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THE INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUALITY AND EVANGELISM  
IN THE MINISTRY OF REUBEN ARCHER TORREY

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Missiology

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by  
Russell David Sanders  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUALITY AND EVANGELISM  
IN THE MINISTRY OF REUBEN ARCHER TORREY

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For the glory of God

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Biola	Bible Institute of Los Angeles
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>

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## PREFACE

A project of this stature is a community effort. I am thinking now not merely of this thesis, but the entire Doctor of Missiology degree program. I commenced this journey in August 2019. I could not have sustained the pace nor finished the race apart from the investment, encouragement, and support of many benefactors. I am grateful to the faculty of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Ministry at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The seminars and colloquia conducted by the faculty proved formative in my spiritual growth. I have experienced something of a spiritual awakening as a consequence of my studies. Special thanks to Professor John Klaassen for allowing me to substitute one missiology seminar and two colloquia for a biblical spirituality seminar and two colloquia. I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Timothy K. Beougher, my faculty advisor. Dr. Beougher pointed me in the right direction when I needed guidance concerning a research topic. He sharpened my powers of investigation and helped me to think like a sleuth on the research trail. He encouraged me to follow the research wherever it might lead and cheered my progress in writing.

I am thankful for the assistance rendered by Ms. Corie Zylstra, Digital Collections Librarian and Archivist at the Moody Bible Institute. Ms. Zylstra cheerfully made available the treasure trove of Torrey resources held by Moody. She patiently answered my queries for additional guidance as I leaned on her for clarification regarding the location of materials. I am grateful to Ms. Emily Banas and Mr. Keith Call of Wheaton College. They both assisted me during my research in the archives at the Buswell Library Archives and Special Collections. Ms. Banas, in particular, willingly answered many of my questions related to citations of Torrey materials held by Wheaton.

Writing is not a natural skill for me. I am very grateful to my editor, Mrs.

Jennifer Stec. Jennifer promptly and patiently answered my questions concerning grammar, formatting, and style. She worked tirelessly in the face of personal physical challenges to edit my work in a gracious and timely manner. She also provided helpful suggestions for sharpening my writing skills.

I am deeply thankful to my father, F. Lavelle Sanders, who financed the entire degree program, allowing me to fulfill a dream of advancing my education. I also appreciate my brother, Rodney Sanders, who optimistically encouraged me to persevere and provided the space I needed to finish the course.

I am thankful to God for three very precious ladies. My late mother, Joyce L. Sanders, did not live to see me begin this degree program. I cannot help but believe she would rejoice with me. In her life, she modeled faith, love, and sacrifice for Christ's cause. These traits are an inspiration to me to this day. My mother-in-law, Janice M. Andrews, has exhibited keen interest in my progress along the way. She has prayed for me and encouraged me to stay the course. Her personal example of perseverance and unconditional love encourage me always. Last but not least is my beloved Kathy, my wife of forty years. She held up my flagging arms and, through her words and prayers, breathed fresh hope into my weary spirit. I could never have completed this project without her encouragement, support, and love. She means more to me than words can adequately express. She is a true "Mrs. Helpmate."

I dedicate this degree and thesis to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His grace sustained me day by day. He has proven ever faithful to me as I have walked this educational journey, and indeed, through all of my life. I owe every ounce of inspiration, endurance, vision, and provision to his grace. *Soli Deo gloria.*

Russ Sanders

Bentonville, Arkansas

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Reuben Archer Torrey (1856–1928) was an American evangelist, pastor, author, educator, and Bible teacher whose ministry spanned the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Torrey engaged in a diverse ministry but is perhaps best known for his practice of crusade-style evangelism and personal soul-winning.<sup>1</sup> Reflecting on Torrey’s five-month evangelistic crusade in London in 1905, Torrey colleague George T. B. Davis wrote, “Throughout the entire campaign [in South London and the Strand] Dr. Torrey urged the duty and the joy of personal work with the fiery eloquence and zeal of an Old Testament Prophet.”<sup>2</sup> Davis captured Torrey’s vision for soul winning in the evangelist’s own words:

