

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “BORN AGAIN”?

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Part Five

“Born of Water” as Figurative (Part Two)

Continuing on from the last chapter, we now look at the movements and groups which were closer antecedents to the Pentecostal movement. We are still surveying the Christian groups which interpret Jesus words “born of water. . . .” as figurative or symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit. As a product of the Wesleyan-Methodist theology, the Holiness Movement agreed that water baptism symbolized a spiritual reality. Since the emphasis in the Holiness Movement was

entire sanctification, attention was focused on what happened after conversion. Water baptism was seen as part of the accepted doctrines of conversion passed down from their predecessors, and was not understood to be a matter of contention. Thus, Holiness people did not view water baptism in sacramental terms - as a literal part of the New Birth. They joined with the Reformed believers in agreeing that water baptism was a sign of the inward work already done.

“EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES
THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST IS
BORN OF GOD, AND
EVERYONE WHO LOVES THE
FATHER LOVES HIS CHILD AS
WELL.”

1 JOHN 5:1 NIV

The Holiness Movement

Anyone wishing to understand Christianity in America, and especially the Pentecostal movement, cannot do so without a substantial knowledge of the history and nature of the Holiness movement. This movement contributed largely to the personality of contemporary American Christianity. Specifically, there is nothing in the make-up of the Pentecostal faith and practice which cannot be found, and sometimes

in a more sophisticated form, in the Holiness churches. In seeking out answers to our questions about the New Birth and water baptism, it is important to consider the Holiness movement and its effects on present traditions.

This movement emerged primarily within the Methodist church, although it was not exclusive to Wesleyan descendants. Many from the Reformed tradition accepted the Holiness theology and conventions. “The American Holiness movement emerged as a synthesis of the Reformed and Wesleyan theology . . .”¹ Yet it is true that most of the Holiness leaders were Methodist, and the movement originally, and for most of the 19th century, existed as a part of the Methodist church:

From the formation of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness in 1867 until the mid-1890's, established Methodist clergymen such as John S. Inskip and William McDonald kept most of the movement in the church.²

Driven by the three major impulses of American Christianity - Pietism, Revivalism and Perfectionism - the Holiness tide reshaped the shores of American Christianity:

The pietistic essence of American revivalism also helped to create a religious and social climate favorable to the rise of a holiness revival during this period. Whatever else pietism has represented in its history of consistent influences on the Protestant churches, it has symbolized religious emphases which favored experience over theology and the call to individual commitment to a Christian life of witness and charity. It was not enough to be a “formal” Christian. Individuals had to know for themselves that they were “born-again” Christian. The logical goal of such a life was individual Christian perfection.³

Notice how “experience” is elevated in Holiness theology. This is an outgrowth of the Pietist and Revivalist stress on the assurance of being a Christian through a “born-again” experience. This notion of assurance through experience played a central role in Holiness thinking. Rather than a faith focused on theology or dogma, Holiness stressed “crisis” experience. The experience in particular was one of “entire sanctification.” The entire sanctification experience was the precursor of the Pentecostal experience of Spirit Baptism. One might say, the experience of entire sanctification was the Pentecostal baptism with the Spirit, yet without the tongues. The testimonies to both in their given literature is remarkably parallel, nearly identical, even at times with the accompaniment of tongues.

The Holiness Movement imbued a large portion of the Protestant church with its teaching of entire sanctification, or “holiness,” from 1840-1870. Entire sanctification was designated a “second work of grace” after conversion. In conversion one was regenerated and justified by faith. However, the Holiness people looked for a greater measure of the Spirit’s work in the “second work” called “entire sanctification.”⁴

They called the crisis of conversion being saved, the crisis of healing of the sinful nature, entire sanctification or full salvation. Recognizing the necessity of spiritual growth before and after the crisis of entire sanctification, they maintained that as in human development, spiritual birth was necessarily a crisis. Feeling that the contrast between Jesus’ disciples before and after Pentecost was explained by the sanctifying experience of that day, the Methodist holiness spokesmen of the National Holiness Movement, and their followers insisted that full salvation was accomplished in two crises and that purification of the corruption of human nature by the Holy Spirit must of necessity precede perfect love.⁵

This teaching is not directly pertinent to the traditional view of water baptism as it relates to the New Birth. However, as we shall see later in this paper, it will have immense significance for any future understanding of the Baptism of the Spirit and what it means to be “born of the Spirit.” Holiness followers believed that spiritual birth or New Birth is “necessarily a crisis,” as well, as an “experience.” Hence, many Holiness/Pentecostal Christians referred to the New Birth as a “crisis experience.” What was meant was an experience which produces a turning point in life. It was an experience which brought resolution to a condition of life which one had failed to solve. Thus, water baptism was of much less concern to this movement, whose interests rested on an experience post-conversion or subsequent to water baptism.

