R. A. Torrey’s Enduring Theological Legacy: The Pentecostal Movement

By Robert P. Menzies

An influential author and editor of numerous volumes of *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915) and the superintendent of both the Moody Bible Institute and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, R. A. Torrey (1856-1928) was without question one of the most significant leaders of what is now termed the Fundamentalist movement. Indeed, when it is also remembered that from 1902-1906 Torrey circled the globe conducting huge, evangelistic meetings unrivaled in size at that time and that his many books and pamphlets remain wildly popular among conservative Evangelicals, R. A. Torrey might with good reason in Christian circles be called, The Father of Fundamentalism. Yet, in spite of his impressive pedigree and unparalleled influence, in this essay I will argue that Torrey’s most lasting and significant legacy is not to be found in the Fundamentalist movement. In fact, as we shall see, the Fundamentalist movement rejected significant aspects of Torrey’s message and hermeneutic. Torrey’s true, enduring theological legacy is to be found in a movement that was just taking shape at the time of his death in 1928, the Pentecostal movement. Although Torrey himself largely misunderstood and, at least at first sight, rejected this movement, it is nonetheless his most faithful and significant theological heir.

My case for viewing Torrey as the Father of the Pentecostal rather than Fundamentalist movement will be presented in four parts: first, we shall review Torrey’s understanding of that cardinal Pentecostal doctrine, the baptism with the Holy Spirit; second, we will examine Torrey’s approach to Scripture, his hermeneutic; third, we will analyze Torrey’s response to the Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909), the catalyst to “the most significant social movement of the past century;” and finally, we will highlight Torrey’s remarkable, if often unrecognized, impact on the Pentecostal movement, particularly in its formative stages.

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1 According to John Fea, the term, “Fundamentalist,” was not used until 1920 (Fea, “Power from on High in an Age of Ecclesiastical Impotence: The ‘Enduement of the Holy Spirit’ in American Fundamentalist Thought, 1880-1936,” *Fides et Historia* 26 [1994], 24).

1. Torrey’s Understanding of Baptism with the Holy Spirit

Several years ago while I was browsing through the books housed in the Alliance Bible Seminary’s library, located on Hong Kong’s beautiful Cheung Chau island, I ran across R. A. Torrey’s *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (1910). As a Pentecostal, I was aware that Torrey and other Gilded Age Evangelicals, such as A. J. Gordon and A. B. Simpson, frequently spoke of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. However, I had never closely examined what Torrey actually said. So, when I saw the title of this volume, worn with age but still visible, it piqued my interest. I pulled the book off the shelf and began to read. The more I read, the more amazed I became. R. A. Torrey’s description of baptism with the Holy Spirit sounded eerily similar to my own assessment offered in various books and periodicals. I felt as if I was reading my own words, my own thoughts put to page. Clearly, I had found a kindred spirit.

Torrey’s perspective is perhaps most clearly presented in his short book, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (1895), but similar descriptions appear in his later books, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (1910) and *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is, and What He Does* (1927), as well as his other writings. Torrey’s views on this matter did not change over the course of his life and ministry in spite of considerable pressure to modify them or change his language. The title of Torrey’s main biography, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty*, captures well Torrey’s confident, unambiguous, and direct approach. Torrey is anything if not clear and his perspective is not difficult to summarize.


Torrey then moves to the heart of his description of baptism with the Holy Spirit by asserting three affirmations.

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1.1 *A Definite Experience.*

First, Torrey declares that “the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience which one may know whether he has received or not.”\(^6\) Again, Torrey draws upon stories from Luke-Acts to support this statement (Luke 24:49; Acts 19:2–6). Yet one cannot help but see that this judgment is also supported by his own experience and that of other influential leaders of his day. Charles Finney, D. L. Moody, and R. A. Torrey all spoke of powerful experiences of the Spirit, moments when they were “baptized with the Holy Spirit,” with the result that their lives and ministries were dramatically changed. Moody, keenly aware of his lack of power and challenged by the prayers and proddings of two free Methodist ladies, was baptized with the Spirit in 1871. Moody told Torrey that this experience was so overwhelming that he “had to ask God to withhold His hand, lest he die on the very spot for joy.”\(^7\)

Although as Marsden notes, Torrey was “known to distrust excessive emotion,”\(^8\) he did not shy away from speaking of his own experience. Torrey describes coming “to the place where I saw that I had no right to preach until I was definitely baptized with the Holy Ghost.”\(^9\) He declared to a friend that he would not enter the pulpit again “until I have been baptized with the Holy Spirit and know it…” Torrey then shut himself up in his study and on his knees prayed fervently, asking God to baptize him with the Holy Spirit. Several days passed and his prayers had not been answered. He was tempted to consider what might happen if Sunday came and he still had not received the promise. Yet he resolved not to preach until he had received power from on high. “But,” Torrey writes, “Sunday did not come before the blessing came.”\(^10\) It happened in a manner quite different from what he expected. “It was a very quiet moment, one of the most quiet moments I ever knew….God simply said to me, not in any audible voice, but in my heart, ‘It’s yours. Now go and preach’….I went and preached, and I have been a new minister from that day to this.”\(^11\)

Torrey would later have a more emotional, dramatic encounter. He was sitting in his office when, as he tells it, “I was struck from my chair on to the floor and I found myself shouting...‘glory to God, glory to God, glory to God.’” Torrey states that he could not stop shouting. “I tried to stop, but it was just as if some other power than my own was moving my jaws.” Finally, after he was able to pull

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6 Torrey, *Baptism*, 14 (italics his).
8 Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 130.
himself together, he went and told his wife what had happened. It was clearly a powerful, dramatic experience. Nevertheless, Torrey insisted that this was not the moment when he was baptized with the Holy Spirit. That experience took place earlier and was the result of his “simple faith in the naked Word of God.”

Torrey’s doctrine and his experience at this point raise a crucial question. If baptism with the Holy Spirit is a distinct, definable experience, how will we know when we have experienced it? Torrey’s insistence that we must receive it through “simple faith” in God’s promises, an emphasis which runs throughout his writings, seems to run counter to his affirmation that baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience. There is a tension here: Do we simply accept that we have received the promise after our prayer of petition? Or do we press on until we experientially know that we have received the gift? Torrey seems to affirm the latter, but he never clearly delineates the nature of this experience? This tension between acceptance by faith and pressing through for empirical evidence (a definite experience) in Torrey’s theology never seems to be resolved.

1.2 Separate and Distinct from Regeneration.

According to Torrey, baptism with the Holy Spirit is not only a definite experience, it is also “a work of the Holy Spirit separate and distinct from His regeneration work.” Torrey did not deny the Holy Spirit’s work in regeneration, he simply insisted that “to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit is one thing; to be baptized with the Holy Spirit is something different.” Again Torrey’s affirmation here is rooted in his reading of the Book of Acts. He points to Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:5, “…in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit,” as a promise uttered to disciples who were “already regenerated.” In similar fashion, the Samaritan Pentecost (Acts 8:12-16) shows clearly that “one may be…a regenerate man, and yet not have the baptism with the Holy Spirit.”

With these statements, Torrey echoes the theology and experience of his mentor, D. L. Moody, and a host of other 19th century Christian leaders. The groundwork for distinguishing baptism with the Holy Spirit from conversion and regeneration was actually laid earlier by Wesley’s successor, John Fletcher. Donald Dayton argues that while John Wesley was reluctant to connect baptism with the Holy Spirit to sanctification for fear of undermining its connection to conversion, John Fletcher was not. Fletcher was much more willing to use

13 Torrey, Baptism, 16 (italics his). Torrey also describes the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a “second blessing” (Baptism, 18).
14 Torrey, Baptism, 16.
15 Torrey, Baptism, 16.
16 Torrey, Baptism, 17.
Pentecostal terminology with respect to sanctification and thus to link Spirit baptism with a post-conversion moment of entire sanctification. Dayton also notes that this shift of emphasis from ‘Spirit baptism and conversion’ in Wesley’s thought to ‘Spirit baptism and sanctification’ in the writings of Fletcher was occasioned by a shift in the exegetical foundations. “It is a remarkable fact that, in spite of Wesley’s commitment to a ‘restoration’ of the life of the early church, he only infrequently refers to the Book of Acts.” Fletcher, on the other hand, “brings the Book of Acts into a new prominence.” Dayton concludes, “Thus we may detect between Wesley and Fletcher a significant shift…from a basically Pauline or Johannine orientation to a Lukan one.”