I would rather win souls than be the greatest King or Emperor on earth; I would rather win souls than be the greatest general that ever commanded an army; I would rather win souls than be the greatest poet, or novelist, or literary man who ever walked the earth. My one ambition in life is to win as many as possible. Oh, it is the only thing worth doing, to save souls.<sup>3</sup>

R. A. Torrey’s single-minded passion to reach lost people mirrored his Master’s, who declared, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).<sup>4</sup> Torrey imbibed deeply from the Spirit of his Master.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, R. A. Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning* (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1915); R. A. Torrey, *Vest Pocket Companion for Christian Workers* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1895); R. A. Torrey, *The New Topical Textbook: A Scripture Textbook for the Use of Ministers, Teachers, and All Christian Workers* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897); R. A. Torrey, *How to Work for Christ: A Compendium of Effective Methods* (London: James Nisbet, 1901).

<sup>2</sup> George T. B. Davis, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of a World-Wide Revival, a Record and Study of the Work and Personality of the Evangelists R. A. Torrey, D. D., and Charles M. Alexander* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 209.

<sup>3</sup> Davis, *Torrey and Alexander*, 209–10.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *English Standard Version*.

A life of deep spirituality nurtured Torrey's evangelistic zeal. He composed two volumes addressing the topic of prayer, four featuring the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and ten texts focusing on the Word of God.<sup>5</sup> His interest in the spiritual life was neither theoretical nor speculative, but experimental and practical. Concerning the practice of prayer, Torrey remarked, "I want to have fellowship with him, and to that end I have asked the Father that whatever else he may make me, to make me at all events an intercessor, to make me a man who knows how to pray, and who spends much time in prayer."<sup>6</sup> Torrey believed prayer was the key to unlock the storehouses of God's grace and power.<sup>7</sup>

Torrey coupled the practice of prayer, however, with the intake of Scripture.<sup>8</sup> Judging from the sheer number of volumes he penned on the theme of the Bible, one may infer that Scripture played a defining role in shaping the spirituality of the man. In *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, he reminisces, "The author can well remember the time when he had more appetite for books about the Bible than he had for the Bible itself, but *with increasing study* there has come increasing love for the Book."<sup>9</sup> Torrey fed his life in Christ by the twin practices of prayer and Bible study. Additionally, his experience of the Holy Spirit's living reality figured significantly in his spiritual formation.

Torrey regarded the doctrines of the personality and deity of the Spirit of God as of immense practical import. In Torrey's view, the Holy Spirit was not an impersonal

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<sup>5</sup> Some of Torrey's noteworthy works include, R. A. Torrey, *How to Pray* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1900); R. A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures and in Personal Experience* (London: James Nisbet, 1910); R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896).

<sup>6</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1924), 17.

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to Donald S. Whitney for the terminology "Scripture intake." See Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible*, 98–99 (emphasis added).

force but a living being worthy of worship. Torrey remarked, “If the Holy Spirit is a person, and a divine person, and he is, and if you or I do not know him as such, if we think of the Holy Spirit merely as an impersonal influence or power . . . then we are robbing a divine person of the worship that is his due [and] the love that is his due.”<sup>10</sup> Torrey believed that if an individual regarded the Spirit as an impersonal influence, he would be tempted to manipulate the Spirit to his own ends. On the contrary, Torrey noted, “If you think of him in the biblical way, as a person of divine majesty and glory, your thought will be, ‘How can the Holy Spirit get hold of me and use me?’”<sup>11</sup> For Torrey, the Holy Spirit birthed and empowered Christian life and ministry.

In Torrey’s life and ministry, the disciplines of prayer, Scripture intake, personal witnessing, and the experience of the Spirit’s baptism coalesced to form a four-fold strand of Christian spirituality.<sup>12</sup> Torrey’s spirituality in turn invigorated both his practice of crusade and personal evangelism.

