

Foreword

Several Pentecostal groups arose in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s with a doctrine called “Jesus’ Name,” “Apostolic Pentecostal,” or “Oneness” by its proponents, and the “New Issue,” or “Jesus Only” by its opponents. I had the privilege of supervising Talmadge French’s PhD research on this subject over several years at the University of Birmingham. His research was meticulous and thorough, not leaving any stone unturned in his search for facts. Oneness Pentecostals, according to French, have some thirty million adherents worldwide, which makes them a significant minority within classical Pentecostalism. French is one of a handful of Oneness Pentecostal ministers with a PhD, and this historical study is unique, not least because he is an insider who manages to maintain critical distance from his subject, one that is also very close to his heart. Originally conceived as a study of the origins of Oneness Pentecostalism in one American city, Indianapolis, Indiana; it developed into a study of the most prominent African American leader in early “Finished Work” Pentecostalism, Garfield Thomas Haywood, also in Indianapolis; and then developed further to an analysis of the interracial nature of early American Oneness Pentecostalism spread across the United States, in which Haywood played a prominent role. Haywood was undoubtedly a most remarkable man whose achievements in attaining racial integration in an era of Jim Crow segregation laws that were *de jure* in the South and *de facto* in the North, were nothing short of amazing. This fascinating story with all its original sources is the result of these years of research.

Oneness Pentecostalism is an enigma to most scholars—of all forms of Pentecostalism globally today this form appears, at least to this observer, to have maintained most closely the countercultural and otherworldly character of early Pentecostalism. As French shows in this book, the “interracial fervor” of early American Pentecostalism remained in Oneness Pentecostalism longer than in other sections of the movement. There remains a deep divide between Oneness and other forms of Pentecostalism, largely on doctrinal grounds. It has been regarded by other Pentecostals

variously as heretical or heterodox. The main issue is its Sabellian Modalistic approach to the Trinity, and the doctrine that baptism in the name of Jesus and Spirit baptism with speaking in tongues is necessary for salvation that is promulgated in many, but not all, Oneness circles. This is not a homogenous organization, for like Pentecostalism as a whole, Oneness Pentecostalism has split into many different groups independent of each other. The two largest in North America are the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World and the United Pentecostal Church International. There are even bigger Oneness Pentecostal groups in Ethiopia: the Apostolic Church of Ethiopia, and in China and the Chinese diaspora: the True Jesus Church. The latter has imbibed some of the features of Seventh-Day Adventism into its teachings and observes Saturday as the Sabbath. Most forms of Oneness Pentecostalism also practice foot-washing.

It might be helpful first to give a potted history and theology of early American Oneness Pentecostalism for the uninitiated, even though such a summary has to be arbitrary and selective. Racial, doctrinal and personal issues simultaneously caused the divisions that erupted in early American Pentecostalism. The first Pentecostals at Azusa Street under their African American leader William Seymour were in an integrated and socially inclusive movement of the Spirit. This was what French called an “interracial vision”. Although Pentecostalism has its roots in the nineteenth century Holiness movement, some adherents had come from churches outside of this, and were more influenced by the Keswick view of progressive sanctification, which tended to deny a second instantaneous experience of holiness. William Durham in Chicago was undoubtedly one of the most influential Pentecostal preachers and the cause of the first major doctrinal schism in the movement. His Gospel Mission Church, also known as the North Avenue Mission, became a revival center that rivalled Azusa Street in influence and indirectly resulted in the creation of several European immigrant Pentecostal congregations in Chicago that spread worldwide.