“Come-Outers”

From its beginnings until 1890, the Holiness movement was an association of Holiness sympathizers who maintained their memberships in mainline, usually Methodist, churches. A major shift occurred at the General Conference of the Southern Methodist Church in 1894. Until this time, Holiness was viewed as means of unifying the various denominations. Charles Finney wedded entire sanctification with Revivalism. Many within the mainline churches saw the Holiness revival in general and entire sanctification in particular as God’s means for renewing their church tradition. When this did not happen, a number of Holiness associations in the Methodist church

broke away from the mainline body, or “came out” of the Methodist church. They formed new associations (which later became denominations) for carrying on the “holiness” gospel, free of the restrictions and control of institutional Methodism.

For the most part, the Holiness movement followed the pattern of the Wesleyan and Reformed view of the New Birth. Their view of baptism as a symbol was aligned with the Anglican-Wesleyan position, which means they understood water baptism to be a *sign*. While the character of the Holiness movement was dynamic and complex, a degree of unanimity existed among Holiness advocates as to the nature of the New Birth. We will look at more recent statements of the largest of these separated churches to gather a general view of what the Holiness movement, in the last quarter of the 19th century, taught concerning water baptism and regeneration.

The **Church of the Nazarene** was the largest group among the come-outers. They closely followed Wesley view of regeneration:

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.⁶

Their Articles of Faith states about baptism:

We believe that Christian baptism, commanded by our Lord, is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ, to be administered to believers and declarative of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and full purpose of obedience in holiness and righteousness. Baptism being a symbol of the new covenant, young children may be baptized, upon request of parents or guardians who shall give assurance for them of necessary Christian training. Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant.⁷

The second largest group is the **Church of God, Anderson**. Regeneration is seen as correlative to believing in Jesus Christ. Water baptism functions as a “witness” to that preceding regeneration:

When you accept Jesus Christ as Savior, you are born into the church. You are a new creation in Christ (John 3:1-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Through the cross you have become a member. . . . Through baptism

the new believer witnesses to a new spiritual dimension in his or her life.⁸

The third largest group among the holiness denominations was the **Free Methodists**. For them, regeneration was a term which illustrates the new nature which comes by faith in Christ:

Regeneration is a biological term which illustrates that by our new relationships in Christ we do in fact have a new life and a new spiritual nature capable of faith, love, and obedience to Christ Jesus as Lord. The believer is born again. He or she is a new creation. The old life is past; a new life is begun. (Ezekiel 36: 26-27; John 5:24; Romans 6: 4; 2 Corinthians 5: 17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3: 9-10; Titus 3:4-5; 1 Peter 1:23)

The **Wesleyan Methodist**, another large member of these denominations, believed concerning regeneration:

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that work of the Holy Spirit whereby, when one truly repents and believes, one's moral nature is given a distinctively spiritual life with the capacity for love and obedience. This new life is received by faith in Jesus Christ, it enables the pardoned sinner to serve God with the will and affections of the heart, and by it the regenerate are delivered from the power of sin which reigns over all the unregenerate.⁹

Even though they call water baptism a “sacrament,” they actually see water baptism as the *symbol* of the new covenant by which the believer declares faith in Jesus Christ:

We believe that water baptism is a sacrament of the church, commanded by our Lord and administered to believers. It is a symbol of the new covenant of grace and signifies acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. By means of this sacrament, believers declare their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.¹⁰

Their imprecision of language does not overshadow the clear intention of this statement. Water baptism is considered a sign or symbol that points to the actual work of cleansing that occurs when one believes in Christ.

Radical Holiness

Among the “Come-outers” were other more radical holiness groups. There was some debate about the mode of baptism. For example, W. B. Godbey, eminent Holiness teacher at God’s Bible School (Cincinnati, OH), strongly opposed immersion in favor of affusion (pouring or sprinkling).¹¹ Martin Wells Knapp, founder of God’s Bible School in 1897, rejected the idea that water baptism effects the cleansing from sin:

Dr. Water. He would substitute water baptism for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Inbred sin, from which the soul is to be purified, is deeper than the muscle, bones, marrow, or nerves, so that his notion of cleansing from it simply by the application of water to the skin is so ridiculous that but few have been deceived by it. It is utterly without witness and without Scripture proof. I knew a man who had been baptized three different ways, but was still a sinner.¹²

There does not appear to be a general contention about the meaning of water baptism among the Holiness groups. They appeared to be content to maintain the tradition of their mother denomination - the Methodist church:

With these he [C. B. Jernigan] began to plan for a union of all churches that taught holiness as a second work of grace, and a delegated body of these two churches met at Rising Star, Texas, in November, 1904. The Holiness Baptist church in Arkansas had also been invited to participate in this union; but they refused to unite unless all would agree that baptism by immersion would be the recognized mode for the church. The Church of Christ practiced baptism by pouring only; while the Independent Holiness church was not restricted to any special mode.¹³

Holiness theology, for the most part, located the occurrence of regeneration at the moment of faith in Christ, while speaking of water baptism as a sign, witness, or declaration of the believers faith in Christ as Savior.

