

The Pentecost Bands in India: Radical Holiness Revivals and the Mukti Revival

by Robert Danielson

Introduction

Many scholars of Pentecostalism are familiar with the Mukti Revival of 1905. Many see this outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a girls' orphanage in India as a precursor to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906.¹ Various accounts have tried to explain this experience. Some scholars connect it to the holiness revival inspired by the Welsh Revival in the Khasi Hills, over 3,000 miles from the Mukti Mission.² Others have explained it as a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Still others argue for the incredible influence of Pandita Ramabai herself, a spiritual intellectual perhaps unrivaled in her day and age.³

Without any desire to take away from the inspired work of Ramabai, and the historically noted influences of the Welsh Revival (as well as the unparalleled power of the Holy Spirit), this paper seeks to introduce another potential influence.⁴ Radical holiness representatives were present in Central India before the Mukti Revival, and evidence shows they had direct contact and interactions with Ramabai. While any lasting potential influence is still only speculative, the similarity of holiness

¹For one good general overview of the history involved, cf. Allan Anderson, "Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism," *Transformation* 23, no. 1 (2006): 37-48.

²Cf. Helen S. Dyer, *Revival in India: "Years of the Right Hand of the Most High."* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1907).

³However, Pandita Ramabai's role is somewhat minimized due to a colonial revisionist reading of the historical events that occurred, which tend to simplify the situation. For an excellent discussion on this, cf. Yan Suarsana, "Inventing Pentecostalism: Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Revival from a Post-Colonial Perspective," *PentecoStudies* 13, no. 2 (2014): 173-196.

⁴This is not to suggest that the Wards and the Pentecost Bands in India were primary drivers of the revival, or to suggest that they were the only influences. Stanley M. Burgess, "Pentecostalism in India: An Overview," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4, no. 1 (2001): 85-98 demonstrates that there are plenty of contenders for Pentecostal influence in India, both before and after the Mukti Revival. The goal here is to simply introduce these missionaries who were influenced by Free Methodism as serious additional potential influences in the region prior to the Mukti Revival.

accounts of revivals among orphans from the same 1897 famine (which prompted both Ramabai and these radical holiness missionaries to create and run orphanages) should not be overlooked, especially since they are in close geographical proximity to each other.

This paper focuses primarily on the documented work of the Pentecost Bands in India. This group was initially a part of the Free Methodist Church, but had become independent by the time they arrived in India. However, their leader, Rev. Frank C. Hotle joined forces with Free Methodist missionaries Ernest and Phebe Ward to promote holiness through the Harvest Home Camp Meetings in India. They also functioned through their social work in caring for and educating orphans. This paper will conclude with some considerations about the relationship between the Pentecost Bands in India, the Wards, and the Mukti Mission.

The Pentecost Bands: An Overview

The Pentecost Bands were an evangelistic movement that emerged out of the Free Methodist Church. Their dynamic founder, Vivian Dake, (1854-1892) was their chief leader.⁵ B. T. Roberts founded the Free Methodist Church in 1860, which saw itself as part of the larger Holiness Movement. As Howard Snyder pointed out, the Free Methodist Church in part defined itself as a “radical” holiness group, “though maintaining some irenic contact with the broader Holiness Movement, its leaders and writers often warned against too low a standard of holiness: an experience that did not go deep enough, was not sufficiently world-denying, and compromised particularly with the amusements and ostentations of the age.”⁶

Vivian Dake was a young Free Methodist minister and conference evangelist for the Michigan Conference of the Free Methodist Church. He began to organize young people into bands in 1885 to assist in his evangelistic work.⁷ B.T. Roberts encouraged Dake writing, “Organize your bands. Push out. Be as aggressive as the Salvation Army, but more holy, more serious and have no nonsense about it.”⁸ These bands typically were self-supporting, evangelistic groups of four people,

⁵To read more on the Pentecost Bands in general cf. Howard A. Snyder, “Radical Holiness Evangelism: Vivian Dake and the Pentecost Bands,” in *The Radical Holiness Movement in the Christian Tradition: A Festschrift for Larry D. Smith*, edited by William Kostlevy and Wallace Thornton, Jr., 69-84. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2016.

⁶Snyder, 70.

⁷For more on the life of Vivian Dake cf. Ida Dake Parsons, *Kindling Watch-Fires: Being a Brief Sketch of the Life of Rev. Vivian A. Dake* (Chicago: IL: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1915) and Thomas H. Nelson, *Life and Labours of Rev. Vivian A. Dake, Organizer and Leader of Pentecost Bands*, (Chicago, IL: T.B. Arnold, 1894).

⁸Snyder, 72.

including a leader and an assistant leader. They would travel around, preach evangelistically, and engage in visitation and tract distribution. Their goal was to win souls, start revivals, and they hoped to leave a small church plant behind them when they left.

Dake's early death on a trip to Africa in 1892 precipitated a crisis in the Pentecost Bands. Their zealous enthusiasm and organizational autonomy did not suit denominational leaders of the Free Methodist Church so, in 1895, the Pentecost Bands under leader, Thomas Nelson, withdrew from the Free Methodist Church and became an independent entity. They developed their own publication, *The Pentecost Herald* to promote their work. The Pentecost Bands reached their peak about 1906 with 487 congregations, and they ultimately merged with the Wesleyan Methodist church in 1958. In an earlier version of his article (already mentioned), Snyder noted the following:

It does not appear any significant number of Band workers ended up in the later Pentecostal Movement. Despite the use of the term "Pentecost," the Pentecost Bands seem to have been more christologically than pneumatologically focused. Their emphasis on radical commitment and crucifixion seem to have made them resistant to Pentecostal appeals despite some obvious affinities, particularly in demonstrative worship styles.⁹