### **Background**

In the summer of 1981, I attended a Bible conference near Asheville, North Carolina. The conference’s keynote speaker, Homer G. Lindsay (1927–2000), made an anecdotal comment regarding Torrey’s views about the Holy Spirit. I do not recall Lindsay’s specific words. He seemed to be in essential agreement with Torrey’s teaching regarding the work of the Spirit in the believer’s life. He indicated, however, that he

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<sup>10</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1927), 28.

<sup>11</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is*, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Torrey never enunciated a formal definition of spirituality. A definition of spirituality may however be teased out of a comment he made about the importance of spiritual friendship. He advised young Christians to select a “few wisely chosen friends . . . with whom you can associate intimately.” He advised that they must be “spiritual persons in the best sense,” and then proceeded to describe a spiritual person as “persons who love to study the Bible, persons who love to converse on spiritual themes, persons who know how to pray and do pray, persons who are really working to bring others to Christ” (R. A. Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life* [Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1906], 200). Three of Torrey’s four-fold strand of Christian spirituality may be observed in this quote.

would choose different nomenclature to express his own position. I never read Torrey for myself and never gave him any further consideration. Nevertheless, my first living recollection of hearing Torrey's name dates to that conference.

Thirty-nine years later, I enrolled in the Doctor of Missiology program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. After I completed Timothy K. Beougher's Biblical and Theological Foundations of Missions and Evangelism seminar, I asked him for suggestions for a thesis research topic. I informed Professor Beougher that I was interested in the intersection of spirituality in the practice of missions and evangelism. I related to him that I had considered writing on James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), founder of the China Inland Mission. The paucity of published works, the preponderance of handwritten materials, and the challenge of access to diverse source material locations rendered Taylor a daunting character to consider.

Professor Beougher suggested that I consider Reuben A. Torrey as a potential research figure. Torrey authored, coauthored, or edited over sixty published books, tracts, and pamphlets, making him readily accessible to the researcher. Two key institutions, the Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College, held significant unpublished materials and were strategically accessible to Southern Seminary. In Beougher's estimation, Torrey exemplified the integration of spirituality in the practice of evangelism. I anticipated taking Beougher's seminar in the History of Missions and Evangelism during the upcoming semester. Therefore, Professor Beougher suggested I write a biographical sketch of Torrey to satisfy the research component of that seminar. The opportunity to research and write about Torrey afforded the prospect of vetting him before I committed to a formal thesis topic. The process of researching and writing about Torrey confirmed Beougher's suggestion, and I committed to the task of writing my thesis on him.

As I embarked on the research project, I made extensive use of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library on the campus of Southern Seminary. The library holds a significant number of Torrey works that aided the research. The Southern Seminary

Archives assisted me by providing copies of Torrey's correspondence contained in its collections. I accessed a number of volumes through inter-library loan which proved invaluable as I prepared to write.

I made two extended visits to the campus of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. The Moody Archives house a rich treasure trove of Torrey correspondence, unpublished sermons, Sunday school lessons, and other memorabilia. I also visited the Buswell Library Archives and Special Collections at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. Wheaton made available a plethora of unpublished materials, including four of Torrey's personal diaries. Through its Digital Commons, Biola University in La Mirada, California, maintains an online repository of Torrey tracts and booklets. The Digital Commons also holds high-quality scans of *The King's Business*, a publication of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles between 1910 and 1970. While Torrey served as Biola's Dean, he contributed prodigiously to *The King's Business* as a content provider and as editor of the publication between 1912 and 1918. The Torrey content I retrieved via *The King's Business* proved most helpful during the research phase.

### **Thesis**

What were the core elements of Torrey's spiritual life, and what influence did his spirituality exert on his practice of evangelism? I answer the first question by demonstrating that Torrey's spirituality was characterized by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Scripture intake, prevailing prayer, and personal evangelism.<sup>13</sup> I answer the second question by exhibiting that in Torrey's thought, the wellspring of evangelism was love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Torrey, in turn, nurtured his love for Christ by practicing spiritual disciplines and experiencing the Spirit's fullness.