In speaking of the new birth (which means being born from above) we are using a figure of speech which the Apostle John is pleased to use in explaining what happens when a sinner is made a "saint." . . . Jesus calls the same experience being "saved" in Luke 19:10. The Apostle Paul calls the same experience "being justified" in Romans 5:1 and he also calls it being "a new creature in Christ Jesus" in 2 Corinthians 5:17. The Apostle Peter calls it being "converted" in Acts 3:19. Jesus also calls the same experience "regeneration" in Matt. 19:28. Isaiah one of

the major prophets, in speaking of this experience called it "being pardoned" Isaiah 55: 7. So you see we have this same experience named in seven different ways, and many more could be cited, but there is no need, I trust, for that. Any of the above terms may be substituted for the new birth and mean just the same thing. One term may be clear to you but it might be clearer to use another term to explain it to someone else. ¹⁴

This places the Holiness followers in the tradition which interprets "born of water" in John 3:5 as *figurative or symbolic* rather than the Roman Catholic/Restorationist tradition which holds the *sacramental* understanding.

Keswick Movement

The Keswick movement, the confluence of Reformed and Holiness tributaries, emerged in the last quarter of the 19th century. It carried clear Reformed notions of regeneration, while adopting the importance of a distinct work of the Spirit after conversion for the empowerment of the believer. This movement is identified with the village of Keswick in England where, from 1875, a convention was held by English "higher life" exponents, along with various American Holiness leaders and teachers. It is acknowledged by Holiness, Keswick and Pentecostal scholars that Keswick theology was an immediate forerunner of Pentecostal theology, especially the "Finished Work" strand.

Another predecessor to Pentecostalism was the Keswick "Higher Life" movement which flourished in England after 1875. Led at first by American holiness teachers such as Hannah Whitall Smith and William E. Boardman, the Keswick teachers soon changed the goal and content of the "second blessing" from the Wesleyan emphasis on "heart purity" to that of an "endowment of spiritual power for service." Thus, by the time of the Pentecostal outbreak in America in 1901, there had been at least a century of movements emphasizing a second blessing called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" with various interpretations concerning the content and results of the experience.¹⁵

The Christian and Missionary Alliance, which greatly influenced the Pentecostal movement, can be broadly categorized as falling under the Keswick tradition. Without question the most significant personage of the CMA was **A. B. Simpson**. Simpson, (1843-1919) an evangelist, writer, and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, was led by A. J. Gordon and W. E. Boardman to the Keswick view. Simpson

was associated with such noted Fundamentalist leaders as C. I. Scofield, Andrew Murray, and Dwight L. Moody. He was raised in a staunch Scottish Presbyterian family, after the “strictest Puritan formulas.” He was educated at Knox College in Toronto, Canada. In his book on the Holy Spirit, *The Holy Spirit: Power From On High*, he says this about the New Birth:

The mystery of the incarnation is repeated every time a soul is created anew in Christ Jesus. Into the unholy being of a child of Adam, a seed of incorruptible and eternal life is implanted by the divine Spirit, and that seed is in itself, through the life of God, holy and incorruptible. Just as you may see in the sweet springtime the little white, spotless shoot, coming from the dark soil and out of the heap of manure, unstained by all its gross surroundings, so out of our lost humanity the Holy Spirit causes to spring forth the life of the newborn soul. And while the subject of that marvelous experience may seem an imperfect being. Still he has that within him, of which the apostle has said, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9). He can sin, but that holy nature implanted in him cannot; it is like its Author, holy, too.¹⁶

Simpson followed the Reformed view of New Birth, which is, that only by the initiative of the Holy Spirit, is new life implanted in the sinner, and by this, opens the heart to true understanding to the Gospel. The first work of the Spirit in the believer’s life, then, is regeneration:

We next see the Holy Spirit in relation to the believer: first, He is presented to us as the Spirit of regeneration. In John 3 Christ says, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (3:5-6). The natural man is unable even to see the kingdom of God and is powerless to enter. The Holy Spirit creates in us a new life and a new set of spiritual senses altogether, through which we discern, understand, and enter into the life of God and the spiritual realm. “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (1:12-13).¹⁷

He did not believe that the “washing of regeneration” referred to baptism. Rather it was the life giving Spirit:

And so the laver of regeneration represents the primary work of the divine Spirit in quickening the soul that is dead in sin, and bringing it into the life of God. . . . Therefore, the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3). Therefore, the prophet Ezekiel said of the coming salvation, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). This is the laver of regeneration, the indispensable work of the Holy Spirit in conversion.¹⁸

Simpson’s view of the means of New Birth is simply put in this statement:

We should never preach regeneration apart from Christ and simple faith in Him. The true place to obtain a new heart is not by looking into our old one, or trying to improve it, but by bowing at the feet of Jesus and believing in Him as our sin-atoning Savior.¹⁹

The well known Bible teacher, evangelist, and president of the Moody Bible Institute, **R. A. Torrey** (1865-1928), was an early leader in the Keswick movement. He believed that:

Regeneration is the Holy Spirit’s work. Regeneration is the impartation of life, spiritual life, to the one “dead in trespasses and sins.” (Eph. 2:1) It is the Holy Spirit who imparts this life.²⁰

Torrey did not associate water baptism with regeneration. Rather, he linked it with justification:

Just as we are utterly dependent upon the work of Christ for us in justification, so we are utterly dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit in us for regeneration. Regeneration is the impartation of a new nature – God’s nature. (2 Pet. 1:4) It is the Holy Spirit who imparts this to us, makes us partakers of the divine nature. (Compare Luke 1:35) It is done through the Word. (2 Pet. 1:4 and 1 Cor 4:15.) To put it in a word: The human heart is the soil, the preacher or teacher is the sower, the word of God is the seed, the Spirit of God quickens the seed, and the Divine nature is the result.²¹

A. J. Gordon, (1836-1895) was a collaborator with D. L. Moody in his evangelistic campaigns and founder of the school which later became Gordon College (now Gordon-Conwell). He shared the Keswick view of the higher Christian life. Gordon’s famous church in Boston was a revival center, where his teaching and

preaching ministry became well respected. He wrote a popular book on healing and another entitled *The Ministry of the Spirit*.

Being raised in, and a minister of the Baptist tradition, he shared their position on the New Birth. He understood the New Birth as:

. . . not a change of nature as it is sometimes defined; it is rather the communication of the Divine nature, and the Holy Spirit is now the Mediator through whom this life is transmitted.²²

He wrote that the New Birth was affected by the means of the Word of God:

And what the scion is in grafting, the word or promise of God is in regeneration. It is the medium through which the Holy Spirit is conveyed, the germ cell in which the Divine life is enfolded. Hence the emphasis which is put in Scripture upon the appropriation of divine truth. We are told that “of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*” (James 1:18). “Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, *through the word of God*, which liveth and abideth” (I Peter 1:23, R. V.).²³

He explained his view of the work of regeneration by referring to the life-giving power in the words of Christ:

“It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.” And then he adds: “The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and life.” As God in creation breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul, so the Lord Jesus by the word of his mouth, which is the breath of life, recreates man, and makes him alive unto God.²⁴

Gordon was a known opponent of baptismal regeneration, teaching that baptism is sign of the faith that one places in the Person of Christ:

How far we must ever keep from ascribing any saving efficacy to the water, or to the ritual act of baptism, will appear when we consider how wonderfully framed the ordinance is for disclaiming all merit for the believer’s obedience, in the very act of helping him to render that obedience. For not only is here a sign which is empty and worthless, without the accompanying faith, but one which shows how empty that faith is without its object, Christ crucified and risen.²⁵

Andrew Murray, another popular writer and leader in the higher Christian life movement saw regeneration as the work of God to lead the sinner to repentance and faith in Christ.

The new birth is when the Holy Spirit, by convicting us of sin, leads us to repentance and faith in Christ and imparts a new nature. Through the Holy Spirit, God fulfills the promise, “a new spirit will I put within you.” The believer is now a child of God, a temple ready for the Spirit to dwell in.²⁶

D. L. Moody (1837-1899) was one of the most outstanding leaders in American Protestantism at the turn of the 20th century. In his book about Moody’s theology, Stanley Gundry summarized Moody’s preaching on the new birth:

It is the power of the Spirit that not only convicts people, but also in the regenerative event gives them a new nature by the new birth.²⁷

In a dialogue found in Moody’s book *Spiritual Power*, this answer is given to the questions, “What do you mean by ‘the new birth?’”:

I judge it by what I know of the old birth. I was born of human parents into the human family, so I belong to Adam’s race by nature and by generation, and I inherit Adam’s sin and curse accordingly. The new birth is from union – union by faith with the second Adam; but this is by *grace*, not nature, and when I receive the Lord Jesus Christ I am born of God – not by generation, but by regeneration. As I am united to the first Adam by nature and generation, so I am united by faith through grace and regeneration to the second Adam and inherit all His fullness accordingly.²⁸

Many other quotes of many other Keswick leaders could be presented here. But the point is made that the consistent teaching held by a majority of the Keswick leaders, was, that the new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit, prior to conversion, which came by “enabling faith” to implant His new life in the believer. It is not dependent upon the rite of water baptism. It is considered as occurring simultaneously with the faith of justification. This is in harmony with the Holiness teachers with which Keswick was closely associated. Through the influence of another Keswick sympathizer, A. Boddy and his periodical *Confidence*, the Keswick view of the Baptism of the Spirit was brought into the Pentecostal movement. A large number of those who became leaders in the coming Pentecostal movement were heavily impacted by this Keswick tradition. This resulted in the majority of

Pentecostals maintaining a non-sacramental view of baptism and a Reformed view the New Birth.

Fundamentalist

The Fundamentalists were the pre-Evangelicals who flowed from a number of the currents in conservative American Christian theology. At the turn of the 20th century they distinguished themselves from the Mainline liberal churches, contending with them over issues of Modernism and Higher Criticism of the Bible. Many of them were Holiness and Keswick in their views.²⁹

The Fundamentalists, as a whole, subscribed to the view of the New Birth which their Wesleyan/Reformed predecessors handed down to them. Their rejection of sacramentalism and identifying water baptism with the New Birth can be seen in the following quote. It is taken from an article in a set of books, known as *The Fundamentals*, which is a distillation of the Fundamentalist movement's thought, and became a chief medium for defending the faith of the Fundamentalist Movement:

After all the centuries, many students of the New Testament, accepting the gospel of John as canonical and genuine, stumble over the same great truths and “over the right ways of the Lord.” Taking the fifth verse of John 3, they accept the doctrine of regeneration, but couple it with an external act without which, in their view, the regeneration is not and cannot be completed. In their rituals they distinctly declare that water baptism is essential to and is productive of the regeneration which Jesus declares must be from heaven. They stumble over, or pervert the words used, and make “born of water” to be baptism, of which nothing is said in the verse or in the chapter, and which the whole tenor of scripture denies.³⁰

For the most part, the Pentecostal Movement was Fundamentalistic, only of a more radical kind. Strangely, it was the non-Pentecostal fundamentalists who became the most fierce rivals of Pentecostalism. The greatest attacks levied against Pentecostals were by those who defended the “fundamentals” of the Christian faith vis-à-vis Modernism. Nevertheless, the Fundamentalist view of the New Birth ran parallel to that of the Pentecostal ranks, since the majority of those coming into the Pentecostal ranks were Fundamentalists.

Pentecostal Movement

In great measure, the Pentecostal movement was a continued convergence of the theological paths of the Wesleyan and Reformed traditions which began within the Holiness movement. The Holiness thought, descended from Methodism, was initially the more dominant of the two.

Pentecostalism is a child of the Holiness thrust of American Methodist theology, but it has grown to be an adult that has influenced almost every phase of American Evangelicalism in the twentieth century.³¹

The majority position of the earliest Pentecostals relative to the New Birth and water baptism was much the same as their Holiness/Keswick predecessors. In the beginning, Charles F. Parham, the father of the modern Pentecostal movement, did not place much emphasis on water baptism. Later, he said that God urged him to be baptized in the name of Jesus. His story about this is strangely reminiscent of that told by Joseph Smith (Church of Latter-Day Saints) of his baptism in 1824.³² Overall, Parham’s writings do not reveal a prominent place for water baptism in his theology.