The Pentecost Bands Arrive in India

While the first Pentecost Band of India technically arrived on November 28, 1897, there had been representatives of the Pentecost Bands in India for much longer. In the first issue of *The Pentecost Herald* from April 1894, there were three bands listed in "Tradeo, Bombay, India." These included: Band no. 12 with Ernest F. Ward as leader and Watson L. Huber as Assistant Leader, Band no. 13 with Laura Douglas as Leader (and Division Leader) and Emma Appling as Assistant Leader, and Band no. 23 with Phebe E. Ward as Leader and Bessie Sherman as Assistant Leader.¹⁰

⁹This quote did not make it into the published form of Snyder's "Radical Holiness Evangelism," but was part of a copy sent to the author by Dr. Snyder. It was originally part of his discussion on page 79 of the diffusion of the Pentecost Bands. In an email with the author, Dr. Snyder indicated that this was a paper initially presented at a Wesleyan Holiness Studies Project consultation in the 1990s. I am using the quote because it so clearly states the distinctions between the Pentecost Bands and the later Pentecostal Movement itself.

¹⁰*The Pentecost Herald* (Uniontown, PA) 1, no. 1, (April 1894), 4.

Ernest and Phebe Ward had left the United States for India in November 1880. Ernest had joined the Free Methodist Church one year earlier because of their holiness teachings. In a whirlwind of activity in October 1880, Ernest married Phebe, became both a deacon and an elder of the Free Methodist Church in a conference in Freeport, Illinois, and announced that he was going to India as a missionary. At the time, the Free Methodist Church did not have an active mission program, so Ernest and Phebe left as self-supporting missionaries using money Phebe had saved as a teacher. On January 16, 1881 the Wards arrived in Bombay (Mumbai). They worked as evangelists preaching in the bazaars in Ellichpur (Achalpur) and Burhanpur until their first furlough back to the U.S. in 1892. On their return to India, they took up their evangelistic tasks in Raj Nandgaon. It is unclear when they joined the Pentecost Bands, but it was most likely on their return to the U.S. in 1892 (before the 1895 split from the Free Methodist Church).¹¹ Ernest Ward described the location in a letter to Thomas Nelson, which was published in *The Pentecost Herald*:

I want to give you a little idea of our field; Raj Nandgaon our headquarters, is just 666 miles from Bombay by rail on the direct line to Calcutta, (It will not be difficult to remember that number.) It is 618 miles from the latter place, so that it lies near the centre of the peninsula. Our nearest missionary neighbors are forty-two miles east and 107 miles west, respectively.

This mission field naturally includes a territory having a population of half a million souls the greater part of whom have never heard the gospel. The Rajah or Chief of Nandgaon has been quite friendly to us so far, and has given us a fine building spot within a stone's throw of the station and near the bazaar. We have fenced it in (one and a half acres nearly) and are asking the Lord for the funds to build a house thereon. This is a very interesting field for mission work. Within a radius of five miles are over forty villages. The village people are simple hearted and ready to listen to the truth. They are not so much under the control of the priests as in many parts of India. It is very

¹¹In her account of the life of Ernest and Phebe Ward, their daughter Ethel noted that as the Wards were waiting in Bombay to leave for their furlough in 1892, they met Miss Douglas and Miss Sherman, who had just arrived in India as representatives from the Pentecost Bands. Together they held some meetings in a tent and formed the first Free Methodist society in India before they left. But it does not indicate if they joined the Pentecost Bands at this time or later. Ethel Ellen Ward, *Ordered Steps, or the Wards of India*, (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1951), 69.

gratifying to see them drink in the truth so far as they understand at our open air meetings.¹²

The very next month after this letter appeared in *The Pentecost Herald*, another interesting notice appeared. This was a notice from Frank C. Hotle noting that he had felt called to the mission field in India. He also noted some of his background. He was sanctified in the Pentecost Band meetings at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa about three years previously (about 1891) while attending a Methodist Episcopal college (most likely Iowa Wesleyan University) where he was studying for the ministry. In his personal memoirs, Hotle noted he experienced conversion at seventeen and felt a desire to preach, so he entered a Methodist college, where he encountered a “band of bright, fire-baptized young ladies” who he initially thought were from the Salvation Army, and they convinced him of the need for sanctification in the Holiness Movement’s understanding of the concept.¹³ He noted that he “entered Band work at once.”¹⁴ Apparently there were early discussions about settling the Hotle family with the Wards in Raj Nandgaon in 1895 or 1896, although this did not happen until later.¹⁵

Frank Cylvester Hotle (Feb. 11, 1870 – Dec. 19, 1945) was born in Talleyrand, Iowa, the son of Henry Hotle and Mary Ann Shockley. Like Ernest Ward, he set out to do things quickly. Just about a month after announcing his plans to go to India in *The Pentecost Herald*, he married Delphina (Della) Turner on September 5, 1895 in Page, Iowa. The couple set off raising funds and speaking, and in between all this work managed to have a daughter, Elsie Mae (Eliza) on July 28, 1897.

At this same time, the Wards’ approach to mission work in India took a drastic turn. Throughout 1897 growing reports of a massive famine in Central India began to emerge. In *The Pentecost Herald*, Frank and Della Hotle expressed concern about the famine in March of 1897.¹⁶ A letter followed this from Phebe Ward about the famine,¹⁷ and growing reports continued until the famine news took over the front page of *The*

¹²Letter from E. F. Ward to Bro. Nelson dated February 14, 1895 in *The Pentecost Herald* 2, no. 13 (April 1895), 3.

¹³Hotle, Frank C. *My Experience and Call: With a Brief Summary of Seven Years Labor in Central India*. Louisville, KY: Pentecostal Publishing Company, n.d., 8.

¹⁴*The Pentecost Herald* 2, no. 14 (May 1895), 3. The Hotles also note their fund raising and speaking activities in *The Pentecost Herald* 2, no. 8 (whole no. 20) (October 1895), 3.