Torrey confirmed the foregoing thesis in his massive volume, *How to Work for*

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<sup>13</sup> In Torrey's life, evangelism was both a spiritual discipline and the fruit of his spirituality.

*Christ*. In chapter 5 of book 3, Torrey listed a sermon outline titled, “Love to Christ;” his text was Acts 21:13.<sup>14</sup> Torrey’s first point was “What Love to Christ Will Lead To.” Torrey stated that love to Christ will lead to obedience to Christ. He further asserted that love to Christ will result in study about him. Torrey wrote, “We all wish to know all we can about those we love. If we love Jesus we will study about Him. We will study the four gospels and the prophecies and the epistles and the Revelation of Jesus. Not from a sense of duty but because we want to know about Jesus.”<sup>15</sup> Torrey concluded his first point by claiming, “If we love Jesus we will proclaim Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> The second point in Torrey’s outline was titled, “How [to] Learn to Love Him.” Under this second point, Torrey argued for the role of the Holy Spirit. He wrote, “It is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to love Jesus. He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. He bears witness of Jesus. He imparts to us His own love for Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

Torrey’s words illustrate the centrality of love to Christ. Love to Christ results in verbal proclamation of him, leads the believer into the study of Scripture, and is engendered in the believer by the Holy Spirit. What is the believer to do who finds that his love for Christ and his fellow man has grown cold? Commenting on 1 John 4:19<sup>18</sup> in his *Outline Studies on 1 John*, Torrey instructs, “If you do not love God, do not try to pump up love for Him, simply meditate on His love for you. . . . God’s love to us not only awakens in our hearts a love to God . . . it begets a love to man as well.”<sup>19</sup> Torrey writes, “Meditate every day on God’s love to you, and its many and wondrous

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<sup>14</sup> The apostle Paul wrote, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

<sup>15</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 363–64.

<sup>16</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 363–64.

<sup>17</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 363–64.

<sup>18</sup> “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

<sup>19</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Outline Studies on 1 John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 67–69.

manifestations to you. Think of that love when you kneel in prayer . . . think of it as you read your Bible, think of it as you go to your work. Like begets like, and love begets love.”<sup>20</sup>

Torrey argues that God’s love to us “not only begets love to Him but begets love to all. This is the way to learn to love men, even to love the unloveliest of men. Dwell on God’s love to you, and dwell on your unworthiness of that great love.”<sup>21</sup> Torrey adds a missiological application when he notes, “Our great need today is love, love to fellow Christians, love to the vile and outcast, love to the most abandoned men and women, love to the heathen whom we never saw, love to the Chinese, love to the African.”<sup>22</sup> Torrey reasoned that the practice of meditating on God’s love as revealed in Scripture rekindles love for Christ and for all men. Love for God, in turn, compels the believer to go to the “most abandoned men and women” with the gospel message.

Torrey’s life and teachings embodied my thesis, that faithful evangelism is the overflow of love to the Lord Jesus Christ and is nurtured by the experience of the Spirit’s fullness, coupled with the practices of Scripture intake, prayer, and personal evangelism.

### **Methodology**

My thesis is a work of missiology and biblical spirituality. As I make my argument, I acknowledge the following presuppositions and theological commitments, and I adhere to the following methodological considerations:

*The inerrancy of Scripture.* Scripture is completely true and trustworthy in all that it affirms.<sup>23</sup> A commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture is essential to an evangelical

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<sup>20</sup> Torrey, *Outline Studies*, 67–69.

<sup>21</sup> Torrey, *Outline Studies*, 67–69.

<sup>22</sup> Torrey, *Outline Studies*, 67–69.