William Seymour, the leader of the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, stated in his *Doctrines and Disciplines*: “Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth.”³³ As to his formula, Seymour made clear:

We must have sound doctrine in our work. . . . The next we don’t believe in [is] being baptized in the name of Jesus only. We believe in baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as Jesus taught his disciples (Matt. 28: 19-20).³⁴

At the beginning, the Pentecostal revival was generated among mostly Holiness Christians (see above). However, there were those who joined the Pentecostal Movement from the Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian, Disciples of Christ, and Baptist, along with the Keswick-Christian and Missionary Alliance churches, who believed that sanctification was a gradual process.³⁵

Later, a significant change took place within the Pentecostal Movement, through the leadership of **William H. Durham**. Durham, a Baptist with a Reformed understanding of regeneration, came to the Pentecostal experience on March 2,

1907, at Azusa Street. William Seymour prophesied over him, “Wherever this man preaches, the Holy Spirit will fall upon people.” Durham returned to his church in Chicago, IL, (the North Avenue Mission) and from 1907 to 1910 hundreds came to the Pentecostal experience under his ministry. Among them were many of the future leaders of the Pentecostal Movement:

- a. **Eudorus N. Bell** (1866-1923) a Baptist preacher, who came from Fort Worth, TX and receive the Pentecostal baptism on July 18, 1908, after seeking for 11 months, .
- b. **A. H. Argue** (1868-1959) a pioneer of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.
- c. **Aimee Semple McPherson** (1890-1944) and husband started attending December 1908, Aimee received healing, they were baptized in the Spirit, received gift of interpretation and were ordained into the ministry.
- d. **Andrew David Urshan** (1884-1967), Persian student at Moody Bible Institute received the Pentecostal experience in 1908, was ordained by Durham in 1908, and later, established a Persian mission in Chicago, working with Durham.
- e. **Howard Archibald Goss** (1883-1964) attended services at the North Avenue Mission and later invited Durham to preach to a Church of God in Christ camp meeting in Malvern, AR, where Parham’s followers were converted to the Finished Work view.³⁶
- f. **Giacomo Lombardi** and **P. Ottolini**, were saved through Durham’s ministry and took the Pentecostal message to the Italian community.
- g. **Gunnar Vingren** and **Daniel Berg** came to Pentecostalism through Durham and became Pentecostal missionaries to Scandinavia.
- h. Later in Los Angeles, California, **Francis John Ewart** (1876-1947) and **Frank Bartleman** (1871-1936) both worked with Durham in his church at Seventh and Los Angeles streets.

On May 1910, Durham preached at “the annual Pentecostal Convention at the Stone Church in Chicago,” with William Hamner Piper’s the pastor. This meeting “was attended by many of the Pentecostal leaders of the Midwest.” He preached about “the Finished Work of Calvary”. It was called the “shot heard ‘round the world,” at least the Pentecostal world. In this sermon, he rejected the Holiness view of a second work of entire sanctification. For him, no additional works were necessary beyond conversion, because justification and sanctification were both accomplished in the finished work of Calvary. All that the Christian needed was to appropriate that finished work by faith.

The first great experience is conversion. In conversion a man received Jesus Christ, and God accepts him, and imparts to him eternal life. “He

that hath the Son had life.” In conversion we pass from death unto life from a state of condemnation, for “He that believeth not is condemned already,” to a state of life and peace, for “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 5: 1. The moment a sinner accepts Jesus Christ, he will be saved.³⁷

The message of the “Finished Work” was a passion for Durham. He viewed faith in the finished work of Christ, as the moment of conversion, justification, and the New Birth - and thus, personal salvation.

He [Peter] did not teach, as men are teaching today, that men are partly saved in conversion, and that it takes a second work of grace to complete the job. Today there are still teachers to be found that tell us that in conversion (they generally say justification) we are saved from our outward iniquities and sins, but that we are left full of inbred sin, then that God does not deal with the nature of sin in conversion, but only with outward sins. If this were true, which it is not, men would be forgiven, but not saved, and might remain in a pardoned state indefinitely without being born again. It seems to me that when a man is born again is when his nature is changed. To convert means to change. In conversion both the state and nature of a man is changed. In conversion a man is changed from a state of sin to a state of righteousness. He is made a new creature, not partly new. He is changed from a state of condemnation and death to a state of life and peace. He is changed from a state of sin and to a child of God. Conversion is the greatest experience that works a complete change in the life of a man. If this is not the case, conversion is not really conversion, but only partial conversion. Therefore we are bold to declare that in conversion a man comes into Christ the Sanctifier, and is made holy, and, if he dies in this blessed state, he is certainly saved.³⁸

I will suggest possible reasons for his turn to the Finished Work later in this paper. Durham did not view water baptism as a part of regeneration. For him, one was saved prior to water baptism. This is the pattern which he saw in the Book of Acts, as He wrote:

Thus we see that in Apostolic days, as soon as a man was saved they baptized him and laid hands on him that he might receive the Holy Spirit.³⁹

Durham effectively polarized the Reformed Pentecostals groups from the Holiness Pentecostals through his Finished Work. This, in effect, also consolidated the Pentecostals as to their position on the mode of water baptism:

A significant shift also occurred in thinking about baptism. Whatever their former tradition, Finished Work advocates with few exceptions became immersionists, holding that baptism is the sign or testimony of salvation. In this view neither the baptism of infants nor the baptism of adults by any other mode than immersion is any baptism at all.⁴⁰

One of Durham’s proteges was a young man by the name of Harry Van Loon. When Durham past away, Van Loon shared pastoral duties for Durham’s church at Seventh and Los Angeles and issued Durham’s *Pentecostal Testimony*. Several years later Van Loon edited a periodical called *The Gospel Witness* in which he continued in the theology of his former pastor. His theology was typical of the pattern that would follow in those who took the Finished Work path.