¹⁵Cf. letter from Vina Winnie dated November 9, 1895 in *The Pentecost Herald* 2, no. 15 (whole no. 27) (January 1896).

¹⁶*The Pentecost Herald* 3, no. 23, (whole no. 54) (March 1, 1897), 4.

¹⁷*The Pentecost Herald* 4, no. 5, (whole no. 60) (June 1, 1897), 5.

Pentecost Herald.¹⁸ Faced with a situation with reports of as many as twelve million people dying over an eight-month period, the Wards shifted from an evangelistic program of preaching in the bazaar to taking in abandoned and dying children. They also helped bury the dead. This situation soon stretched the Wards' meager resources. Phebe Ward wrote a letter dated September 29, 1897 to *The Pentecost Herald* published in November 1897 in which she was clearly exhausted:

I love the way of the cross this morning, by which I am crucified to the world and the world unto me. I presume you have heard of Bro. Ward's and Louisa's serious illness with cholera. God loosened our hands by the singular providence and let me get a breathing spell, from where I was living at high pressure speed. The change was much needed; I might say imperative. Bro. Ward is improving now but it has been a veritable fight with death. A less strong man would probably have succumbed, Louisa too though not so ill, has had a long pull. Blood poisoning set in which has kept her from getting on her feet... Some of our loveliest ones (orphans) have gone to heaven. I have sat and watched them leave us, when it seemed as if this famine was a giant fiend, stealing away our jewels. I can never describe the awfulness of this famine! I have grown old in eight months and can wear Bessie Sherman's clothes easily, I am so thin. We shall be glad to hear the out coming party have left America.¹⁹

Phebe Ward's letter appeared alongside the first report written by Alfred S. Dyer, editor of *The Bombay Guardian* in *The Pentecost Herald* of Pandita Ramabai's work helping girls impacted by the same famine.

In the light of the famine reporting, and perhaps because of an increase in mission giving driven by those reports, things sped up for the Hotles. An organized Pentecost Band group left Indianapolis on September 29, 1897. The group included William McCready and Elizabeth Tucker, along with Frank C. and Della T. Hotle and their daughter Eliza.²⁰ They arrived in Bombay on November 28, 1897, and

¹⁸*The Pentecost Herald* 4, no. 13, (whole no. 68) (October 1, 1897) and *The Pentecost Herald* 5, no. 1, (whole no. 82) (April 1, 1898).

¹⁹*The Pentecost Herald* 4, no. 16, (whole no. 71) (November 15, 1897), 3.

²⁰The trip of the group was reported extensively in *The Pentecost Herald* 4, no. 14, (October 15, 1897), 2, no. 15, (November 1, 1897), 3, no. 17, (December 1, 1897), no. 18, (December 15, 1897), and no. 20, (January 15, 1898), 6. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth Tucker ultimately became Ernest Ward's second wife. Their marriage was from January 17, 1914 until her untimely death from cancer in India on September 3, 1915. Phebe died while on furlough in Seattle on September 1, 1910.

on December 10, 1897 Hotle and his wife went to Raj Nandgaon to visit the Wards. The Pentecost Band journal noted they had not seen the Wards in five years, indicating some contact with the Wards on their 1892 furlough. Shortly before this visit they had established their group in Nagpur. While visiting the Wards, the Pentecost Band's account for December 10, 1897²¹ also noted, "While there they found that famine children could still be procured by going into the villages and gathering them."²² Hotle began gathering children for an orphanage in Nagpur.

The Pentecost Band's account for May 25, 1898 noted,

Bro. Ward came today to get his daughter Louisa, who has been here for a two weeks change. We were all very glad to see him and we had a real breaking through time at prayers. Bro. Ward feels his heart is with us and that the Lord would be pleased to have him cast his lot among us. We told him to pray much about it, and if he still felt his place was in the bands, we would gladly welcome him.²³

In the account for May 27th, 1898, the Pentecost Band's account noted, "Bro. Ward returned home today; but before going he gave us his name to be sent to the *Pentecost Herald* to be enrolled among the workers."²⁴ On June 21, 1898 (less than a month after Ward joined the Pentecost Band in India), the Pentecostal Band decided to combine the orphanages at Nagpur and Raj Nandgaon. The account recorded,

After prayerful and careful consideration, we decided that it would be profitable and pleasing to God for the two orphanages at Nagpur and Raj Nandgaon to be united as our forces thus concentrated would enable us to more properly adjust matters so as to lessen or more fully equalize the burdens of each worker.

²¹All references and quotations from the Pentecost Bands of India come from the *Records of Pentecost Bands in India*, microfilm at Asbury Theological Seminary, ARC1010 1989-006 reel 1. This microfilm contains the records of three bands: Band #1 at Raj Nandgaon (1897-1905), Band #2 at Gondia (1899-1905), and Band #3 at Dondi Lohara (1899-1949). The originals are kept at the Marsden Memorial Historical Center in Indianapolis, IN. The quotes used in this paper are from the records of Band #1 unless otherwise specified.

²²Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for December 10, 1897 (see footnote 21).

²³Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for May 25, 1898 (see footnote 21).

²⁴Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for May 27, 1898 (see footnote 21).

This move by Ward is significant. The Pentecost Bands broke away from the Free Methodist Church in 1895 in part due to their radical understanding of holiness and unwillingness to accept denominational oversight. By joining the Pentecost Band in India, Ward broke away from the Free Methodists and aligned himself with a more radical holiness doctrine.