In 1911 Durham, once so influenced by Azusa Street, went to the Azusa Street Mission to preach his “Finished Work of Calvary” doctrine in Seymour’s absence, which resulted in schism and the departure of two-thirds of Seymour’s workers. The Holiness teaching of “entire sanctification,” which had been embraced by Seymour and most early Pentecostals, Durham declared to be unscriptural, teaching that sanctification was not a “second blessing” or a “crisis experience,” but that Christ had provided for sanctification in his atonement and that this was received at conversion by identification with Christ in an act of faith. He therefore taught

a “two-stage” work of grace (justification and Spirit baptism) instead of a “three-stage” one. His theology was thoroughly Christocentric, and it could be argued, deviated significantly from the Spirit-centered theology of both the Holiness movement and the first American Pentecostals. Durham’s influence was enormous. Many of those who became major leaders of the Pentecostal movement embraced the “Finished Work” doctrine, including those who became leaders of Oneness Pentecostalism. After Durham’s premature death from tuberculosis in 1912, his doctrine became the basis upon which the Assemblies of God, the Oneness denominations, the Foursquare Church, and several other smaller Pentecostal denominations were formed. Durham’s assistant minister, Frank Ewart, who also became a Oneness leader, led the North Avenue Mission after Durham’s death. There has been speculation that had he lived, Durham himself might have embraced Oneness, and that his Jesus-centered doctrine inevitably led to Oneness teaching. By 1914 some sixty percent of all American Pentecostals had embraced the “Finished Work” position. Durham’s influence on the theology of the majority of Pentecostals was certainly immense and the division in US American Pentecostalism on this issue remains today.

The “Finished Work” controversy was the first of many subsequent divisions in American Pentecostalism. A more fundamental and acrimonious split erupted in 1916 over the doctrine of the Trinity. This was a schism chiefly in the ranks of the Assemblies of God that began as a teaching that the correct formula for baptism was “in the name of Jesus,” and developed into a dispute about the doctrine of the Trinity. The “Finished Work” Pentecostals had an increasing expectation that God would continue to bring “further revelation” and do a “new thing”. Remarkable revival meetings, especially those conducted by the woman evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter in Dallas in 1912 and in Arroyo Seco, near Los Angeles in 1913, encouraged this heightened expectation but failed to unite Pentecostalism. In the Arroyo Seco camp meeting, Canadian evangelist Robert McAlister began to preach about baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” from Acts 2:38, which he said was the common practice of the early church, rather than the triune formula of Matthew 28:19. Baptism was to be “in the name of Jesus” because Jesus was the “name” of God, whereas “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” were different titles for the singular name of Jesus Christ. This new teaching not only resulted in calls for rebaptism, but also developed into a theology of the name of God based on a combination of the Keswick emphasis on Jesus and the Old Testament names of God, and leading ultimately to what became known as the “Oneness” doctrine.

Early leaders in the Oneness movement included Frank Ewart, Seymour's former business manager Glenn Cook, the leader of a large interracial congregation in Indianapolis, Garfield T. Haywood, Iranian-born Assyrian Andrew D. Urshan (ordained by Durham), and Howard A. Goss, Pentecostal pioneer Charles F. Parham's former field superintendent. Ewart was credited with first formulating the distinctive Oneness theology on the nature and the name of God to accompany the new baptismal practice. This he first announced in a public sermon in 1914, when he and Cook rebaptized each other. The new doctrine spread through evangelistic meetings and in Indianapolis, Cook baptized Haywood together with 465 members of his large congregation. The "New Issue" created a schism in the Assemblies of God (AG) and Goss had been one of its organizing founders in 1914. In 1916, 156 ministers, including Goss, Ewart and Haywood, were barred from membership of the AG over the doctrine of the Trinity, which henceforth became a condition for membership. The AG emerged thereafter as a tightly structured, centralized denomination with a "Statement of Fundamental Truths" affirming the Trinity. The split also meant that the AG lost its black membership and became essentially an all-white denomination, especially with the departure of Haywood, the only prominent black leader associated with the AG, but never credentialed by them. The AG's stand for "orthodoxy" at this time was to ease their later acceptance by evangelicals. Oneness Pentecostalism in contrast was destined to remain isolated from the rest of Pentecostalism and Christianity in general, particularly through its practice of rebaptism and rejection of Trinitarian doctrine.