This tendency to speak of Baptism with the Holy Spirit with reference to a post-conversion experience gains momentum in Holiness circles in the later half of the 19th century. A number of prominent revivalists of this period, especially those influenced by the Reformed tradition, also began to emphasize Pentecostal themes and terminology. Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody, A. J. Gordon, and A. B. Simpson all spoke of a baptism with the Holy Spirit distinct from conversion. Nevertheless, a crucial question remained largely unanswered. What was the true purpose or result of baptism with the Holy Spirit? Although since Fletcher and increasingly in Holiness circles in the 19th century the term had been associated with an experience of sanctification, the biblical evidence for this interpretation was minimal at best. The more the revivalists noted above spoke of Pentecost and a baptism with the Holy Spirit, the more they were drawn to Luke’s two-volume work. Increasingly, this group began to describe the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a post-conversion empowering that enabled its recipient to minister effectively as well as to overcome sin. This emphasis on “power for service” sat in uneasy tension with the Holiness focus on “purity.”

Thus, when R. A. Torrey published his *Baptism with the Holy Spirit* in 1895, his presentation of Spirit baptism as a definite experience, distinct from conversion was not unique. Rather, it clearly built on an established and growing theological tradition. Yet Torrey’s singular contribution to the discussion becomes evident with his next affirmation.

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1.3 Always connected with Witness and Service.

Torrey was unequivocal when it came to the purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. “The baptism with the Holy Spirit,” Torrey declared, “is always connected with testimony and service.” While most of his contemporaries suggested that baptism with the Holy Spirit was at least partially connected to sanctification, Torrey would not be diverted from what he felt was the clear teaching of the Book of Acts. “Look carefully at every passage in which the baptism with the Holy Spirit is mentioned and you will see it is connected with and is for the purpose of testimony and service (for example, Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4, 4:31, 33).” Furthermore, Torrey noted that while “there is a work of the Holy Spirit of such a character that the believer is ‘made…free from the laws of sin and death’ (Rom. 8:2),” he emphatically declared, “But this is not the baptism with the Spirit; neither is it the eradication of a sinful nature…it is something that must be momentarily maintained.” Repeatedly, Torrey drives home his point, “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not for the purpose of cleansing from sin, but for the purpose of empowering for service.”

The specificity and clarity of Torrey’s vision sets him apart from all of his contemporaries. As we have noted, many others spoke of baptism with the Holy Spirit as a definite experience, distinct from conversion. But, almost without exception, these colleagues connected this experience in some manner with sanctification. This is true of Charles G. Finney, A. J. Gordon, and A. B. Simpson. The one possible exception is D. L. Moody, but Moody did not present his own views on the matter in a clear, reasoned, and systematic manner. Indeed, Dayton notes that Moody was “reluctant to speak openly of [his own] experience,” although Moody did frequently encourage Torrey to preach and teach on this topic. This latter point suggests that Moody stood in general agreement with Torrey’s more narrow, focused understanding of baptism with the Holy Spirit.

22 Torrey, *Baptism*, 17 (italics his).
Torrey did qualify his “power for service”\textsuperscript{30} understanding of Spirit baptism in one way. He acknowledged that “this power will not manifest itself in precisely the same way in each individual.”\textsuperscript{31} Here Torrey departs from his normal exegetical foundation, Luke-Acts, and shifts to Paul’s discussion of gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. Torrey points to Paul’s emphasis on the diversity of gifts (1 Cor. 12:4, 8-11) and notes that the Holy Spirit “will impart to us the power that will qualify us for the field He has chosen [for us].”\textsuperscript{32} In Torrey’s view, not all are called to be preachers, evangelists, or missionaries. However, all are called to bear witness for Christ and serve in various ways. If we are to fulfill God’s purposes for our lives and serve effectively, we need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. For “while the power that the baptism with the Holy Spirit brings manifests itself in different ways in different individuals, there will always be power.”\textsuperscript{33}

Torrey’s emphasis on Spirit baptism as the source of diverse gifts led him to reject speaking in tongues as its normative sign. Torrey writes:

In my early study of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, I noticed that in the Scripture, in many instances, those who were so baptized ‘spoke in tongues.’ The question came often to my mind, ‘If one is baptized with the Holy Spirit, will he not speak with tongues?’ But I saw no one so speaking and I often wondered, ‘Is there anyone today who actually is baptized with the Holy Spirit?’ This twelfth chapter of I Corinthians cleared me up on that, especially when I found Paul asking of those who had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, ‘Do all speak with tongues?’ (I Cor. 12:30).\textsuperscript{34}

Torrey penned these words in 1895, well before the miraculous events that accompanied the Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909). During these remarkable meetings thousands reported that they were baptized with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. One can only wonder if he might have responded differently had he had, at this stage in his life, personal contact with these modern-day Pentecostals.

\textsuperscript{30} Torrey, Baptism, 20: “The baptism with the Holy Spirit imparts power, power for service.”
\textsuperscript{31} Torrey, Baptism, 20.
\textsuperscript{32} Torrey, Baptism, 24.
\textsuperscript{33} Torrey, Baptism, 24 (italics mine). So also pp. 25-26: “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God coming upon the believer, taking possession of his faculties, imparting to him gifts not naturally his own but which qualify him for the service to which God has called him.”
2. Torrey’s Hermeneutic

I have argued that Torrey’s understanding of baptism with the Holy Spirit was, on the one hand, based on a developing theological tradition. In the Gilded Age to describe Spirit baptism as a definite experience, distinct from conversion was not particularly striking or novel. Here, Torrey stood in a growing line of Holiness preachers and revivalists. Yet, on the other hand, Torrey did offer something quite unique. With his firm and focused description of Spirit baptism as “power for service,” Torrey broke from the crowd that consistently interpreted this experience, generally utilizing Wesleyan or Holiness categories, as integral to sanctification. While a few did highlight power for service as one result of baptism with the Holy Spirit, they inevitably also coupled this with sanctification or holiness. In this regard, Torrey was exceptional.35

As is often the case with innovations, particularly in theological circles, Torrey’s perspective received a cool reception from many of his colleagues. While, as we have seen, some felt comfortable describing Spirit baptism as a “second blessing,” many others believed that it referred to an incorporation of the believer into the body of Christ, the moment of regeneration. Another group consigned baptism with the Spirit to the apostolic age.

On one occasion Moody asked Torrey to speak with a group of teachers at Moody’s Northfield Bible Conference.36 These men opposed Torrey’s understanding of Spirit baptism. Moody and Torrey spoke with the men for hours. However, as Torrey put it, “they did not altogether see eye to eye with us.” As the men finally began to leave, Moody signaled for Torrey to remain. Torrey described the scene:

Mr. Moody sat there with his chin on his breast, as he so often sat when he was in deep thought; then he looked up and said: ‘Oh, why will they split hairs? Why don’t they see that this is just the one thing that they themselves need? They are…wonderful teachers, and I am

35 Moody might also be considered exceptional in this regard. However, while Moody emphasized “power for service,” he used the term, “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” sparingly. Richard Gilbertson suggests that “he preferred to avoid this more controversial term” (Gilbertson, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 158).
36 In 1879 Moody established the Northfield Conference Grounds in his hometown, Northfield, MA. This campus hosted regular Bible conferences.
so glad to have them here; but why will they not see that this baptism with the Holy Ghost is just the one touch that they themselves need?"\(^{37}\)

Undoubtedly many of the objections voiced by this group of Northfield teachers were echoed by others in succeeding years. Indeed, they can still be heard today. Nevertheless, in spite of significant opposition and controversy, throughout his life Torrey remained steadfast in his convictions concerning the baptism with the Holy Spirit. What enabled him to speak with such confidence and conviction? How was he able to forge a new theological path? The answer is to be found in Torrey’s unwavering commitment to Scripture, and more particularly, in his hermeneutic. I would like to highlight four aspects of Torrey’s hermeneutic that enabled him to speak with confidence and make his unique contribution.

2.1 A Focus on Luke-Acts

A key reason for Torrey’s ability to clearly and confidently describe the baptism with the Holy Spirit’s nature, purpose, and availability is his focus on Luke’s two-volume work. Torrey’s adherence to the key Lukan texts for his analysis of Spirit baptism is striking and quite unique.\(^{38}\) As Dayton points out, in the 18\(^{th}\) century the Wesleyan emphasis on a “second blessing” associated with sanctification gained momentum as John Fletcher, unlike John Wesley, increasingly began to draw upon Luke-Acts and use Pentecostal language to describe this experience.\(^{39}\) This connection between a “second blessing” and Luke’s Pentecostal texts proved problematic though, since these texts did not resonate well with the sanctification theme. As a result, the vast majority of the 19\(^{th}\) century Holiness and revivalist ministers who spoke of Spirit baptism and the work of the Spirit, did so by evoking Pauline (and, at times, Johannine) texts as they sought to develop aspects of the sanctification theme.