The decision seems to be met with the favor of God as the railroad company gave us free pass for over fifty children and we took them from Nagpur to Raj Nandgaon today. Our family of children number up to one hundred and eight now.²⁵

The Wards may have remembered this event differently. Ethel Ward wrote,

Then they learned that a party of four missionaries from the Pentecost Band work had begun a Mission in Nagpur which was nearer than others. "Let us invite them," said Mr. Ward, and his wife consented. So the letter of invitation was written. "Yes, we can come," was the reply, "and it is surely an answer to our prayer because we have had to pay such a high rent here that we have been contemplating moving elsewhere."²⁶

Ernest Ward and Frank Hotle: Competing Leaders

While the account in *The Pentecost Herald* and in the Pentecost Band in India journal seems to relate a positive working relationship between Ernest Ward and Frank Hotle, there is clear evidence of some level of simmering conflict. Ward may have eagerly cast his lot with the Pentecost Band because of his own deeply rooted belief in radical holiness doctrine, but this decision would have consequences. After the extreme hardships and exhaustion from the work to aid those suffering from the famine of 1897, the Wards likely welcomed these holiness reinforcements. The extra hands were needed in the new form of social mission at Raj Nandgaon that was taking shape. However, Ward, a veteran missionary of sixteen years in India with immense knowledge of the culture, context and language, had put himself and his family (as well as his mission station) under the leadership of Frank Hotle who had little to no experience in India.

By September 1898, just a year after leaving the United States, with 108 orphans in their charge, and 80 of those in their school, the Pentecost Band decided to send Ernest and Phebe Ward back to the U.S. for a furlough. The Pentecost Band journal does not say much about this decision, but it would be the cause of a permanent strain between Ward and Hotle. Ethel Ward in her 1951 book on her parents and the mission in India gave the only real clue as to what happened:

Adjustment! That was the great problem now. That has ever been the perpetual problem on every mission field. Hundreds of

²⁵Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for June 21, 1898 (see footnote 21).

²⁶E.E. Ward, 93.

years before, the prophet Amos knew this and wrote, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” And here were six to “walk together.” Mrs. Elizabeth Tucker and Mr. Wm McCready were two of the band from Nagpur but Mr. and Mrs. H_____ were the “leaders” and they “determined” (Acts 15:37) that it would be best for the Wards to take a furlough to America now and leave Louise in India to save expense and insure the Wards returning to Raj Nandgaon again. The rest “agreed,” so it came the decision was that they should go on furlough.²⁷

On furlough in 1892 the Wards’ left their two oldest daughters, Ethel and Bessie, in the care of the “Reaper’s Home” in Virginia. Now, the Pentecost Band forced the Wards to leave their youngest daughter, only five years old, in India to “ensure” that they would return. Frank Hotle was the leader under whom this was done. In her account, Ethel even refused to name him.

Interestingly, Rev. Frank C. Hotle wrote an account of his experience in which he completely erased all mention of either the Wards or the Pentecost Band in India—and most of his fellow workers as well.²⁸ Why he did this is unclear at this time. However, the final chapter of his book focused on his current work at the Missionary Holiness Alliance Bible School and Training Home in Terre Haute, Indiana. Perhaps Hotle was using the book for fundraising and he wished to elevate his role in the India mission, or perhaps it reflects a negative experience which led him to break from the Pentecost Bands as well.

While the Wards were back in the United States, they took up the task of speaking and travelling. Meanwhile, Hotle and the Pentecost Band instituted the first Harvest Home Camp Meeting in India, from November 1-8, 1898. In the U.S., the Harvest Home Camp Meeting was a tradition of the Pentecost Bands. The Camp Meeting was a time for holiness people to enjoy fellowship, and also to reinforce the teaching of the holiness doctrines. There were at least four annual Harvest Home Camp Meetings held in India by the Pentecost Band in Raj Nandgaon.

Ernest Ward was also closely connected to the work of *The Pentecost Herald* during the Wards’ furlough. He published numerous reports on the work in India, and he and the paper listed the Wards as the leader and assistant of Band no. 21. This Band was located at the “Herald

²⁷Ward, 94-95.

²⁸Rev. Frank C. Hotle, *My Experience and Call: With a Brief Summary of Seven Years Labor in Central India*, (Louisville, KY: Pentecostal Publishing Company, n.d.).

Office, Indianapolis, Ind.,”²⁹ from the November 15, 1898, issue until the October 15, 1899 issue. It is also interesting to note that in an article by Fannie Birdsall about one of the Wards’ speaking engagements. She concluded with a brief plug to “Send 5 cents for the illustrated sketch of the life of Pandita Ramabi (*sic*).”³⁰ Clearly the Wards and the Pentecost Bands were aware of Pandita Ramabai well before the Mukti Revival. However, this awareness also included direct contact as well.³¹

Before the Wards went on furlough, Hotle and Ward had been investigating the possibility of a new branch of the Pentecost Band mission in Gondia. They planned for this mission to focus on work among child widows. Within Indian custom at the time, young girls were often married as children to much older men, and then were often left unprotected and abandoned when these husbands died. Various early missions often assisted these girls, and Pandita Ramabai especially focused on this type of ministry at the Mukti Mission. *The Pentecost Herald* discussed the child widow plight several times in its pages.

While Ward was in the U.S., Hotle sent a letter dated April 5, 1899, from Poona (Pune), India to *The Pentecost Herald*, where he wrote,

We go to Kedgaon tonight, a village thirty miles east of here where we wish to visit the high caste “Widows’ Home” conducted by the notable woman, Pandita Ramabia (*sic*). We are praying and hope to obtain some special and valuable information as to principles and management of this wonderful work. God is with us and we feel he has led us here. He has been laying these people heavily on our hearts and we are praying the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers into his vineyard to go forth and preach deliverance to the many thousands who are bowed beneath the galling yokes of moral and social slavery.³²

An additional note in the Pentecost Band journal indicated that Sister Tucker “will go to Dardar, Bombay, and Pandita Ramabai’s”³³ on her way home for furlough on April 20, 1903, before sailing. Clearly, the

²⁹*The Pentecost Herald* listed all of the bands in each issue of their periodical. While the Wards were on furlough, this was the assignment that was listed in the paper from the November 15, 1898 issue until the October 15, 1899 issue when they returned to India.