The details of this fascinating history and the subsequent events are presented in this book. Haywood's Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW), the first American Oneness denomination, remained a racially integrated church until 1924, after which most of the whites withdrew and the PAW adopted episcopal government with Haywood as presiding bishop. After an abortive attempt to unite under the umbrella of the newly formed Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ (PCJC) in 1931, the PAW has since been predominantly an African American church. The United Pentecostal Church (UPC) was originally a white denomination formed in 1945 from a union of the PCJC and the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated, but that tale belongs to a later historical period. Oneness Pentecostals have been excluded from fellowship with Trinitarian Pentecostals ever since the schism of 1916, except in the academic Society for Pentecostal Studies, where they have participated since 1973, and where I first met Talmadge French.

The central Oneness teaching as it has developed is a rejection of the traditional Christian concept of “separate but equal” Persons in the Trinity. Oneness Pentecostals hold that Jesus is the revelation of God the Father and that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, who is fully revealed in Jesus. Unlike the traditional idea that Jesus is the human name of Christ, in Oneness teaching Jesus is the New Testament name of God, and this name reveals His true nature. The one God of the Old Testament (Yahweh) reveals His immanence in the incarnation of Jesus, and His transcendence in the presence of the Spirit. God has now permanently taken up His abode in the human body of the Son. The Spirit indwells Jesus in fullness as God incarnate, and thus an attempt is made to resolve the intricacies of Trinitarian theology. Oneness Pentecostals think that Trinitarians have embraced tritheism because they believe in three separate and distinct “Persons” in the Godhead. Instead, Oneness teaching affirms that Jesus is fully God and not one divine being out of three. They prefer to refer to Father, Son and Spirit as “modes” or “manifestations” of God, all of which are present in the manifestation of each one. It follows that they also reject the traditional Christian teaching of the eternal Sonship of Christ, and that Oneness teaching on the dual nature of Christ tends towards a separation of the divine and the human. French explains carefully this theology of Oneness in the first chapter. Much of Oneness Pentecostalism teaches a threefold soteriology based on Acts 2:38: repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit, all as essential parts of salvation. Oneness Pentecostalism therefore, with its several varieties and hundreds of denominations, emerged as an alternative to the Trinitarian doctrine and baptismal practice of early Pentecostalism, and was possibly the unavoidable outcome of the Christocentric “Finished Work” theology of William Durham.

By 1916, American Pentecostalism was doctrinally divided into three competing groups: “Second Work” (Holiness) Trinitarians, “Finished Work” Trinitarians and “Finished Work” Oneness Pentecostals, divisions that remain to this day. Other issues that divided Pentecostals were the authority of spoken prophecy (some held that there should be set apostles and prophets in the church), different eschatological interpretations, church polity, personality conflicts and racial differences. The process of schism and proliferation of new sects that had commenced in the nineteenth century Holiness movement was multiplied and perpetuated in the global expansion of Pentecostalism, and today might be considered a defining feature of the movement. In addition to doctrinal differences,

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within two decades the American Pentecostal movement had divided on racial lines. In the Oneness movement racial inclusion remained longer than in other forms of Pentecostalism, and this is recounted in the chapters of this book. The Oneness schism effectively meant that no black leaders remained in the AG. Racial divisions on the basis of African American, Hispanic American, and white American continued and proliferated throughout Pentecostalism for most of the twentieth century. By 1931 Oneness Pentecostals, the most integrated of all Pentecostal groups, were also split on racial lines. And yet, despite all these divisions, the Pentecostal movement continued to grow and as a whole probably retained as much friendly contact across racial divides as any other religious group in the United States.

What follows is a carefully-crafted, meticulously-researched history of early American Oneness Pentecostalism, based on original documents and hitherto-unknown sources. It has filled a large number of gaps in the historiography of American Pentecostalism and is essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand better and avoid a polemical attitude to these “without the camp” Pentecostals whom the author represents. This book will certainly clear up misunderstandings, foster better dialogue with Oneness Pentecostalism, and shed whole new light on American Pentecostal history and its struggle with racial prejudice. I want to warmly commend it to you.

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