The plan of the ages was to perfect a salvation whereby man could be brought back to God an once again reinstated into His grace and favor. This was judicially wrought out on the cross of Calvary, when Christ as the world’s redeemer shed His precious life’s blood and cried, “It is finished.” Experimentally this is wrought out in man when he truly repents and exercises living faith in Christ’s finished work and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses him from all sin, and imparts to him eternal life. The Holy Spirit that convicts the sinner of his sins also points him to Christ His substitute, and the blood that was shed as the remedy for sin. The Holy Spirit never points to Himself. The Holy Spirit is not the Saviour, . . .⁴¹

The second young man who shared pastoral duties with Van Loon, after Durham’s death, was Frank J. Ewart. His theological journey would take quite a different path, as did his understanding of the New Birth, which we shall see.

Oneness Pentecostals

In contrast to the historical traditions above, one group of Pentecostals took a radically different view of regeneration. They departed from most of their root-traditions and returned to a more sacramental position relative to water baptism. Going back beyond the Holiness tradition, and even the Protestant tradition as a whole, the Oneness Pentecostals espoused a view reminiscent of Roman Catholic theology. However, they interpreted the New Birth in an original and radical way. Influenced by sacramental and Restorationist teaching (Roman Catholic, Campbellites), the Oneness Pentecostal pioneers taught that the “water” of John 3:5 was the literal water of water baptism. They shared the Restorationists’ view that

water baptism was by immersion only and was for the purpose of the remission of sins. However, the original or unique aspect of their interpretation was that true water baptism can only be that which is administered with the formula, “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Their theological basic for this is, that, they understood the Bible to teach that the revealed, saving name of God is “Jesus.” Thus, baptism is the only effective or true Scriptural baptism, when the saving name of Jesus is called over the candidate immersed in baptism. Thus, by necessity, any other baptism is biblically invalid.

A church, denomination, organization or assembly which refuses to take the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in Christian baptism could never have a place in His Bride.⁴² {Note: Ewart was one of the chief architects of the New Birth doctrine and a primary leader in the Oneness Pentecostal origins and development. His influence is probably as significant as any other person in Oneness Pentecostal history.}

There is remission of sins in no other name but the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12), therefore, baptism cannot possibly signify that the believer receives remission of sins, unless the name of Jesus is used as the baptismal formula; neither can we be thereby identified with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection, unless the name of Jesus is called upon the one being immersed into the watery grave, the penitent also calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16.)⁴³ {Vouga was one of three representatives for the Pentecostal Church, Inc. in the forming of the UPCI in 1945.}

Acts 22:16 says, And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." God washes away sins at baptism when we call on His name. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:11). Many commentators see this verse as another reference to the washing of sins that occurs when one is baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁴⁴

Water baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and sins are remitted (forgiven) in the name of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:47; Acts 4:12; 10:43; 22:16). . . . At water baptism we call on the name of Jesus for the remission (forgiveness) of sins and the name of Jesus is called upon us.⁴⁵

The blood of Jesus Christ is applied only through water baptism in the name of Jesus. Also see 1 John 5:8 and Acts 22:16.⁴⁶

In Acts 2 the “epi” is deliberately used to indicate that the use of the Name is the MEANS (sic) to which “remission of sins” should be obtained. This preposition is also used in the expression “calling on the Name of the Lord; (see Acts 2:21; 22:16) and the reference in Acts 22:16 is certainly to the baptismal formula.⁴⁷

The church administers water baptism. Water baptism is administered by immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Only the church is commissioned to do this. Therefore, the church has the power to bring life eternal to men and women or to withhold life from them.⁴⁸

There is a very significant historical connection between the Oneness Pentecostal origins and the Restorationist movement. Yet, it is overlooked by everyone who has written a history of Oneness Pentecostalism. This fact is that Glenn A. Cook, who was a central figure in the New Birth dissemination, and only second to Frank Ewart in the formulation and promulgation of the “New Issue” message, was raised in this particular Christian tradition. This made it natural for him to embrace a vital part of the Oneness Pentecostal New Birth teaching - baptism for remission of sins. Glenn A. Cook was raised a Campbellite:

The writer was raised among the Campbellites, as they were called in those days, and has seen hundreds baptized to get into that organization. Water baptism was all that was necessary, and in later years I have had these same people ridicule me when I told them they needed the Spirit-filled life.⁴⁹

Baptism for the remission of sins would not have been a new idea for Cook. In fact, it would have already been a central part of his view of baptism, because his theological roots in the Churches of Christ dictated it. It was the central doctrine of his faith upbringing. The idea of baptism being one half of the New Birth would have required very little change or innovation on Cook’s part. It would have been a natural and logical step. Glenn Cook, who was a printer, and the manager of the Apostolic Faith Mission at Azusa Street under William Seymour was a close friend of Frank Ewart. Francis John Ewart, a prolific writer in the early Oneness Movement, collaborated with Glenn Cook in publishing a popular Pentecostal periodical (*Meat In Due Season*). The combination of Cook’s Campbellite view of Baptismal remission with Ewart’s discovery of the saving of Jesus in Baptism, produced the first half of the New Birth doctrine, the primary distinctive of the UPCI theology of salvation, and of many other Oneness groups, as well.

This is very important fact in Oneness history. This provides an historic link between the Restorationist tradition of the New Birth, as opposed to the Wesleyan/Reformed tradition of most Pentecostals. This direct connection between the Campbellite teaching, and the New Birth doctrine of the UPCI, should give pause to those who claim this element of the New Birth is a “revelation” resulting from the Pentecostal outpouring at the turn of the 20th century. Historical facts show us otherwise. It also need to be correctly understood in the context of Church history. The discovery of Frank Ewart was not the restoration of the Apostolic pattern to the “apostatized” Church. It was a return to the sacramentalism of the Roman Catholic Church, which the Protestant churches, by and large, has purposefully rejected for nearly five hundred years. I believe this is a perfect example of the idea, that when you fail to recognize history, you are bound to repeat its serious mistakes.

Today the largest Oneness Pentecostal body, the United Pentecostal Church, adamantly teaches that one cannot be forgiven of their sins unless they are baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Baptism is the means of receiving forgiveness:

In order to receive *aphesis*, baptism must accompany repentance (Acts 2:38). This illustrates the important linkage between repentance and baptism found in scripture. Baptism is an expression of repentance. . . . The confusion brought about by attempting to define when sins are forgiven and when they are remitted is in part due to making too great of a theological distinction between repentance and baptism. In the salvation process, they work together to facilitate *aphesis* (forgiveness / remission).⁵⁰

Water baptism is viewed as a legal contract through which obedience enables one to meet the requirements for salvation:

Water baptism is the legal part that we do to fulfill the requirements of salvation.⁵¹

The Oneness term often used to categorize water baptism is “ordinance.” This word, which means an “authoritative command,” was used by many denominations who wished to distance themselves from Roman Catholic sacramentalism. Most Oneness people borrow this language for the same reason.⁵² However, practically, Oneness teachers and preachers describe and administer water baptism as a sacrament. Oneness advocates may dispute this, saying that the power is not in the water but the use of the Name. This distinction is noted. Nevertheless, the Oneness position remains sacramental because the effect takes place when water baptism is

administered. That is how a sacrament really works. The operation occurs in the doing of it (*Ex Opere Operato*⁵³). And that is how the water baptism of the Oneness New Birth is articulated.

There is a second vital aspect to the Oneness Pentecostal view of the New Birth - the “Birth of the Spirit” - which we will look at later. For now, we are addressing the question of whether the “water” in John 3:5 refers to water baptism. Our historical reconnaissance has shown two basic interpretations of the word “water” in John 3:5 and of water baptism’s relationship with regeneration: 1) the water is a *literal* reference to water baptism; 2) the water *symbolizes* the work of the Spirit. We also saw that a majority of Christian groups, over the last several centuries, especially on the American Church scene, *have not* equated the New Birth with water baptism. This places any interpretation of water baptism as part of the New Birth outside the mainstream of Protestant tradition, doctrine and practice. It also aligns it more closely with the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic theology.

It must be acknowledged, that historical theology does not necessarily establish our doctrinal conclusions. Nevertheless, it does show us how other Christian traditions and groups have viewed these doctrines. Let me state clearly and forcefully, that Scripture is the final authority in doctrine, and it alone is the determinant source of Christian doctrine. Hence, we return to Scripture to find the answer to our question about the “water” of John 3:5

Next Chapter: **Does “Water” of New Birth Mean “Literal” Water?**

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