued (in "Reuben A. Torrey") that Torrey's studies with James Dana at Yale led him to accept older forms of scientific inquiry. However, this is based on a misreading of William F. Sanford Jr., "Dana and Darwinism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26, no. 4 (October–December 1965): 531–46. Although Dana was ini-

tially resistant to Darwin, he had accepted the major assumptions of Darwinian evolution by the early 1870s, when Torrey attended Yale. Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 39, suggests that Torrey's connection to Dana led to his later lack of alarm over Darwin.

15. R. A. Torrey to Phillips Brooks, December 3, 1879, quoted in Raymond W. Albright, *Focus on Infinity: A Life of Phillips Brooks* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 201–2.

16. Titles of Torrey's sermons taken from Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," August 27, 1882, August 15, 1882, September 15, 1882, September 3, 1882, and August 3, 1882. On his surprise at the success of his "Traditional and Personal Faith" sermon, see Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," August 6, 1882.

17. Torrey's sermon, though undated, seems to have been from Garrettsville or perhaps from seminary. See Reuben A. Torrey, "Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life John XIV.6," handwritten manuscript, *Torrey Family Papers*, quote from 15–16. The manuscript has no date, but Torrey refers to "the late war" (11) in reference to the Civil War (after 1898 this would have referred to the Spanish American War). Torrey reportedly began preaching "entirely extempore" in Minneapolis (*Pilgrim*, February 1884, 12). Finally, the rhetorical style is markedly different from that of his many sermons published after 1889.

18. An example of Torrey's interest in evangelical piety is in "Diary, 1882–1883," August 10, 1882. The absence of evangelical themes is striking when compared with his subsequent diaries after 1889. On Torrey and saloon prayer meetings, see Davis, *Torrey and Alexander*, 29. See also Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 200–202.

19. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," July 18, 1882, quote from July 25, 1882.

20. I. A. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, ed. Alfred Cave and J. S. Banks (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1880), 47. See also Hutchison, *Modernist Impulse*, 85.

21. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," August 15, 1882, and August 16, 1882. Torrey tutored students in German to supplement his income in Garrettsville. See, for example, Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," July 13, 1882. Torrey's first lecture is recounted in "Diary, 1882–1883," November 15, 1882. "Attended one of Luthardt's lectures & found to my surprise that I could understand almost everything." Torrey's class notes began in a mixture of English and German but quickly switched to all German. Reuben A. Torrey, "German Class Notes," *Torrey Family Papers*.

22. Crawford Howell Toy, "Delitzsch, Franz," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer and Cyrus Adler (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1912), 505.

23. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," January 24, 1883.

24. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," November 28, 1882. Torrey also studied with Christoph Ernst Luthardt. After finishing his "Apologetic," Torrey complained it was "hardly of an apologetic nature." Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," December 29, 1882.

25. Torrey's exposure to von Hartmann came through Francis Bowen's popular philosophical textbook, which he designed to inoculate the English-speaking world against the "dangers" of continental philosophy. Francis Bowen, *Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Schopenhauer and Hartmann* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1877), vii, 463–64.
26. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," December 7, 1882.
27. R. A. Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1909), 92.
28. *Southern Cross*, September 10, 1902, 12.
29. On Frank, see Gary W. Davis, "A Critical Exposition of F. H. R. Von Frank's System of Christian Certainty" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1972).
30. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," May 11, 1883.
31. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1882 [*sic*; actually 1883]. See Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, 31.
32. Reuben A. Torrey, *How to Bring Men to Christ* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1893), 121.
33. Reuben A. Torrey, "What I Believe" (n.p., n.d.), 3.
34. Reuben A. Torrey, *How to Study*, 109.
35. Torrey, "Diary, 1882–1883," July 6, 1883.
36. Quotes on Ritschl taken from David W. Lotz, "Ritschl in His Nineteenth-Century Setting," in *Ritschl in Retrospect: History, Community, and Science*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 8–27, and Gerald W. McCulloh, "A Historical Bible, a Reasonable Faith, a Conscientious Action: The Theological Legacy of Albrecht Ritschl," in Jodock, *Ritschl in Retrospect*, 31–50. See also Dan L. Deegan, "Albrecht Ritschl as Critical Empiricist," *Journal of Religion* 44 (April 1964): 149–60.
37. For substantive summaries of Frank's theology, see R. Seeberg, "Franz Hermann Reinhold Von Frank," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 4:368–69; D. Ritschel, "Erlangen School," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. William J. McDonald (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 5:515–16.
38. Quote in Torrey's Bible is taken from Gen. 16:13 (Torrey's Bible in Reuben Archer Torrey, Collection 107, box 5, Billy Graham Center Archives).
39. Torrey, *How to Study*, 110–11.
40. 2 Tim. 3:16. This was adopted as the official verse of the Moody Bible Institute while he served as its superintendent. See also *Proceedings of the Third Convention*, 130, for Torrey's use of this passage.
41. *Pilgrim*, May 1884, 3. See also the issues for October 1883, February 1884, March 1884 (where his congregation was described as "largely dependent on wages for their daily bread," at a rate such that "the struggle is to provide food"), and November 1885. The Immanuel Mission eventually developed into