<sup>23</sup> Wayne Grudem understands the inerrancy of Scripture to mean “that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020], 86). In simple terms, he writes, “The Bible always tells the truth . . . concerning everything it talks about” (86).

spirituality and the practice of evangelism. I write from an appreciation for the inerrancy of Scripture and submit my thought to its authority. Torrey himself was no less adamant about the inerrancy of Scripture.<sup>24</sup>

*The centrality of Christ.* The Scriptures point to the Lord Jesus Christ as the preeminent one (Col 1:18), the sole mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:5), apart from whom there is no salvation (Acts 4:12). Christ and his cross-work constitute the sum and substance of the Christian message (1 Cor 2:2). He is the *terminus* of God's special revelation (Luke 24:44–45; Heb 1:2).<sup>25</sup> I endeavor in my writing to exalt Christ and demonstrate that he was the centerpiece of Torrey's ministry.

*The mission of God.*<sup>26</sup> Evangelism and mission arise out of the Triune nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father is the genesis of mission and evangelism (John 3:16; 20:21). He sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). The Son came in obedience to the Father's initiative to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). The Father and Son send the Spirit to apply the benefits of Christ's redemption to those who believe (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Eph 1:13). In turn, the church is sent into the world to proclaim Christ's salvation in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Torrey believed that the inerrancy of Scripture was the vital doctrine that should serve as a cohesive factor uniting all Christians. See Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), 245; R. A. Torrey, *Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God: And was the Body of Jesus Raised from the Dead?* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922).

<sup>25</sup> Regarding the centrality of Christ, Torrey writes, "Jesus Christ is the centre of all the Bible teaching. . . . The whole Bible, from the first chapter to the last, centres in Jesus Christ. You will never understand any chapter in the Bible until you see Jesus Christ in that chapter. . . . Jesus Christ is the key to the Scriptures. Jesus Christ unlocks every chapter" (R. A. Torrey, *Getting the Gold Out of the Word of God* [New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1925], 8–24).

<sup>26</sup> Concerning the *missio Dei*, Bosch writes,

It was here [at the Willingen Conference of the IMC (International Missionary Council) in 1952] that the idea *missio Dei* first surfaced clearly. Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology 16 [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991], 399)

<sup>27</sup> For a succinct presentation of the Trinitarian framework for missions, see Torey Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine Missions and the Mission of the

I write with an appreciation for the centrality of evangelism in the mission of God and exhibit the significance of Spirit-empowered evangelism in the ministry of R. A. Torrey.

*The integration of spirituality<sup>28</sup> and theology<sup>29</sup> in the practice of evangelism.<sup>30</sup>*

A vibrant and biblical experience of God ought to eventuate in the faithful practice of evangelism. I write from the conviction that theology must inform the practice of evangelism. By extension, a biblical spirituality fosters and nourishes faithful

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Church,” *JETS* 63, no. 3 (2020): 535–58. Teer observes that “every [mission] commissioning text—with the exception of Matt. 28:19–20 . . . highlights the cruciality of the Holy Spirit for the actualization of the church’s mission” (553–54). Teer’s observation nestles nicely within the framework of Torrey’s thinking, who viewed the Holy Spirit as the indispensable agent who empowered evangelism and missions and insured the believer’s evangelistic fruitfulness.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Adam equates Reformed spirituality with biblical spirituality. He delineates six distinctive features of a biblical (Reformed) spirituality. Biblical spirituality is firmly based on the Bible; it focuses on Jesus Christ; it is grace-based; it is a spirituality for ordinary people, not a spiritual elite; it is open to the world and to what is commonly called secular work and duties; and it was a literate spirituality, capable of engaging lay people in spiritual formation. See Peter Adam, *Hearing God’s Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 27–28. I believe Adam’s *taxis* is deficient with respect to the role of the Holy Spirit in forging a spiritual life. Torrey modeled a spirituality of the Word and Spirit and therefore exhibited a more robust biblical spirituality.