This privileging of Paul was and has been for some time characteristic of Protestant theology, particularly that of the conservative and Reformed variety. The great truths of the Reformation were largely gleaned from Paul’s epistles. The terminology, “justification by faith,” echoes Paul. So, following the lead of Luther,

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\(^{38}\) Simpson, for example, linked the Pentecostal gift to the new covenant promises of Jer. 31:31-34 and Ez. 36:25-28; while Rom. 7-8 and Gal. 3:2,14 were commonly used by Keswick teachers to describe the gift (Gilbertson, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 73-77, 195, 212).

Calvin, and the other reformers, the Protestant churches have largely emphasized the Pauline epistles as their core texts.  

This penchant to elevate Paul to a large extent has been passed on to the children of these Gilded Age conservatives, modern-day Evangelicals. Elsewhere I have outlined how Evangelicals, in a knee-jerk reaction to liberal scholarship that challenged the historical reliability Luke’s writings, rejected the notion that Luke was a theologian. Evangelicals maintained that Luke and the other gospel writers were not theologians; they were historians. In Evangelical circles any discussion of the theological purpose of Luke and his narrative was muted. The gospels and Acts were viewed as historical records, not accounts reflecting self-conscious theological concerns. This approach essentially created a canon within the cannon and, by giving Paul pride of place as the “theologian” of the New Testament, had a significant Paulinizing effect on Evangelical theology. Evangelicals are just now beginning to come to terms with the theological significance of the biblical narratives.

Torrey, by focusing almost exclusively on Luke-Acts, was able to avoid the ambiguity and confusion caused by the tension between the Lukan Pentecostal texts and the Pauline emphasis on the Spirit’s role in sanctification outlined above. With respect to baptism with the Holy Spirit, Torrey did the opposite of what many Evangelicals do today. He defined the experience in light of the Lukan texts and read 1 Corinthians 12, including 1 Cor. 12:13, in light of this Lukan perspective. The result was a very clear and focused understanding of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, one that harmonized beautifully with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s role in the ongoing process of sanctification in the life of every believer. Torrey was able to see that these two dimensions of the Spirit’s work, the former clearly articulated by Luke and the latter by Paul, need not be confused. The result, I would suggest, was a faithful and clear articulation of an important Biblical truth. This accounts for the remarkable interest in Torrey’s messages on the baptism with the Holy Spirit during

40 Kenneth J. Archer notes that Dispensationalists also de-emphasized the gospels and elevated the epistles because, in their view, while the epistles were written for the church, the gospels were written for life in the future millennial kingdom (Archer, A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community [JPTSS 28; London: T&T Clark International, 2004], 57).


his lifetime as well as the contemporary appeal of his writings, which remain hugely popular.43

2.2 Continuity in Salvation-History

As a result of his interest in Luke-Acts, Torrey also affirmed that the power and gifts of the Spirit were available to contemporary Christians. Torrey was adamant on this point. On the strength of Acts 2:39, Torrey declared, “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is the birthright of every believer.”44 Spirit baptism, according to Torrey, was not only available, it was essential for effective service. So, he states the logical corollary, “If I may be baptized with the Holy Spirit, I must be.”45 Furthermore, with words that mirror his own experience, Torrey urges, “Any man who is in Christian work who has not received the baptism with the Holy Spirit ought to stop his work right where he is and not go on with it until he has been ‘clothed with power from on high.’”46

Clearly, Torrey was not a cessationist. He points to Jesus’ anointing with the Spirit at the Jordan river as a model for believers today. “If it was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, lived, worked, and triumphed, how much more are we dependent upon Him.”47 Indeed, “The same Spirit by which Jesus was anointed for service is at our disposal for us to be anointed for service…Whatever He realized through the Holy Spirit is there for us to realize also.”48 Again, the key texts Torrey cites with regard to Jesus’ anointing for service are from Luke-Acts: Luke 3:21-22; 4: 1, 14, 18 (citing Isa. 61:1); and Acts 10:38.49 The structure of Luke-Acts, particularly the parallels between Jesus’s sermon at Nazareth and Peter’s sermon at Pentecost (cf. Luke 4:16-21; Acts

43 Moody constantly asked Torrey to preach on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. So much so that Torrey once queried, “Mr. Moody, don’t you think I have any sermons but those two?” The two sermons referenced here are: “Ten Reason Why I Believe the Bible to Be the Word of God” and “The Baptism with the Holy Ghost.” See Torrey, Why God Used Moody (digital), 1374-79.
45 Torrey, Baptism, 35 (italics his).
46 Torrey, Baptism, 31. While Torrey emphasized that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was a definitive experience, he also saw that this experience had a repetitive or ongoing character: “It is not enough that one be filled with the Holy Spirit once. We need a new filling of the Holy Spirit for each new emergency of Christian service” (Torrey, What the Bible Teaches, 331 and Baptism, 67-70).
47 Torrey, What the Bible Teaches, 343. Torrey also declares that Jesus “worked his miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit” (p. 342).
48 Torrey, What the Bible Teaches, 343.
49 Torrey, What the Bible Teaches, 340-41. See also Torrey, The Holy Spirit, 139-41.
2:16-21), supports Torrey’s conclusions, although this observation is not explicitly developed by Torrey.

In light of Jesus’ command to wait for “power from on high” (Luke 24:49; cf. Acts 1:4-5) and the practice of the early church to immediately pray for new believers to be baptized with the Spirit (Acts 8:12-17; 19:1-6), Torrey insists that,

every child of God is under the most solemn obligation to see to it that he definitely receives the Holy Spirit, not merely as a regenerating power and as an indwelling presence, but as a definite enduement of power, before he undertakes service of any kind for God.

All of this points to the fact that Torrey saw considerable continuity between, on the one hand, the ministry of Jesus and the early church as recorded in Luke-Acts and, on the other hand, believers today. This emphasis on continuity, which flows naturally from a careful reading of Acts 2:17-22, encouraged Torrey not only to highlight the availability of baptism with the Holy Spirit, it also challenged him to practice and espouse divine healing and living by faith.

2.3 Our Promises and Stories

One of the most striking features of Torrey’s hermeneutic is the way that he reads the New Testament, and especially the book of Acts, with a strong sense of expectation, anticipating that the text contains promises and precepts for the contemporary reader. Torrey’s rhetorical and literary style has been critiqued by some as dry and void of any trace of emotion. Grant Wacker offers a colorful, but blunt description, “Always impeccably attired, Torrey earned a reputation for humorless, tediously exegetical sermons — a reputation well deserved if the unrelieved gravity of his forty odd books is any indication.” George Marsden is no less caustic when he offers William McLoughlin’s assessment of Torrey, “On the street he usually wore a high hat, and he always talked as though he had one

50 Robert P. Menzies, Pentecost: This Story is Our Story (Springfield, MO: GPH, 2013), 52-55.
52 Torrey, The Holy Spirit, 141.
It may be true that Torrey was “almost immune to emotional persuasion” and only “swayed by the logical element of cold reason.” Nevertheless, I find Torrey’s sermons and writings gripping, full of insight and edification. This is undoubtedly due, in part, to his logical, straightforward, and clear presentation of the significance of biblical texts. Kenneth Archer suggests that Torrey, like many others of his day, including most Pentecostals, utilized “the Bible Reading Method” to formulate doctrine. This method “encouraged readers to trace out topics in Scripture and then synthesize the biblical data into a doctrine.” While this description is accurate to a degree — certainly Torrey liked to formulate propositions and arrange in orderly fashion the biblical texts upon which these propositions were based — Torrey’s method differed from many of his contemporaries in several significant ways. We have already noted the way that his discussion of baptism with the Holy Spirit centered on Luke-Acts and highlighted important connections between Luke’s Gospel and the Book of Acts. In this way, it might be argued that Torrey anticipated insights that would be later associated with redaction criticism. Additionally, by highlighting the strong continuity that linked the ministry of Jesus and the early church together with contemporary Christians, Torrey broke from the traditional Reformed perspective.