³⁰*The Pentecost Herald* 5, no. 16, (whole no. 95) (November 15, 1898), 8.

³¹Phebe Ward’s initial contact with Pandita Ramabai came as early as 1892, when she took a trip to Pune. She went there to leave an Anglo-Indian adopted daughter at a Children’s Home since there were insufficient funds to take her on furlough with the family to the U.S. Cf. Ward, 69-71.

³²*The Pentecost Herald* 6, no. 6, (whole no. 109) (June 15, 1899), 6.

³³Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for April 20, 1903 (see footnote 21).

members of the Pentecost Bands were impressed by Ramabai and willing to learn from her work. What is less clear is how these radical holiness missionaries might have influenced Ramabai.³⁴

Despite the obvious tensions between the Wards and the Hotles over the furlough incident, it would be unjust to imply that they did not support each other and work well together for the good of the larger group. On August 7, 1900, the Hotles' young son, Earl Clifford, died at only eleven months and four days of age. The journal for the Pentecost Bands recorded that Ernest Ward conducted the funeral service the following day, noting, "This is our first death among the missionaries."³⁵ The two also worked together to establish the second Pentecost Band in Gondia and on the Harvest Home Camp Meetings.

Having said that, Ernest and Phebe Ward set out in December of 1900 to establish a new mission station in Khairagarh, and so they would have less day-to-day contact with the Hotles. *The Pentecost Herald* listed the Wards as the leaders of Band no. 4 in Khairagarh from the January 15, 1901 issue until the September 1, 1901 issue. Then, it suddenly listed the Wards as just workers under A.E. and Bessie Ashton (the former Bessie Sherman) in Gondia. Ethel Ward remained as an assistant leader in Khairagarh.³⁶ From the September 15, 1901 issue of *The Pentecost Herald* until the January 15, 1902 issue the Wards remained in this status. From the February 1, 1902 issue of *The Pentecost Herald* on, the Wards were not listed as members of the Pentecost Bands in India at all, except

³⁴These relationships become even more interesting when we consider that Ramabai had an experience in April 1895 at a Holiness Camp Meeting in Lanauli (or Lanowli). Further, she chose to enroll her daughter and three other Indian girls into Chesbrough Seminary in New York in 1898. Chesbrough was a Free Methodist school, coming from the same roots as the Pentecost Bands and the missionary work of Ernest and Phebe Ward. For more on these relationships see Howard A. Snyder, "Holiness Heritage: The Case of Pandita Ramabai," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40, no. 2, (Fall 2005): 30-51.

³⁵Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for August 8, 1900 (see footnote 21).

³⁶In Phebe's diary, the decision to remain at Gondia occurred at a workers' meeting on July 25, 1901. Phebe also reminisced in a letter to Ernest dated April 22, 1902 writing:

Do you remember the time you, Bro. and Sr. Ashton, Sr. Vail and others were all called together for a worker's meeting, when they dealt with you about the tithing of the Khariagarh house, and that you had not obeyed orders? Sr. Ashton says they had sent for some books without an order from Raj Nand and that Bro. and Sr. Hotle began to fear you and they were acting too much on your own hook and that things were being taken out of their hands and hence the worker's meeting.

for Ethel, who appears to remain at Khairagarh with the Bands until the end of 1904.³⁷

To pinpoint the reason for the Wards' separation from the Pentecost Bands, it is necessary to explore some of their more personal items, including a diary of Phebe Ward.³⁸ Her diary included letters between her and Ernest shortly after the break. Phebe made an extensive note in her diary for October 7, 1901:

Harvest Home camp meeting began Sept. 25, Wed. About Sat. morn. Ernest objected to some teaching of the Bands in the holiness meeting. His manner displeased the workers and upon holding to his position, he was forbidden to take part in the meetings. He fainted away while standing in the eve. meeting which was construed by the workers to be the judgment of God. I could not quite see it as he was able to attend the meetings the next day. If Bro. Hotle had not previously forbidden him to speak it would have looked more reasonable to me . . . I was much distressed about things as I truly loved the Bands and felt that God was with them. But when Bro. Ward withdrew from the Bands, I felt God wanted me to stand by him. I can see things in the Bands that I know is [sic] not of God, such as forcing workers to take convictions from leaders as from God, and there was a relief in my heart when we left Raj Nandgaon. I was much tossed about during the trial, sometimes thinking I could not get through to heaven without the severe dealing of the Bands with me.³⁹ But when I think of things that have

³⁷The Wards made another brief appearance in the March 15, 1905 issue of the *Pentecost Herald* 11, no. 21, (whole number 235) (March 15, 1905), 3. They led the "ingathering" (when new Christians were baptized by the Bands) with Phebe, Ernest, and Ethel all leading meetings and preaching at the event. The accounts on page 3 refer to them as "former co-workers," and also note that Frank Hotle was "unable to come."

³⁸The diary of Phebe Ward from 1900 to 1904 is part of the "Papers of Ernest F. Ward," Archives and Special Collections, B. L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, box 1, folder 5. This diary also contains several letters slipped into the back of the book, which the author will also reference in this paper.