<sup>29</sup> Regarding the integration of theology and evangelism, Robert Coleman writes, “In their origins, . . . theology and evangelism belong together. When the two are separated in practice . . . both suffer loss—theology loses direction and evangelism loses content” (Robert E. Coleman, *The Heart of the Gospel: The Theology behind the Master Plan of Evangelism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011], 9). C. E. Autrey uses the analogy of the skeletal system in relation to the body to illustrate the importance of theology and evangelism. He avers, “Theology is to evangelism what the skeleton is to the body. Remove the skeleton and the body becomes a helpless quivering mass of jelly-like substance” (C. E. Autrey, *Basic Evangelism* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959], 16). J. I. Packer observes the danger of divorcing theology from evangelism. When theology and evangelism are separated, “[Theology] grows abstract and speculative, wayward in method, theoretical in interest and irresponsible in stance” (quoted in Krish Kandiah, “Lesslie Newbigin’s Contribution to a Theology of Evangelism,” *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 24, no. 1 [January 2007]: 56). James Denney underscores the importance of wedding theology and evangelism when he writes, “If evangelists were our theologians or theologians our evangelists, we should at least be nearer the ideal church” (James Denney, *The Death of Christ: Its Place and Interpretation in the New Testament* [New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1907], viii). Torrey exemplified the integration of theological thought and the practice of evangelism. Donald D. Smeeton remarks, “Torrey provides a model of the evangelist-theologian. In both practice and theory, Torrey rejected the dichotomy that demands a choice between earnest evangelism and theological thought. . . . Torrey shows both are essential” (Donald D. Smeeton, “The Charismatic Theology of R. A. Torrey,” *Paraclete* 14, no. 4 [Fall 1980]: 22).

<sup>30</sup> The Lausanne Covenant defines evangelism as “the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God” (Lausanne Movement, “The Lausanne Covenant,” accessed February 24, 2023, <https://lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>).

evangelism. Torrey integrated theological commitment, vital spiritual life, and evangelistic faithfulness.

The foregoing commitments guide my presentation of Torrey. I primarily interact with Torrey's copious printed literature. Torrey authored over sixty books, pamphlets, and tracts. He preached numerous sermons, 166 of which were published.<sup>31</sup> He maintained personal diaries and engaged in regular correspondence with a variety of individuals. He wrote articles for journals and periodicals, including *The King's Business* (associated with Biola), *Moody Monthly*, and *The Institute Tie* (both associated with Moody Bible Institute). Torrey's primary writings constitute the foundational element of my research.

A number of individuals impacted Torrey through their writings or ministries. Torrey consistently singled out three men as particularly noteworthy. Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875) impacted Torrey through his autobiography and his *Lectures on Revival*.<sup>32</sup> I read both volumes to appreciate Finney's views on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. I wanted to assess to what degree, if any, Finney's views on Spirit baptism might have influenced Torrey's understanding of the same.

George Müller's (1805–1898) *The Life of Trust* made a profound impression on Torrey and encouraged him to experiment for a season with a life of complete

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<sup>31</sup> Hight's figure is not a scientific calculation. Duplications of some Torrey sermons appear in different collections of his printed sermons. Referring to the 166 sermons, Hight notes, "So far as this investigator has been able to determine, these compose the major corpus of published discourses and addresses that have been conveyed to the present generation from the preaching ministry of Torrey" (Hilary Thomas Hight, "A Critical Analysis of the Published Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey" [ThD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960], 3).

<sup>32</sup> See Charles G. Finney, *The Autobiography of Charles G. Finney*, ed. Helen Wessel (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1977) and Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revival* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1988). When Torrey undertook the oversight of his first church, the Congregational church in Garrettsville, Ohio, he remarked that he knew little about the work of pastoral ministry. Reflecting on that time, he reminisces, "Before undertaking that church I had read the biography of Mr. Finney, and his 'Revival Addresses,' and I had the idea that the normal state of a church was revival, so I started out on that line" (Davis, *Torrey and Alexander*, 27). Inspired by Finney's writings, Torrey set to work to promote revival in his church and in the community. A revival eventually broke out in the community. Torrey continues, "The town was transformed by the revival . . . and by the grace of God I have been in a revival all the time from that day to this" (Davis, *Torrey and Alexander*, 29).

dependence on God for his material needs.<sup>33</sup> Torrey heard Müller preach while he [Torrey] lived in Germany between 1882 and 1883.<sup>34</sup> Reflecting on the significance of Müller's faith on his own, Torrey wrote,