Yet the aspect of Torrey’s hermeneutic that I find most compelling, even if it is not entirely novel, is the strong sense of expectation that permeates his writings, an approach to the text that highlights its relevance for the contemporary reader. This latter quality, this sense of identification with the text, mirrors Pentecostal approaches to Scripture. Torrey, like the early Pentecostals, read the Bible, and particularly the narrative of Acts with its account of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), as providing models for contemporary Christian life and ministry. He understood that the Bible was full of rich promises and wise instruction. He also understood that the stories of the Bible are indeed our stories, written for our edification and encouragement. So, Torrey helps us read the Bible with eager expectation. We simply need to read with eyes alert and open. And as we do, the promises and stories become our promises and stories: promises of the

57 Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 47. Both quotations are found in Marsden, but the second quote is cited as coming from Robert Harkness, *Reuben Archer Torrey: The Man and His Message* (Chicago, 1929), 10.
58 Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 82.
59 Gloege speaks of “Torrey’s contractual understanding of the Bible” and states that “Torrey could construe most any passage as a promise to him personally.” He adds, “Torrey’s Bible was not primarily a book of science, theology, ethics, or poetry but a living text” (*Guaranteed Pure*, 79 and p. 80 respectively).
Holy Spirit’s power, stories of God enabling ordinary disciples to do extraordinary things for His glory.

2.4 Torrey on Speaking in Tongues

We have noted that Torrey ultimately rejected speaking in tongues as the normative sign of Spirit baptism.\(^{60}\) This is striking because, in view of the theological convictions and hermeneutical approach outlined above, we would have expected Torrey to accept this position.\(^{61}\) Charles Parham affirmed tongues as the sign of Spirit baptism only a few years later.\(^{62}\) His student, William Seymour, became the match that ignited the Azusa Street Revival.\(^{63}\) At the very least, we would have expected Torrey to be supportive of or sympathetic to the emerging Pentecostal movement, particularly as it became prominent in Los Angeles when Torrey was residing there.\(^{64}\) As neighbors, given their theological proximity, one might have expected a warm relationship. As we shall see, this was not the case.

Torrey’s response at this point is perplexing and deserves analysis. At the outset, we should note that Torrey’s rejection of tongues as a normative sign appears to stand in tension with his theology and hermeneutic at several points. First, we have already seen how Torrey presents Jesus and the early church as models for the church today. Given the way that he anchors his understanding of baptism with the Spirit in the Book of Acts, it would seem natural for him to connect tongues with this experience like the Pentecostals who followed after him.

Second, Torrey’s emphasis on Spirit baptism as “a definite experience which one may know whether he has received or not,”\(^{65}\) seems to virtually demand this kind of affirmation. Torrey’s views may have softened a bit on this point over the years. In his last work on the Holy Spirit, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is, and What He Does* (1927), he speaks of two ways through which believers may know they have been baptized with the Spirit: “First, by the plain statements of God’s Word, and Second, by experience.”\(^{66}\) Torrey qualifies this statement by asserting that “knowing by God’s Word is a surer way of knowing than knowing by


\(^{61}\) So also Gloege observes, “The practice of speaking in tongues was Pentecostalism’s most emblematic and controversial feature, but even this, at least in its original form, was simply Torrey’s underlying belief in Spirit Baptism taken to its logical end” (*Guaranteed Pure*, 132).


\(^{63}\) Synan, *Century*, 46-61.

\(^{64}\) Torrey moved to Los Angeles in January of 1912 (Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 226). Although this was perhaps a few years after the high point of the Azusa Street Revival, Los Angeles continued to be a center of Pentecostal ministry.


experience.”67 A few pages later Torrey poses the question, “Will there be no manifestation of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit when we are thus baptized?”68 His answer is affirmative, but vague, “What was the manifestation in every case recorded in the Bible? Some new power in service.”69 He also implies that this “new power” might not be immediately evident. The sequence is “God’s promise,” “our faith,” and then “experience.”70 All of this reveals a tension in Torrey’s position that is never adequately resolved. He maintains that Spirit baptism is a definite experience, one that is verifiable, and yet no clear or specific description of this experience is forthcoming. Indeed, in his later years he appears to soften his earlier claims of an immediate, verifiable experience. How will we know that we have been baptized in the Spirit? The question is never adequately answered.71

Perhaps this unresolved question helps explain a curious change in theology and practice. During the early years at Moody Bible Institute and the Northfield Bible Conferences, Moody and Torrey routinely called for the gathered assembly to pray for the baptism with the Holy Spirit.72 One eye-witness account describes how Moody and Torrey “lined up the [Bible Institute] students, walked behind them, and laid hands on each one, saying as they did so, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’”73 This practice, and the theology that supported it, were quickly discarded after Torrey’s departure. Those who received, acted upon, and passed on Torrey’s teaching on Spirit baptism, but now with the addition of tongues as the evidential sign, were the Pentecostals.

Finally, Torrey acknowledges that he was initially drawn to the Pentecostal proposition that speaking in tongues is the result and confirming sign of baptism with the Holy Spirit.74 However, his own lack of experience with speaking in tongues, both personally and in the lives of those he knew, led him to question this doctrine. As a result, we find that he deviates from his normal practice of

69 Torrey, The Holy Spirit, 196 (emphasis his, Torrey capitalizes these words).
72 Torrey, Why God Used Moody (digital), 1396-1405; and The Holy Spirit, 200-201.
73 Stanley Horton, Reflections of An Early American Pentecostal (Baguio City, The Philippines: APTS Press, 2001), 12 (as described by Horton’s grandmother). Gloege shares another first-hand account of “an all-night prayer vigil designed to help students attain the Baptism of the Holy Spirit” (Guaranteed Pure, 93-94).
74 Torrey, Baptism, 21: “The question came often to my mind, ‘If one is baptized with the Holy Spirit, will he not speak with tongues?’ But I saw no one so speaking and I often wondered, ‘Is there anyone today who actually is baptized with the Holy Spirit?’”

2.5 Summary

We have highlighted how Torrey’s hermeneutic was, in many respects, unique. He privileged Luke-Acts and linked Luke’s Gospel with the Book of Acts in his descriptions of Baptism with the Holy Spirit. He saw significant continuity between the experience of the early church and that of contemporary Christians, particularly in their reception of the Spirit’s power for ministry gifts and miracles. Finally, Torrey read the Bible, and especially Acts, as a treasure trove of promises and stories that offered untold riches for those willing to receive them by faith. This approach to reading the Bible would resonate well in the numerous Pentecostal churches that were soon to be established. This was especially the case in the non-Holiness, more Reformed wing (with reference to sanctification) of the movement, which today is perhaps best represented by the Assemblies of God.76

Nevertheless, in spite of the close affinities that tied Torrey’s theology and hermeneutic together with the emerging Pentecostal movement, Torrey rejected one of its cardinal doctrines (tongues as a normative sign) and the movement as a whole. This is particularly surprising in that just prior to the catalyst of the Pentecostal movement, the Azusa Street Revival, Torrey spoke with great passion of the coming of a great revival. On his deathbed in 1899, Moody voiced his regret that he would not be alive to see the great revival that was coming.77 In Torrey’s sermon at Moody’s funeral, “a prophetic ring characterized his words.”78 Torrey based his message on Joshua 1:2, “Moses my servant is dead….Now…get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to [you],” and declared, “[Moody’s] death, with the triumphal scenes that surround it, are part of God’s way of answering the prayers that have been going on for so long in our land for a revival.”79 In the wake of Moody’s funeral, a series of prayer meetings for revival were established by Torrey and the MBI leaders. In November of 1900, just weeks before the beginning of the Pentecostal revival, which was initiated on January 1,


76 With 69 million members worldwide, the Assemblies of God is the world’s largest Pentecostal denomination (ag.org, accessed on July 20, 2018).

77 Martin, Apostle of Certainty, 129.

78 Martin, Apostle of Certainty, 129.

79 Martin, Apostle of Certainty, 130.
1901 at Parham’s Bible school in Topeka, Kansas with an outpouring of the Spirit marked by speaking in tongues, Torrey exclaimed, “I have been expecting a great revival to break out throughout the country.” Yet, when the fire of Pentecost fell in Topeka, Los Angeles, and around the world, Torrey could not accept it as the revival he was seeking. Why was this case? What caused Torrey to reject a movement that was certainly emboldened and perhaps established as a result of his teaching? In the following section we shall seek to answer this question.

3. Torrey’s Response to the Pentecostal Movement

Torrey has been described as a theological “pugilist.” Although this assessment may not give enough consideration to the unique challenges that he faced, I think here particularly of the rise of modernism and theological liberalism, Torrey’s response to the emerging Pentecostal movement was not overly gracious. Torrey offered his assessment in a regular column, “Questions and Answers,” that he wrote for The King’s Business, a publication associated with the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. In the July 1913 edition of The King’s Business Torrey responded to the question, “Is the present ‘Tongues Movement’ of God?” The way the question is framed masks the strong points of agreement that united Torrey with the Pentecostal movement and highlights the one area of disagreement. Predictably, Torrey’s response was negative.