the North East Neighborhood House, an important social service organization in Minneapolis. No records from this early period remain. See “North East Neighborhood House,” collection P3, box 1, folder 3, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN; *Pilgrim*, November 1886. See *Proceedings of the Third Convention*, 150–54, for Torrey’s description of the beginnings and operation of the Open Door Church.

42. The Parable of the Talents, recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, tells the story of three servants who were each given different amounts of money (five, two, and one “talents” respectively) to invest for their master. The two servants with the greater amounts doubled their investments, while the other servant, fearing failure, acted conservatively and buried the talent. The first two servants were commended and given greater responsibility while the other servant had his single talent taken and was “cast into the outer darkness.” See Matt. 25:14–30.

43. R. A. Torrey, “How Shall We Invest?” *Pilgrim*, December 1885, 1.

44. On the First Convention of Christian Workers, see *Christian Union*, May 6, 1886, 20; June 10, 1886, 21; June 24, 1886, 6; and October 28, 1886, 6; “The Christian Workers,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1886, 17; On the 1887 convention, see *Christian Union*, August 4, 1887, 112–13; September 29, 1887, 294. A sample of prominent participants can be found in *Christian Union*, November 7, 1889, 574. On the 1891 convention, see *Proceedings of the Sixth Convention of Christian Workers in the United States and Canada* (New Haven, CT: Committee for Christian Workers in the United States and Canada, 1891), 4.

45. *Christian Union*, August 4, 1887, 112–13.

46. On spiritual power after the baptism of the Holy Spirit, see Torrey, *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 15, 21.

47. On Torrey’s failed healing, see “Minor Mention,” *PP*, December 1, 1886, 6; “Raising the Dead to Life,” 6; “That Phenomenal Faith,” *PP*, February 13, 1887, 6. For national coverage, see “The Faithists. Curious Story of a Partial Resurrection from the Dead,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 14, 1887, 7; “Resurrected by Faith,” *Boston Daily Globe*, February 13, 1887, 2; “Life in the Dead,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1887, 7. Torrey’s mature views of faith healing are found in Torrey, *Divine Healing*.

48. On Torrey’s faith work, see Torrey, “Diary, 1889–1890,” 1, 6. Torrey’s mission arrangements were less clear-cut than his diary suggests. See *Northwestern Congregationalist*, November 16, 1888, and December 7, 1888, 9.

49. Torrey, “Diary 1889–90,” May 26, 1889. This diary is in the possession of the Torrey Family in Montrose, PA, copy in possession of author.

50. Torrey, “Diary 1889–90,” August 12, 1889, 20.

51. Torrey, “Diary, 1889–90,” May 26, 1889, 17.

52. Torrey, “Diary 1889–90,” June 14, 1890.

53. Torrey, “Diary 1889–90,” April 18, 1889.

54. Torrey, "Diary 1889–90," August 12, 1889.

55. Torrey, "Diary, 1889–90," August 12, 1889. This passage rethinking debt in communal terms was expunged from the published version of Torrey's diary.

56. Torrey, "Diary, 1889–90," August 12, 1889. Torrey occasionally tied his difficulties to a lack of faith: "There had been sources where money seemed, sure, money that had really been contributed for us, and I had my eye on them rather than on the Lord Jesus, and so our embarrassment arose" (Torrey, "Diary, 1889–90," April 18, 1889).