Perhaps the most decisive turning point in my life since I have been in the ministry came through reading "The Life of Trust" by George Müller. I have been a different man ever since I read that book; it led to a radical change in my whole conception of the Christian ministry, and of what Christian living really was. . . . I do not think I shall cease to thank God throughout all eternity for what the words of this sainted servant of God were to me, and for what they have been to me ever since.<sup>35</sup>

I read Müller's *The Life of Trust* to gain a first-hand appreciation for his spirituality, as it exerted a weighty influence on Torrey as a man of prayer and the Word. Müller modeled the prayer of faith nourished by meditation on the Word of God, two elements of spirituality that would figure so prominently in Torrey's own life of trust.

The third individual who exerted a significant impact on Torrey's spirituality and evangelistic ministry was Dwight Lyman Moody (1837–1899). Torrey credited the influence of Moody's preaching in the development of his own faith.<sup>36</sup> Torrey's monograph, *Why God Used D. L. Moody*, and an editorial he wrote in *The King's Business* furnished valuable insights into the degree to which Moody marked his life.<sup>37</sup> I read Lyle W. Dorsett's *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* to gain an

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<sup>33</sup> See George Müller, *The Life of Trust: Being a Narrative of the Lord's Dealings* (self-pub., Compass Circle, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Diary of R. A. Torrey, July 13, 1882–July 9, 1883, collection 107, box 3, folder 1. Ephemera of Reuben Archer Torrey. Buswell Library Archives and Special Collections, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. See entry for Sunday, November 19, 1882. Hereafter, this collection is referred to as Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>35</sup> Davis, *Torrey and Alexander*, 37–38.

<sup>36</sup> Torrey references a Moody sermon he read that challenged him to grow in faith. He writes, "Very early in my ministry I read a sermon by Mr. Moody. In it there was something to the effect that a man would not amount to anything if he had not faith. I said, 'That sermon is true. I must have faith.' I went to work and tried to work up faith" (Torrey, *The Holy Spirit*, 281). Moody's sermon did not show Torrey the pathway to develop a more robust faith but provided an early impetus for him to grow in faith. Torrey would go on to credit the practice of feeding on the Word of God as the "great secret of faith." Nevertheless, Moody fanned the flame of desire for a greater faith in Torrey's life.

<sup>37</sup> See R. A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1923), and R. A. Torrey, "Editorial: February Fifth," *The King's Business* 6, no. 2 (February 1915): 89–90.

appreciation for this prominent figure in Torrey's life. Dorsett's treatment of Moody afforded the needed background into Moody's faith and spirituality, though Dorsett's inclusion of Torrey in the overall account figured only in an auxiliary manner.<sup>38</sup> I also read fifteen of Moody's sermons and talks to gain first-hand insight into Moody's own preaching.

Seventeen years after Moody's death, Torrey recalled the life of his mentor and honored him by noting,

It was the privilege of the Editor of this magazine to have worked six weeks in his after meetings in New Haven during his senior year in the Yale Theological Seminary, and he has often thought that that six weeks meant more for his future work in the ministry than his whole three years course in the Theological Seminary, and he counts it as one of the greatest privileges of his life to have known Mr. Moody intimately and to have been associated with him in his work.<sup>39</sup>

Each of the foregoing individuals shaped Torrey's thought and ministry. In reading their works, I gained a breadth of perspective with regard to Torrey particularly concerning his views on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, his spirituality of the Word and prayer, and his evangelistic ministry.

A biblical-Christological-missiological approach characterizes my methodology as I demonstrate the integration of spirituality and the practice of evangelism in Torrey's life and thought.<sup>40</sup>

### **Historical Summary of the Research**

Hilary T. Hight wrote the initial doctoral dissertation focused on R. A. Torrey in 1960. He titled his work, "A Critical Analysis of the Published Sermons of Reuben

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<sup>38</sup> See Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997).