His terse answer to the question, “It is not,” in good Torreyite fashion is supported by seven affirmations. His first affirmation restates his position that baptism with the Holy Spirit provides power for service through a diverse range of gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-11) and that the rhetorical question of 1 Corinthians 12:30, “Do all speak in tongues?,” which anticipates a negative answer, states the matter clearly. Thus, he concludes that the Pentecostal teaching on tongues “contradicts the plain teaching of God’s Word.” Torrey’s second and third affirmations make the charge that Pentecostals portray tongues as the “most important of all manifestations of the Spirit’s presence and power,” while in reality the gift of tongues is one of the least profitable gifts, and that believers are encouraged to seek after the “greater gifts,” which refers to gifts such as prophecy and clearly not

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80 Martin, Apostle of Certainty, 132.
81 The nature of Torrey’s influence upon both Charles Parham and William Durham are topics of importance for future historical research.
83 Torrey, “Questions and Answers,” The King’s Business (July 1913), 360-62. This article later appeared under the same title as tract.
84 Torrey, The King’s Business (July 1913), 360.
tongues. With his fourth point of contention, Torrey chides Pentecostals for allowing uninterpreted tongues and disorder to reign in corporate gatherings. He charges:

Now in the gatherings of the ‘Tongues’ people, oftentimes many speak in tongues in a single gathering; oftentimes several speak at the same time, and they constantly speak even when there is no one present to interpret. In these matters they disobey God in the most unmistakable way.

One wonders if Torrey himself witnessed this sort of behavior or whether he heard of it secondhand. Although admittedly a lot of “wild fire” did occur, Pentecostal services were generally conducted in an orderly way that, while allowing for spontaneity, did seek to follow established biblical patterns. Yet this Pentecostal ‘order’ might not have been understood by those unaccustomed to ‘the leading of the Spirit’ and times of prayer permeated with glossolalic praise and intercession. As I have argued elsewhere, Paul’s instructions concerning the use of tongues in the assembly (1 Cor. 12-14) were polemical in nature and address an aberrant situation. Additionally, the context and purpose of the glossolalic prayer impacts whether it is appropriate, edifying, and in need of interpretation. It appears unlikely that Torrey, with his limited exposure to Pentecostal worship, was well-positioned to address these issues in a wise and knowledgeable way.

Torrey, with his fifth, sixth, and seventh points, spirals out of control and appears to give in to his “pugilistic” instincts. His ad hominem attacks include charges of “the grossest immoralities,” demonic behavior, and duping “clear-

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85 Torrey, The King’s Business (July 1913), 360 (both quotes).
86 Torrey, The King’s Business (July 1913), 361.
87 For vivid descriptions see Grant Wacker, Heaven Below: Early Pentecostal and American Culture (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 99-103.
88 Wacker, Heaven Below, 103-11.
89 Menzies, Tongues, 107-55.
90 Torrey, The King’s Business (July 1913), 361 (point five). Gerald W. King writes: “Torrey accused the movement of gross immorality, most particularly in the lapse of its leaders—one (Parham) whose sin he could not specify in print (sodomy) and another from Ohio (Lupton) whose sin he could (adultery). In recent meetings conducted in Los Angeles by a woman (Maria Woodworth-Etter), hypnotic methods felled men and women, who lay indecently supine for hours” (King, Disfellowshiped: Pentecostal Response to Fundamentalism in the United States, 1906-1943 [Eugene, Or: Pickwick, 2011], 74).
91 Torrey, The King’s Business (July 1913), 362 (point six, but incorrectly listed again as point five).
minded men and women” like heretical groups of the past.\textsuperscript{92} This leads Torrey to conclude that “God has set the stamp of His disapproval in a most unmistakable way” upon the Pentecostal movement. Indeed, “everyone who believes and obeys the Word of God should leave [it] severely alone except to expose…the gross errors and evils connected with it.”\textsuperscript{93}

Stanley Frodsham, a leader in Assemblies of God,\textsuperscript{94} offered a gracious and thoughtful response to Torrey’s attack that is still worth reading.\textsuperscript{95} His response drew heavily upon his own experience in the movement. He dismissed several of Torrey’s claims as inaccurate and was able to speak with authority because he was personally present at one of the meetings criticized and he had widespread knowledge of the Pentecostal movement, having visited Pentecostal churches throughout the United States and in many other countries around the world. However, I found Frodsham’s later article, written in 1928 after the Pentecostal movement was officially “disfellowshipped” by the World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) in a meeting that Torrey had helped organize, even more powerful. The language of the WCFA was harsh:

Whereas, the present wave of Modern Pentecostalism, often referred to as the “tongues movement,” and the present wave of fanatical and unscriptural healing which is sweeping over the country today, has become a menace in many churches and a real injury to the sane testimony of Fundamental Christians, Be it resolved, that this convention go on record as unreservedly opposed to Modern Pentecostalism, including the speaking with unknown tongues, and the fanatical healing known as general healing in the atonement, and the perpetuation of the miraculous sign-healing of Jesus and His apostles, wherein they claim the only reason the church cannot perform these miracles is because of unbelief.\textsuperscript{96}

Yet Frodsham’s response was remarkable for its graciousness. He wrote,

\textsuperscript{92} Torrey, \textit{The King’s Business} (July 1913), 362 (listed as point six, but actually point seven).
\textsuperscript{93} Torrey, \textit{The King’s Business} (July 1913), 362.
\textsuperscript{94} Frodsham was elected the General Secretary of the Assemblies of God in 1916 and also served as the denomination’s Missionary Treasurer. He became the Editor of the \textit{Pentecostal Evangel} in 1920.
\textsuperscript{95} Stanley H. Frodsham, “Why We Know the Present Pentecostal Movement is of God: An Answer to a Tract, \textit{Is the Present Tongues Movement of God},” \textit{The Christian Evangel} (August 9, 1919), 4-5.
\textsuperscript{96} Cited in Stanley H. Frodsham, “Disfellowshiped!,” \textit{The Pentecostal Evangel} (August 18, 1928), 7.
Although the Fundamentalists have by this action disfellowshiped a great company of us who believe in all the fundamentals of the faith as much as they do, we will, by the grace of God, continue to love and fellowship [sic] every child of God, especially those who stand as we do in teaching that the whole Bible is verbally inspired...the miraculous virgin birth of our Lord...His absolute deity...His perfect humanity... His vicarious death...His bodily resurrection...His coming again in glory.97

Frodsham then cited Acts 2 and Mark 16, key Pentecostal texts, and noted that these too are part of the Bible. Yet Frodsham continued, “But while we believe in these things that God has set forth in His Word, we do not condemn any who do not see as we do.” Additionally, after speaking of healing flowing from the atoning work of Christ, he acknowledges, “It is only fair, however, to say that a number of Fundamentalists like Dr. R. A. Torrey do recognize that ‘the gospel of Christ has in it salvation for the body as well as the soul.’”98 Finally, Frodsham concludes with these charitable words:

Although we Pentecostal people have to be without the camp, we cannot afford to be bitter against those who do not see as we do. Our instructions from the Throne are set forth clearly in Holy Writ, ‘This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He gave us commandment.’ So our business is to love these Fundamentalists and to unitedly pray, ‘Lord, bless them all.’99

Frodsham’s response reminds us that the Pentecostals were doctrinally united at almost every point with their Fundamentalist brothers and sisters. They too “believed in all the fundamentals of the faith.”100 Torrey’s writings and ministry call us to recognize that this theological unity, at least for some, went beyond a commitment to the fundamentals and included a common vision for Spirit baptism, divine healing, and living by faith.

Torrey had been praying for revival and one came. Although from his vantage point, particularly in 1913, it would have been impossible to predict the true nature,
scope, and significance of the movement that it would generate. Indeed, one scholar, Penn State historian Philip Jenkins, recently described the Pentecostal movement as “the most successful social movement of the past century.”\textsuperscript{101} And so the revival came — a revival that would sweep the globe and impact virtually every nation, a revival that would transform the face of global Christianity, a revival that in no small measure could attribute its genesis to Torrey’s influence — and yet Torrey himself missed it. How could it be?