³⁹In her letter to Ernest in April 22, 1902, reflecting on their experience, Phebe wrote of even more extreme events emanating from the Hotles' leadership:

You know that Bro. Hotle wanted me out of the way so they could run things as they pleased and they thought they saw in me a formidable foe. You remember the day you and he locked me up as he thrust me in that little room, he said "Your power in Raj N- is broken," because I insisted on knowing the state of my own soul. He told Sr. Vail I had to be taken to America to get me out of the way. How sad! Instead of utilizing the God given power in me- they would not have it when it ran counter to their opinions. That was the secret of your being taken from Khairagarh. They could not handle you so well there.

happened in dealing with different workers and the severe and harsh treatment used, I cannot but contrast it with the spirit of Jesus and it makes me more sure that this sudden and extraordinary move is from God. For Ernest did not think of severing his connections with the Bands when he went to H.H.⁴⁰

The fact that their daughter Ethel remained with the Pentecost Bands was a cause of concern for her parents. In her April 22, 1902 letter to Ernest, Phebe was considering returning to the U.S. due to her poor health, and for the education of her younger two daughters. While she ultimately decided to stay in India, she wrote,

This is my plan, to send the money to Ethel to come to Bombay to get her picture taken with the girls before we go. She will want to come to see us off. If they will not let her come that may be a link in the chain to open her eyes as to the bondage she is in . . . If they hold her there so we cannot see her it will be another incentive to pray her out. My heart sinks as I think of going without seeing her, but I can do it . . .⁴¹

Having broken with the Pentecost Bands in October 1901, the Wards were forced to abandon all they had worked for and look for a new field. A brother Wiley was sent to oversee their work while they prepared to leave, even while they tried to continue their ministry. Phebe made a note in her diary about a religious service held November 10, 1901: "When Ernest testified he spoke of consecration, whereupon Bro. Wiley got up and stopped him and said he must not talk any more about that."⁴² Since their mission work at Raj Nandgaon was now under the Pentecost Bands' leadership, it was important to find a temporary location to regroup. In a copy of a letter to Phebe's brother, Frank, dated April 17, 1902, Ernest wrote, "After leaving the P. Bands last October, Phebe and I have rec'd invitations to cast in our lot with 3 other missions. We chose to come here and help in the work at Dhond. There are 400 orphan boys and I am at present assisting in their spiritual training."⁴³ The Wards relocated to Albert Norton's boys' orphanage, a partner mission with Pandita Ramabai's Mukti Mission that was close by. Phebe noted in her diary that Ernest wrote to Albert Norton (the missionary who encouraged them to come to India in the beginning), and on December 13, 1901 they arrived at the boys' orphanage. Phebe reported that the

⁴⁰Diary of Phebe Ward, entry from October 7, 1901 (see footnote 38).

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

Nortons were shocked by the physical change in her, and that, “We sleep in the dining room curtained off from one end.”⁴⁴

Of this time, Ethel Ward noted that the “leaders” moved the Wards from Lohara to Gondia, to Khairagarh, and in the meantime they visited and helped other missionary friends as well. During this time, Ethel Ward recorded:

Just then, the Wards had a letter from their old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Norton who had first interested them in India. “Come and see us,” they wrote from Dhond. “We have a boys’ school near Pandita Ramabai’s School at Kedgaon, near Poona (Pune).”

The Wards had an invitation to another place but decided to visit in Dhond enroute, and help them temporarily. The Nortons had a large orphanage of 440 boys, and being near to Pandita Ramabai’s famous “Mukti Mission,” where she had about 1000 girls and women, this boys’ school supplied many husbands to Ramabai’s girls. Mrs. Ward looked after the little boys and the sick boys, also taught a class of sixty-five boys in Sunday School.⁴⁵

Ethel’s view seems to gloss over the true accounting of these events, but the diary and letters clearly indicate that Ethel was still with the Pentecost Bands and under their control.

From December 1901 through April 1902, the Wards stayed and worked closely with the Nortons. During this time, the Wards clearly had contact with Ramabai’s work. Phebe’s diary recorded news from Kedgaon. She also noted that on February 7, 1902, Ernest took Methodist missionary C. B. Ward to visit Ramabai and her mission. On February 27, 1902, Free Methodist missionary Effie Southworth stopped by on a visit to Ramabai. Phebe Ward also made an extensive record in her diary on March 28, 1902 of a visit to the Mukti Mission. It noted that she took C. W. Sherman (Bessie Ashton’s father and founder of the Vanguard Mission in St. Louis—also with ties to Free Methodism) to visit Ramabai’s work. In her account Phebe was also clearly impressed by Ramabai’s organization and methodology.⁴⁶

Apparently in 1902, the work of both the Nortons and Pandita Ramabai were not sufficiently tied to the radical holiness views of Ernest

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵E.E. Ward, 103.

⁴⁶To see the full extended and notated quote from Phebe Ward’s diary, see Robert Danielson, “From the Archives: Ernest F. Ward: The First Free Methodist Foreign Missionary,” *The Asbury Journal* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 172 - 180. Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/vol70/iss1/11> (accessed January 15, 2020).

Ward to present permanent options, despite apparent encouragement from C. W. Sherman to consider working with Ramabai. Ernest wrote to Phebe on April 7, 1902 about the future options in Dhond or Khedgaon:

I have very little hope of a permanent affiliation with this work (*he is writing from the Nortons' work in Dhond*). Both sides of the house are neither in harmony with our teaching nor our practice on thorough holiness lines if we are at all aggressive, and until they radically change will continue to head us off in our work among the orphans. I think it should be exactly the same at Khedgaon if they had invited us there and I don't see why Bro. Sherman has any hope in that direction. I don't see a bit for true holiness with the advisors P.R. (*assumed to stand for Pandita Ramabai*) has about her now (or) P. herself, unless she shows a desire to shake loose of everybody unspiritual who have a controlling voice at home or abroad.⁴⁷

The Wards assisted with some of the Vanguard Mission's work in Sanjan, until they ultimately returned to the Free Methodist Church in June 1904. They also helped its work in Yeotmal. Ethel also apparently left the Bands at that time and went to work with the Free Methodists at Yeotmal.