57. On Torrey's continuing financial troubles, see *Northwestern Congregationalist*, August 16, 1889, 9.

58. James Findlay, "Moody, 'Gapmen' and the Gospel: The Early Days of Moody Bible Institute," *Church History* 31 (Summer 1962): 322–35; Torrey, "Autobiographical Notes."

59. Reuben A. Torrey, "Outlines of Doctrine Essential to Leaders and Teachers in Christian Work," *Proceedings of the Fifth Convention of Christian Workers in the United States and Canada* (New Haven, CT: Committee for Christian Workers in the United States and Canada, 1890), 292–99, quotes on 293, 294.

60. *Ibid.*, 294 and elsewhere.

61. William T. Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago! A Plea for the Union of All Who Love in the Service of All Who Suffer* (Chicago: Laird and Lee, 1894), 461–63.

62. Moody asked whether the dispute was caused by Torrey's beliefs on "the Second Coming or Divine Healing?"; D. L. Moody to R. A. Torrey, October 31, 1898. On the faith healing incident, see *Daily Interoccean*, October 2, 1899, 4; *Chicago Chronicle*, October 2, 1899, 2; "Rev. R. A. Torrey under Hot Fire," *Chicago Journal*, October 2, 1899, 1; "Will Have a New Teacher: The Rev. R. A. Torrey to Be Relieved of His Connection with Y. M. C. A. Sunday School Work," *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1898. For liberal criticism, see, e.g., "Henderson on Faith Cure," *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 1899, 5; "Disease and the Devil," *Chicago Tribune*, April 2, 1899, 6.

63. R. A. Torrey, "How Can I Know That I Am Led by the Holy Spirit?," in *Traits and Tracts of Torrey: A Fresh Appreciation of a Great Man and Teacher*, ed. Louis T. Talbot (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, n.d.), 104 and 105.

64. *Ibid.*, 106.

65. On Torrey's worldwide mission, see William T. Stead, *The Torrey-Alexander Mission: The Story of the Men and Their Methods* (London: Review of Reviews Publishing Office, 1905).

66. Various British critiques of Torrey's meetings, led largely by Unitarian ministers, were published in 1904. See Thomas Rhondda Williams, *The True Revival versus Torreyism* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries, 1904). For a typical critique of Torrey, drawing from British critics (and from which the quotations

are taken), see Charles S. Macfarland, "Our Readers' Forum," *Congregationalist and Christian World*, November 11, 1905, 678.

67. On continuing liberal cooperation, see "Dr. Torrey in Atlanta," *Zion's Herald*, August 22, 1906, 1070.

68. On Torrey's contributions to Pentecostal theology, see Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury, 1987). George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 94, notes that Torrey inadvertently became "a kind of John the Baptist figure for later international Pentecostalism." German Pentecostals traced their beginnings to when "Torrey . . . prayed that the Holy Spirit might come down upon all who desired him." Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 221–23.

69. The *Institute Tie* (especially 1906 and 1907) contained regular reports of Torrey's revival work and numerous allusions to the "latter rain." On the importance of "latter rain" terminology to Pentecostalism, see Edith L. Blumhofer, "Restoration as Revival: Early American Pentecostalism," in *Modern Christian Revivals*, ed. Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

70. Torrey's blistering critique of Pentecostalism is found in Reuben Archer Torrey, *Is The Present "Tongues" Movement of God?* (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1913). His critique of dispensationalism is found in Torrey, *Divine Healing*, 17–18. Though he did not object to the broad contours of premillennialism, he had little, if any interest in end-time prophecy or the intricacies of dispensationalism. Rather, he used it as a backstop to the problems of historical consciousness, in similar ways to his German mentor F. H. R. Frank. On early Pentecostalism, see Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Randall J. Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*; James R. Goff Jr., *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1989).

71. Grant Wacker, "Travail of a Broken Family: Evangelical Responses to Pentecostalism in America," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47, no. 3 (July 1996): 523.

72. A compelling way forward in the definition of modernism is found in Kathryn Lofton, "The Methodology of the Modernists: Process in American Protestantism," *Church History* 75, no. 2 (June 2006): 374–402. Lofton focuses on modernism as a process, a methodology, or an approach rather than specific conclusions about the world—conclusions, Torrey's life suggests, that were also reached by nonmodernists, but by very different means. For modernists, she explains, "How you believe . . . was your belief" (378).