In retrospect, it seems clear that three factors clouded Torrey’s vision so that he was unable to see his own fingerprints on the nascent movement and unwilling to look beyond minor points of disagreement.\textsuperscript{102}

3.1 Cultural Distance

“Respectability was his birthright.”\textsuperscript{103} This is how Timothy Gloege describes R. A. Torrey’s childhood and upbringing, and appropriately so. Torrey was born into a wealthy family. His father, a wealthy banker and manufacturer, illustrates why the last decades of the 19th century (roughly 1870-1900) have been called, The Gilded Age. It was a period of rapid industrialization, great wealth, and tremendous economic inequality, a period in which the lives of those in the wealthy class were marked by great affluence and grand excess. Torrey grew up on “a lavish two-hundred-acre estate in Geneva, New York.”\textsuperscript{104} Although his life would not always be so comfortable — family fortunes would take a turn for the worse, and as a mature adult Torrey would have to make his own way — Torrey was raised in privilege. Torrey’s ‘gilded’ background enabled him to study at a number of prestigious universities. He graduated from Yale University in 1875 and Yale Divinity School in 1878. After a short stint as a Congregationalist pastor in Ohio, he spent roughly a year studying theology at universities in Leipzig and Erlangen (1882-1883). This privileged background makes his decision to embark on a ministry among the inner-city poor of Minneapolis, when he returned to the United States, all the more impressive. But it also perhaps helps explain his inability to sympathetically identify with the largely lower class, ‘rough and ready’ congregations that populated the Pentecostal churches of his day. Pentecostals

\textsuperscript{101} Jenkins, The Next Christendom, 8.
\textsuperscript{102} After all, Torrey, at least in theory, recognized the validity of contemporary tongues, he simply rejected the notion that tongues might serve as the normative sign of Spirit baptism, a view to which he himself was initially drawn.
\textsuperscript{103} Gloege, Guaranteed Pure, 69.
“came from the wrong side of the tracks”\textsuperscript{105} and this was a long way from his estate in Geneva or the halls of academia in Erlangen.

In addition to his well-heeled upbringing and elite education, Torrey was well known for being rather pompous. McLoughlin’s line is worth repeating, “on the street [Torrey] usually wore a high hat, and he always talked as though he had one on.”\textsuperscript{106} His biographer, Roger Martin, describes Torrey in this way:

> He wore a finely tailored Prince Albert coat with white shirt, starched collar and cuffs, and white bow tie. His shoes were polished. There was hardly a wrinkle in his clothing. He gave the impression of immaculate cleanliness and neatness, and had a stunning look of culture and dignity.\textsuperscript{107}

These trappings of Victorian culture were accompanied by a serious demeanor, steeped in logic and seemingly devoid of emotion. One friend indicated that “he did not remember [Torrey] ever getting a laugh from any congregation.”\textsuperscript{108} Torrey characterized his own preaching style as “scholarly,” like “a lawyer before a jury.”\textsuperscript{109}

With this portrait of Torrey in mind, I have tried to picture how he might have responded had he entered the Apostolic Faith Mission on Azusa Street in Los Angeles during the Summer of 1906. The leaders of the revival rented an old frame building that once served as a Methodist Church but had more recently fallen into disrepair and was used as a warehouse. They “cleared space enough in the surrounding dirt and debris to lay some planks on top of empty nail kegs, with seats enough for possibly thirty people.”\textsuperscript{110} In this simple setting, an eyewitness observer describes what typically transpired:

\textsuperscript{105}Grant Wacker, “Travail of a Broken Family: Evangelical Responses to Pentecostalism in America, 1906-1916” \textit{Journal of Ecclesiastical History} 47 (1996), 513. Wacker acknowledges that economic, class, and gender differences played a role in the conflict between Fundamentalists (he uses the term, “Radical Evangelicals”) and Pentecostals, but he suggests the differences were more perceived than real.

\textsuperscript{106}Marsden, \textit{Fundamentalism}, 47 (both quotes).

\textsuperscript{107}Martin, \textit{Apostle of Certainty}, 91.

\textsuperscript{108}“Interview with Dr. Ernest W. Wordsworth,” Torrey File, Moody Bible Institute Archives, cited in Marsden, \textit{Fundamentalism}, 47.

\textsuperscript{109}Marsden, \textit{Fundamentalism}, 47.

Brother Seymour generally sat behind two empty shoe boxes, one on top of the other. He usually kept his head inside the top one during the meeting, in prayer. There was no pride there. The services ran almost continuously. Seeking souls could be found under the power almost any hour, night and day. The place was never closed nor empty. The people came to meet God. He was always there. The meeting did not depend on the human leader. God’s presence became more and more wonderful. In that old building, with its low rafters and bare floors, God took strong men and women to pieces, and put them together again, for His glory….Pride and self-assertion, self-importance and self-esteem, could not survive there.

No subjects or sermons were announced ahead of time, and no special speakers for such an hour. No one knew what might be coming, what God would do. All was spontaneous, ordered of the Spirit….

Someone might be speaking. Suddenly the Spirit would fall upon the congregation…..Men would fall all over the house, like the slain in battle, or rush for the altar en masse, to seek God. The scene often resembled a forest of fallen trees. Such a scene cannot be imitated.\textsuperscript{111}

It is hard to imagine Torrey, with his Victorian bearing and aristocratic manner, fitting easily into this setting. One can only speculate, but it is hard not to feel that the cultural distance was simply too great. It rendered him incapable of recognizing at Azusa Street the revival that he had been seeking, the move of the Spirit for which he had prepared the way.

3.2 Peer Pressure

Torrey was a man of principle and not one to waver once his mind was settled.\textsuperscript{112} This quality is surely rooted in his commitment to the Bible as the Word of God. His views on Spirit baptism, healing, and living by faith changed little over the years.\textsuperscript{113} Yet it is also true that Torrey was not immune to the power of peer pressure and the sentiments of his colleagues. His decision to depart from Moody Bible Institute and launch out on a world-wide Evangelistic tour in 1902 may have been encouraged by the growing opposition he faced from colleagues

\textsuperscript{111} Bartleman, \textit{Azusa Street}, 58-60.
\textsuperscript{112} King, \textit{Disfellowshiped}, 140.
\textsuperscript{113} Gloege, “Gilded Age,” 218.
upset with his radical views, particularly his position on divine healing.\footnote{Gloege, \textit{Guaranteed Purse}, 8-9.} It is also apparent that when the Pentecostal movement, with its frenetic, spontaneous services, boisterous worship, and emotional responses, burst onto the scene, it was “a wedge that forced evangelicals who wanted to maintain their middle-class respectability to choose affiliation.”\footnote{Gloege, “Gilded Age,” 218. Marsden notes that “revivalist evangelicals…were embarrassed by the emergence of these cousins in Christ” (\textit{Fundamentalism}, 94).} Would they side with the rational, dispensational conservatives or would they join with the modernist liberals? For men like Torrey, already established in respectable, conservative institutions, it would have been difficult even to contemplate siding with those from ‘the other side of the tracks.’ The need to draw a clear line of separation must have been especially acute for Torrey since his theology and teaching in so many respects anticipated the Pentecostal movement.\footnote{Grant Wacker notes that Holiness leaders strongly denounced Pentecostal excesses and sought to distance themselves from the Pentecostal Movement precisely because they were so close in many other respects (Wacker, “Travail,” 524).} Surely Gloege’s assessment is on mark, “With Pentecostalism following close behind Torrey’s meetings, he felt a need to distinguish himself from the movement and to critique — often in harsh terms — what he believed were its excesses.”\footnote{Gloege, “Gilded Age,” 218.}

3.3 Negative Personal Encounters

Throughout his life, Torrey was a firm believer in divine healing. His book, \textit{Divine Healing: Does God Perform Miracles Today?}, was published in 1924 and reflects his mature views on the subject.\footnote{R.A. Torrey, \textit{Divine Healing: Does God Perform Miracles Today?} (Pantianos Classics, 2017; original, 1924).} Torrey insisted that divine healing is available today, but criticized those who featured healing in ‘healing crusades.’ Torrey felt the focus should be placed squarely on the gospel and healing as an extension of this.\footnote{Torrey, \textit{Divine Healing}, 35-39.} Indeed, Torrey claimed that many had been healed in “private meetings” at the conclusion of his evangelistic crusades.\footnote{King, \textit{Disfellowshiped}, 98-99.} Torrey also stressed that while healing comes from Christ’s atoning death on the cross, this does not mean that we should or will always experience this healing now.\footnote{Torrey, \textit{Divine Healing}, 47-48.} Finally, Torrey insisted that utilizing doctors or medicine might be appropriate, although in some instances it might not (i.e., when we are called to rely on God alone).\footnote{Torrey, \textit{Divine Healing}, 52.}
These positions, particularly his approval of the use of medical means, represent perspectives that Torrey appears to have embraced only after suffering through several difficult experiences. Many Radical Evangelicals in Torrey’s day felt that resorting to doctors and medicine reflected a lack of faith that would undermine prayer for healing.\(^{123}\) As we shall see, the younger Torrey appears to have shared this point of view.