Reports of Holiness Revivals among the Pentecost Bands

The journal for the Pentecost Band in Raj Nandgaon is full of accounts of daily activities and trips taken by the missionaries, but it also contains accounts of spiritual revivals that occurred among the orphans. It is important to remember that the Pentecost Bands were primarily an evangelistic group rooted in radical holiness teaching. It is also significant to realize that spiritual accounts such as these were common in the period, especially in the Holiness Movement. However, a few of these accounts can convey some of the ways in which the Pentecost Band in India combined their evangelistic work with the orphanage work thrust upon them by the famine of 1897. One of the earliest accounts is in a letter from Frank Hotle to *The Pentecost Herald* published in 1898:

A real revival is prevailing all over our compound. Something over twenty of our children have prayed through and got saved, and some of them most gloriously. When they would strike the

⁴⁷Diary of Phebe Ward, copy of letter from Ernest to Phebe in the back of the diary dated April 7, 1902 (see footnote 38).

joy they would clap their hands, praise God and prance about for joy, like some people in America who had the light all their lives. Bro. Ward said he never saw anything like it in India. The revival broke out among our children at Nagpur. Some of the children who have been with us but a few months are saved. Since we have been here the revival is spreading among all the children and a number of Bro. Ward's have been saved. Bro. and sister Ward are being much helped of God.⁴⁸

In an account from the Pentecost Band journal from November 25, 1900, the secretary of the band wrote,

Sunday—A Sabbath day indeed. All nature is keeping it holy. In the early morning most of the workers went to a village to hold services. The Spirit came down in our midst as the workers began telling of a savior for the Heathen. Some of the workers jumped, danced, and shouted while the natives looked on in wonderment. Praise the Lord! At eleven o'clock a Hindi service was held in the chapel. In the bazaar meeting again the Spirit was poured out in blessing. The English service at seven p.m. was a time of heart searching as the truths of the Bible and how to be a soul winner was pressed home to the workers. O Hallelujah for the blood and fire track!⁴⁹

Again, a similar account from May 12, 1901 stated,

Sunday—Hindi morning meeting led by Sis. Wiley and Alcorn and Sumerit and Rukhumin. It was followed by a rousing prayer meeting with the children in their school house where a number of them got saved. The evening meeting showed the results of it. We had a blessed time and all seemed so free, as the children were in readiness and gave their testimonies with such speed. Many testified to being saved from shame, which they manifested in the morning meeting by not taking up their crosses. The fire fell at the first of the services and many ran around, shouting, and praising God. Hallelujah! We can live free and cut loose in Hindi as well as English. Praise the Lord.⁵⁰

We find another one of the numerous examples in the account for April 7, 1902:

⁴⁸*The Pentecost Herald* 5, no. 12, (whole no. 91) (September 15, 1898), 6.

⁴⁹Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for November 25, 1900 (see footnote 21).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

Monday—Bro. and Sis. Whittle arrived in the morning at 7:30 and both went on the morning train to Igatpuri. Workers called on Bi-Kaulal's people today. The salvation seeking among the girls of late is working out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The Lord has favored us with showers of rain, the atmosphere is deliciously cool, but the glory from the presence of our Father far exceeds every temporal blessing. The wonderful outpourings of the Spirit at prayers encourages us to expect great things. We are looking to God for such a revival to break out as will be felt throughout India. And prayers are ascending for the meeting now on at Igatpuri. Bro. Hotle writes of backsliders and professors being much stirred. Amen!⁵¹

And yet a final example from December 7, 1902:

Sunday—We had no village meeting this morning. Ugari, Sankuriya and Gwalin led the morning Hindi service. Gwalin read Matt. 5:13-17 and talked, then the other two and the testimonies followed promptly. SS as usual. Satmir, Hyder and Rupsingh led the evening Hindi service. Satmir read Jno. 13:10-17 and talked and the other boys followed. During one of the opening hymns the Spirit came down and some were running, others jumping, dancing, or shouting. It was a blessed time. Nearly all the children testified and many of them had new testimonies. Bro. Harlowe said it was the best children's meeting he was ever in in India. Sr. Goode led the Eng. Meeting and after reading Isaiah 35 talked from a verse in Jeremiah, "Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths." We all testified and had a good free time.⁵²

What is significant here is that all these accounts occurred prior to 1905, which was an important date for the outbreak of the Mukti Revival led by Pandita Ramabai in Kedgaon. Kedgaon is near Bombay (Mumbai), just 600 miles away on the main railroad from Raj Nandgaon. During a key period in the first half of 1902, the Wards and their form of radical holiness were located just thirteen miles away at the Dhond home, which took in the brothers of Ramabai's girls, and often provided the girls with

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

husbands as well.⁵³ Thus we have a potential radical holiness influence on children in orphanages which were created in Central India as a result of the famine of 1897. These orphanages had known contacts with the Mukti Mission prior to the Mukti Revival of 1905. Evidence shows that Ramabai was interested in the holiness message, especially through contacts within the Free Methodist tradition.⁵⁴ While none of this proves a definite connection between the spiritual practices of the Pentecost Bands (and by extension the Wards) and the Mukti Revival, there is a greater likelihood of immediate impact coming from this direction than from 3,000 miles away in the Welsh Revival influence in the Khasi Hills.

Potential Parallels with the Mukti Revival

Accounts of the Mukti Revival of 1905 are quite like those found in the Pentecost Bands of India journal. One example could be this account by Pandita Ramabai:

. . . the Spirit of God [falling] on those praying people with such power, that it was impossible to keep them silent. They burst out in tears; loud cries, were heard in all parts of the Church building, and we were awe-struck. . . . Little children, middle sized girls and young women wept bitterly and confessed their sins. Some saw visions and experienced the Power of God, and things that are too deep to describe. Two little girls had the spirit of prayer poured on them in such great torrents, that they continued to pray for hours. They were transformed with heavenly light shining on their faces.⁵⁵

As mentioned earlier, such revivalist language was common for the time, and was not unique to the Pentecost Bands in India or even the Pentecost Bands in general. It was even familiar for the Indian context at the time.⁵⁶ However, we should have serious pause, given the similarity

⁵³It is also important to note here that Ernest Ward was involved in the spiritual training of the boys in Dhond and he had a strong leadership role. In one letter to Phebe dated April 1, 1902, Ernest wrote, "We had special meeting for boys today. Then went down to river and baptized 13 boys including 2 blind boys and that little boy who prays so much. Bro. N. asked me to perform the ceremony, which I did. 2 boys came up after we had settled who to baptize at the school and begged to be baptized. Bro. N. left it with me to decide and I told him to postpone their case to another time."