Torrey’s “brief foray into a faith healing ministry was cut short” when he publicly prayed for the healing of a nineteen-year-old lady suffering from Leukemia. Initially, it appeared the lady had been healed. However, when she died the following day, pandemonium broke out. The girl’s mother believed that God would raise her from the dead and retrieved the body from the morgue. The mother maintained that six days of prayers had achieved a “partial resurrection,” while the medical examiner declared that the young lady had been pronounced dead prematurely while in a coma. Sadly, the mother blamed her own “lack of faith” for her daughter’s death. Newspapers widely reported the details of this sad event. Gloege notes, “After this incident, Torrey limited his practice of faith healing to the more-controlled setting of his immediate family, deciding that his public ministry was better devoted to evangelism.”\(^{124}\)

Yet the really devastating blow came with the death of Torrey’s eight-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. When Elizabeth contracted diphtheria, Torrey decided to rely on prayer alone and declined “the use of the well-proven antitoxin.”\(^{125}\) Initially all seemed well, but when Elizabeth’s breathing became labored, Torrey called for a doctor who administered the medicine. Tragically, it was too late and Elizabeth died. Torrey was distraught. He felt that his lack of faith, demonstrated in his call to the doctor, was the reason Elizabeth had died. He later described it “as a stunning blow,” and asked, “Why did God permit it?”\(^{126}\) Torrey’s answer: “Because He loved us” and “We needed it.” Torrey explained,

This chastisement...led to deep heart searchings and discovery of failure and thereby led to confession of sin. It led also to new consecration and love for souls and devotion to God. It brought

\(^{123}\) Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*, 100: with reference to a veritable “phalanx of modern faith-healing advocates” that emerged in the late 1800s, Gloege writes, “nearly everyone initially agreed that faith healing should replace, rather than augment, doctors and medicine.”

\(^{124}\) Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*, 81. For Gloege’s account of this incident, see *Guaranteed Pure*, 80-81, and also “Gilded Age,” 213.

\(^{125}\) Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*, 108.

answers to prayers…It was one of the things that led to my leaving Chicago a few years later to enter on a world-wide ministry.127

A short time later Torrey’s fourteen-year-old daughter, Blanche, showed similar signs of illness. This time Torrey relied entirely on prayer. Torrey not only prayed himself, but he also sent a letter to the well-known but extremely controversial figure, John Alexander Dowie, asking him to pray for his daughter’s healing as well. In this letter Torrey repented of his previous lack of faith, revealing the more radical side of his views on faith healing. Thankfully, Blanche recovered and Torrey sent a second letter to Dowie, rejoicing that their prayers had been answered. In spite of this happy outcome, the letters Torrey sent to Dowie ignited a firestorm of controversy that would cause him considerable grief. Dowie published Torrey’s letters as a means of defending his own rapidly deteriorating reputation. A string of acrimonious articles published by Torrey, Dowie, and others followed.128 As a result, Torrey’s reputation suffered greatly.

Moody was troubled by the thought that radical views on healing might be associated with the Bible Institute. He sent Torrey away for several months to minister to troops in Tennessee who were mobilizing for the Spanish-American War and also brought in James M. Gray to provide a more sober-minded perspective on healing. In October 1898 when Torrey returned to Chicago from his time of ministering to the troops, he was dismissed from his teaching duties at the YMCA. For years Torrey had taught a weekly Bible class for the YMCA, but now they terminated that arrangement.129 Although Torrey continued to serve at the Bible Institute, concerns regarding his Pentecostal leanings were clearly coming to the fore. Moody’s death (December 22, 1899) “in the midst of this crisis…signaled

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127 Torrey, Sermons, 144. Torrey also describes the incredible comfort he found in the midst of this trial. The morning after Elizabeth’s death he walked the streets crying out her name. “And just then this fountain that I had in my heart broke forth with such power as I think I had never experienced before, and it was the most joyful moment that I have ever known in my life! Oh, how wonderful is the joy of the Holy Ghost!” (Torrey, The Holy Spirit, 95).

128 See Dowie’s Leaves of Healing 6.20 (March 10, 1900), 639-648, esp. pp. 642-63 and p. 645, where he reproduces Torrey’s letters, which originally appeared in Leaves of Healing 5.24 (April 8, 1899), 460; for Dowie’s comments on Moody’s opposition and death, see Leaves of Healing 6 (Feb. 3, 1900), 470; for his comments on the authenticity of Torrey’s letters, see Leaves of Healing 6 (April 21, 1900), 826-827. Note also R.A. Torrey’s lengthy letter repudiating Dowie published in The Ram’s Horn (March 17, 1900), 11. Note also the article, “Henderson on Faith Cure,” The Chicago Tribune (Oct. 16, 1899), 8, that is critical of Dowie and links his Zion Community to the Evangelical Churches.

129 Gloc.We provides a detailed and well-documented account of these events in Guaranteed Pure, 108-109. On the conflict with the YMCA, see also James F. Findlay, Jr., Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist 1837-1899 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 404-405.
the end of the era.” The Institute rapidly traded Torrey’s “miracle-tinged faith,” which had generally received Moody’s support, for Gray’s “safe for middle-class consumption” form of Evangelicalism. As Torrey’s comments cited above suggest, the whirlwind of controversy surrounding these events likely encouraged his decision to leave Moody Bible Institute and embark on his world-wide evangelistic tour (1902-1906). In the midst of these pressures, one can appreciate how difficult it would have been for Torrey to openly identify with the kindred spirits he might have found in Pentecostal churches. Additionally, although Dowie pre-dated Pentecostalism, many of his friends and followers flooded into the movement. Torrey’s painful relationship with Dowie surely must have soured him on pursuing any further links.

4. Torrey’s Impact on the Pentecostal Movement

In spite of Torrey’s harsh repudiation of the ‘Tongues Movement,’ Pentecostals loved him nonetheless. British Pentecostal statesman, Donald Gee, stated that it was Torrey “who first gave the teaching of Baptism of the Holy Ghost a new, and certainly more scriptural and doctrinally correct, emphasis on the line of ‘power from on high’, especially for service and witness (Acts i. 8).” Gee also noted that Torrey’s “logical presentation of truth did much to establish the doctrine,” adding that “his preaching [in Berlin] of the Baptism of the Spirit sowed seeds that undoubtedly flourished a few years later when the Pentecostal Movement broke out in Germany.” Of course Torrey’s impact was not limited to Germany. He was a catalyst for Pentecostal-like revival in England, Wales, and beyond. Testimonies from Torrey’s preaching around the globe permeate the early Pentecostal periodicals.

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130 Gloege, Guaranteed Pure, 8.
131 Gloege, Guaranteed Pure, 8-9.
132 Donald Gee, The Pentecostal Movement, Including the Story of the War Years (1940-1947) (London: Elim Publishing Company, 1949 revised edition), 4-5 (all of the quotes from Gee). Torrey’s influence is chronicled by Hollenweger and led Marsden to speak of Torrey as “a kind of John the Baptist figure for later international Pentecostalism” (see Walter J. Hollenweger, The Pentecostals [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988; original, 1972], 221-223 and Marsden, Fundamentalism, 94 respectively).
133 See the following for Torrey’s impact in various nations: A. Boddy, “Scenes in Denmark,” Confidence (Oct. 10, 1910), 229 (Denmark); Confidence (Dec., 1914), 229 (Berlin); Minnie Abrams, “How the Recent Revival Was Brought About in India,” The Latter Rain Evangel (July, 1909), 8 (Australia); E.N. Bell, “Questions and Answers,” The Pentecostal Evangel (April 21, 1923), 9 (China); J. Narver Gortner, “Sins of Omissions,” The Pentecostal Evangel (April 4, 1925), 3 (Australia); David Leigh, “Thousands Turning to Christ in China,” The Pentecostal Evangel (Feb. 26, 1927), 1 (England).
In addition to Torrey’s preaching, Early Pentecostals loved to reference Torrey’s writings. Pentecostal apologist Carl Brumback cites Torrey’s definition of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, adding that it “represents the basic view of the Pentecostal movement toward the experience.” \(^{134}\) Many Pentecostals schools used Torrey’s *What the Bible Teaches* (1898) as a textbook. \(^{135}\) One of Torrey’s declarations contained in this book, “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from, subsequent to, and additional to His regenerating work,” \(^{136}\) is “the most frequent quotation by a non-Pentecostal to be found in Pentecostal literature.” \(^{137}\) Additionally, Horace Ward describes Torrey’s book, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is, and What He Does* (1927), as “the most acceptable non-Pentecostal treatise on Pentecostal doctrine.” \(^{138}\) Clearly, this book too was widely read in Pentecostal circles. It should also be noted that the man that many would deem the theological catalyst of the Pentecostal movement, Charles Parham, read Torrey’s writings. \(^{139}\) A survey of the early Pentecostal literature confirms Frederick Bruner’s conclusion, “Torrey was, after Wesley and Finney, the most influential figure in the pre-history of Pentecostalism.” \(^{140}\) Indeed, given his close proximity in time and doctrine to Parham, Durham, and the Azusa Street Revival, it might be argued with some force that Torrey’s role should be considered primary.

Torrey’s influence extended beyond his preaching and writing into the classroom. As Stanley Horton notes, “a number of the early leaders of the Pentecostal Movement studied under or were influenced by Dr. Torrey.” \(^{141}\) Frank Bartleman, Francisco Olazabal, and Marie Burgess were all students at Moody

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\(^{135}\) King, *Disfellowshiped*, 164.


\(^{139}\) Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure*, 131.

\(^{140}\) Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 45. A search of the online holdings of the Flower Heritage Pentecostal Center (www.ifhpc.org) is instructive: Torrey’s name, which was linked to numerous testimonies, cited favorably in a variety of articles, and listed as the author of many books advertised by the publications, appeared in 126 entries from 1908 through 1939. This confirms Bruner’s judgement, “Pentecostalism found in Torrey’s theology of the Spirit a special affinity” (*Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 45).

Bible Institute during Torrey’s tenure there. Thus, through his preaching, teaching, and numerous books, Torrey exerted a tremendous, indeed formative influence, on emerging Pentecostal leaders and the movement as a whole. His impact can hardly be overstated.

Nevertheless, Torrey’s influence on the Pentecostal movement has not been adequately acknowledged. On the one hand, Pentecostals have too often lumped Torrey together with other Keswick preachers making it appear as if they all taught essentially the same thing. I believe more nuance is required. Although all Keswick preachers associated Spirit baptism with power, unlike Torrey, virtually all of the others connected this power with sanctification (as well as power for service) in significant ways. On the other hand, Torrey’s Fundamentalist students and colleagues have attempted to erase or de-emphasize the strong Pentecostal currents that flowed through his theology. This point is illustrated well by an “awkward exchange between James Gray and Torrey’s daughter Edith in 1931.” Moody Bible Institute wanted to alter a section of Torrey’s correspondence course on the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, but due to copyright restrictions they needed the Torrey family’s permission to do so. “Torrey’s teachings were too close to ‘extreme Pentecostalists,’ like Aimee Semple McPherson, Gray explained.” Most Fundamentalists, with their Dispensationalist orientation, had rejected this approach. Edith was horrified by Gray’s request and firmly rejected it, asking that he never mention the matter again. This judgment is also supported by Torrey’s wife. When some of Torrey’s students attempted to distance his teaching on Spirit baptism from that of Pentecostalism by claiming that Torrey simply had been careless with his use of terms, Mrs. Torrey emphatically denied these “reports, claiming that his views on the subject had never changed despite his rejection of glossolalia as uniform initial evidence.”

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142 Gloege, Guaranteed Pure, 133-34.
143 Gilbertson helpfully notes that “in contrast to D.L. Moody and particularly R.A. Torrey, Keswick teachers devoted much more attention to the Spirit’s work in sanctification” (The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, 180). Charles Nienkirchen notes, for example, that A.B. Simpson “de-emphasized the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a source for power for service” and instead highlighted “its role in bringing ‘union with Christ’ and ‘cleansing from sin’” (Nienkirchen, “A.B. Simpson: Forerunner and Critic of the Pentecostal Movement” in David F. Hartzfeld and Charles Nienkrichen, eds., The Birth of A Vision [Beaverlodge, Canada: Buena Book Services, 1986], 143). This judgment is supported by Gilbertson’s detailed analysis (The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, 207-19).
144 Gloege, Guaranteed Pure, 227.
145 Gloege, Guaranteed Pure, 227. Gloege cites the correspondence for this exchange in n. 2 on p. 260.
146 Waldvogel, “The Reformed Evangelical Contribution,” 19, n. 32. See there the correspondence and sources Waldvogel cites. So also King states, “To his credit, Torrey’s position changed
5. Conclusion

We have noted that R. A. Torrey, with good reason, might be called, The Father of Fundamentalism. Yet we have documented how his views, particularly with reference to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, anticipate and significantly influence the nascent Pentecostal movement. Torrey’s understanding of Spirit baptism as a definite experience, distinct from regeneration, that empowers witness and service to a large degree shape the doctrinal formulations of later Pentecostal denominations, including the Assemblies of God. We have also emphasized that Torrey’s hermeneutic was, in many respects, unique. He privileged Luke-Acts and highlighted the continuity that linked the early church with believers today. Additionally, Torrey read the Bible, and especially Acts, as a treasure trove of promises—promises which include the baptism with the Holy Spirit and that are available to every believer today. Thus, Torrey also blazed an interpretative trail that many Pentecostals would follow. While it is true that Torrey rejected the Pentecostal position that ‘tongues’ serve as the normative sign of Spirit Baptism, it is also evident that this doctrine simply reflects Torrey’s reading of Acts taken to its logical end. It is a natural extension of Torrey’s hermeneutic. We have thus explored reasons for Torrey’s inability to affirm or express sympathy for this position, which include cultural factors, peer pressure, and his negative encounters with proto-Pentecostal John Alexander Dowie. Finally, we have described the remarkable and significant influence that Torrey has exerted on the Pentecostal movement, shaping its doctrine, hermeneutic, and practice at a number of points.

When one considers the impressive resume of shared values and impact that link Torrey together with the Pentecostal movement, it is difficult to find their equivalent in the Fundamentalist (or non-Pentecostal Evangelical) world. This is particularly the case when we remember that Pentecostals affirmed (and still affirm) all of the key doctrines delineated in The Fundamentals, and that the Fundamentalists rejected (and still reject) many of Torrey’s teachings, including his approach to divine healing and living by faith as well as his understanding of Spirit baptism, that the Pentecostals embraced. An honest review of the evidence leads to the following conclusion: R. A. Torrey’s enduring theological legacy is to be found in the sons and daughters of the Azusa Street Revival rather than in the step-children of post-Torrey Fundamentalist institutions.

little if at all over the years since The Baptism with the Holy Spirit had come out in 1895” (Disfellowshiped, 140).
This conclusion challenges traditional notions held both by Pentecostals and Fundamentalists alike. We Pentecostals often portray our own roots as if we had almost nothing to do with the dry, rationalistic, Fundamentalists. These historical reconstructions often pit the inspiration of the Spirit against serious study of the Bible and assert that the early Pentecostals had a largely community-driven, subjective hermeneutic. In the golden age, we are told, experience reigned supreme and was given primacy over a rational reading of Scripture. Torrey’s hermeneutic demonstrates that Pentecostals were not so unique as is often thought in this regard. He too read the Bible as a living text. Torrey’s approach also reminds us that a logical, rational approach to Scripture can be combined with a deep desire to hear the voice of the Spirit and to respond obediently. Additionally, Torrey’s significant influence on the Pentecostal movement, particularly in its formative stages, calls us to see the important points of agreement that unite us together with our Fundamentalist brothers and sisters, and to acknowledge that a logical, reasoned approach to Scripture actually forms the bedrock of the Pentecostal movement.

This study also encourages Fundamentalists to take another look at Torrey and his teaching, particularly his understanding of Spirit baptism. Torrey cannot easily be pushed aside as a marginal thinker or as someone who was simply misunderstood. Torrey was a theological giant, the architect of The Fundamentals, and he was in many respects also a Pentecostal. Perhaps by honestly re-examining Torrey’s work we can all find much more common ground than we have previously imagined possible. I firmly believe that Torrey, the theological pugilist, would encourage this effort and call us to see that, in the power of the Spirit, we have ‘a fighting chance’ to achieve great things for the kingdom of God.

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147 For example, see Archer, A Pentecostal Hermeneutic and James K.A. Smith, “The Closing of the Book: Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and the Sacred Writings,” JPT 11 (1997), 49-71. Torrey does not easily fit into Archer’s categories, which tend to pit rationalistic Fundamentalists against experiential Pentecostals. Archer claims that “Fundamentalists read the Bible as a past inspired revelatory document, but Pentecostals read the Bible as a presently inspired story” (A Pentecostal Hermeneutic, 69), yet for Torrey clearly the Bible was a presently inspired story. Smith states, “my goal has been to sketch the relationship between textual and oral/prophetic communities as one traditionally accompanied by exclusion and oppression of the latter by the former” (“Closing of the Book,” 70). Again, this construct does not account for Fundamentalists like Torrey.