⁵⁴Cf. Howard A. Snyder, "Holiness Heritage: The Case of Pandita Ramabai," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2005), 30-51.

⁵⁵Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, "More Surprises," *Mukti Prayer Bell* (October 1905), 7.

⁵⁶Cf. Gary B. McGee, "'Latter Rain' Falling in the East: Early-Twentieth-Century Pentecostalism in India and the Debate over Speaking in Tongues," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 68, no. 3 (1999), 648-668.

of context, including geographic proximity and similar mission aims and goals. Further, we must also consider the historical evidence of physical interaction between the Pentecost Bands, the Wards, and the Mukti Mission, along with Ramabai's own interest in the Free Methodist Church and the Holiness Movement it represented, as it should give us serious pause for thought.

It is interesting that Edith Blumhofer, a well-known scholar on the Indian Revival, noted, "Three notable features seemed ubiquitous in this Indian revival: fire (felt and unseen), intense joy, and public confession of sin."⁵⁷ All three elements were seen in the Pentecost Band's account almost five years before the Mukti Revival—and three years before the Welsh Revival! Perhaps the Pentecost Band's accounts signify that the Indian Revival was already a reality in Central India prior to the Mukti Revival, and even the impact of the Welsh Revival in the Khasi Hills.

It is reasonable to wonder, if the Pentecost Bands did have any type of influence on the Mukti Revival, why do their own records not report any reciprocal influence following the June 1905 Mukti Revival? There are several possible reasons for this. First, any direct contacts between the Pentecost Bands and Pandita Ramabai were likely more personal in nature, probably with either the Wards or Frank Hotle. Second, by the time of the Mukti Revival, Frank Hotle was no longer in India. Third, the nature of his leadership had also splintered the group as older members left, leaving mostly newer members with fewer personal contacts.⁵⁸ The May 27, 1905 issue of the *Herald of Light* (which replaced *The Pentecost Herald*) noted that Frank Hotle had returned to the U.S. with his family due to "poor health" and at that time was resting with friends in Kansas.⁵⁹ Hotle never returned to the Pentecost Band's work in India after this.

As I have shown, the Wards broke with the Pentecost Bands in late 1901 and returned to the Free Methodist Mission in Yeotmal by 1904. Helen S. Dyer's account of the Mukti Revival and its spread around India made the following interesting statement:

Longing for Revival, the Free Methodist Mission at Yeotmal, Berar, was in the right attitude for blessing. Schools were closed in order that missionaries, teachers, and pupils might wait on

⁵⁷Edith L. Blumhofer, "Consuming Fire: Pandita Ramabai and the Early Pentecostal Impulse." Chapter seven in *Indian and Christian: The Life and Legacy of Pandita Ramabai*, edited by Roger E. Hedlund, Sebastian Kim, and Rajkumar Boaz Johnson (Published by MIIS/CMS/SPCK, 2011), 141.

⁵⁸Phebe's diary notes in December 1901 that Bessie (Sherman) Ashton and her husband "have left the Bands because the rule of the leader is too oppressive."

⁵⁹*Herald of Light* 12, no. 9 (whole issue no. 244) (May 27, 1905), 8.

the Lord. This was the last week in August 1905. On the Saturday night of this week of prayer the answer came. The meetings were over, but twenty were still “tarrying” when at 10:30 p.m. the Holy Spirit came like a shock of electricity; some shouted the praises of God, some danced, some ran, and some fell to the ground, under the power of God. All present were Christians with one exception, and she was converted. The others were all baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then the work spread to the unconverted in the orphanages. There was true conviction of sin, which resulted in confession followed by forgiveness and great joy.⁶⁰

According to Dyer’s account, only local missions in Pune, including Soonderbai Powar’s Zenana Training Home and Albert Norton’s Boy’s Christian Home in Dhond, which was closely aligned with Ramabai’s Mukti Mission, received the impact of the Mukti Revival before the Free Methodists in Yeotmal. It is possible, therefore, to argue that if the Pentecost Band’s work had any influence on the Mukti Revival at all, it would have been through the personal contacts and influence of Ernest and Phebe Ward. Also, according to Dyer, the impact of the Mukti Revival travelled back to influence the Free Methodist mission as rapidly as it did because of those same contacts.

Given the available evidence, it would be presumptive to argue that the Pentecost Bands alone had a direct impact on the Mukti Revival, or even that it had a significant influence.⁶¹ We should not diminish the importance of Pandita Ramabai and her influence in the story of the Mukti Revival. Yet, history frequently shows us that there are many factors that influence significant events. We would be imprudent to dismiss the possibility that the radical holiness missionaries of the Pentecost Bands, especially Ernest and Phebe Ward, might have played a small role in the succeeding events of the Indian Revival.⁶² Their potential contribution should not be ignored in an attempt to oversimplify the influences on the Mukti Revival.

⁶⁰Helen S. Dyer, *Revival in India: “Years of the Right Hand of the Most High”* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1907), 61.

⁶¹Cf. Yan Suarsana, “Inventing Pentecostalism: Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Revival from a Post-Colonial Perspective,” *PentecoStudies* 13, no. 2 (2014), 173-196.

⁶²Stanley M. Burgess. “Pentecostalism in India: An Overview” in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4, no. 1, (2001), 85-98. Burgess demonstrated that there were plenty of other contenders for Pentecostal influence in India, both before and after the Mukti Revival.

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