<sup>39</sup> R. A. Torrey, "Editorial: Moody the Great Servant of God," *The King's Business* 7, no. 8 (August 1916): 677.

<sup>40</sup> For the composition of my methodology, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Torey J. S. Teer, "The Promise of the Father, the Spirit of the Son: A Framework for a Trinitarian Christological Pneumatology" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022), chap. 1. His basic structure and formulations contributed to my understanding of how to write the methodology portion of my thesis.

Archer Torrey.” Hight’s dissertation lacked a clearly discernible thesis. He purposed to “make a critical analysis of the published sermons” of Torrey.<sup>41</sup> Hight analyzed Torrey’s sermons from the standpoint of the introductions, main divisions, sub-divisions, and conclusions he utilized in his preaching. Hight considered Torrey’s use of topical, textual, and expository approaches to sermon delivery. He examined Torrey’s use of illustration types, Scripture citations, indications of language study (Greek and Hebrew), English translations employed, and doctrinal emphases. He discovered that the dominant doctrinal themes Torrey emphasized in his published sermons included God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and prayer.<sup>42</sup> Hight asserted that the doctrine of Christ “claimed the most prominent position” among Torrey’s sermon topics.<sup>43</sup> Hight’s work did not interact with Torrey’s life and teachings and offered only a statistical analysis of the minutiae of Torrey’s sermon content.

Roger E. Martin titled his 1975 dissertation, “The Theology of R. A. Torrey.” Martin specified in his introduction the significance and methodology of his research but did not define an overarching thesis statement. Part 1 of his work provided a biographical overview of Torrey’s life, while part 2 recapped Torrey’s key theological convictions. The theological themes Martin summarized included the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, the person and work of Christ, the second coming, eternal punishment, prayer, evangelism, and other miscellaneous doctrines. Martin essentially restated Torrey’s theological teachings as iterated in his various publications. Martin observed that Torrey’s teaching on the Holy Spirit was a “hallmark” of his ministry but was also the subject of controversy, particularly his understanding of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> As

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<sup>41</sup> Hight, “Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey,” 2.

<sup>42</sup> Hight, “Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey,” 103–20.

<sup>43</sup> Hight, “Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey,” 122.

<sup>44</sup> Roger Edward Martin, “The Theology of R. A. Torrey” (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 1975), 136. Martin also wrote the only substantive biography of Torrey, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty*.

already noted, Martin did delineate Torrey's teachings concerning prayer, the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and evangelism. He did not exhibit the centrality of these themes in relation to Torrey's spirituality, nor did he develop the correlation between Torrey's spirituality and his practice of evangelism.

Kermit L. Stagers titled his 1986 dissertation "Reuben A. Torrey: American Fundamentalist, 1856–1928." Stagers reconstructed Torrey's life from birth to death. In addition to providing a biographical overview of Torrey, Stagers offered insight into the cultural influences and historical context that shaped Torrey's thinking. Stagers argued that it was the fusion of Torrey's family of origin, his personal religious experience, and his grounding in Baconian science and Scottish Common Sense philosophy that "in large measure explains Torrey's acceptance of and continued belief in fundamentalism."<sup>45</sup> He contended that Baconian science and Scottish Common Sense philosophy provided the necessary intellectual support that nineteenth-century evangelicalism needed to maintain its viability against the progressivism of the early twentieth century. Stagers presented Torrey as exhibiting the prototypical American Fundamentalist. He did not write with an appreciation of Torrey's spirituality and the impact his piety exercised on his evangelism.

In 1988, Mark J. Toone wrote a dissertation titled "Evangelicalism in Transition: A Comparative Analysis of the Work and Theology of D. L. Moody and His Protégés, Henry Drummond and R. A. Torrey." Toone articulated a concise thesis. He attempted to argue that Fundamentalism did not faithfully perpetuate the work of D. L. Moody. He averred that "however sympathetic Moody might have been to the theology of nascent Fundamentalism, he would not have been a Fundamentalist."<sup>46</sup> Toone alleged that the controversy between conservative and liberal factions was illustrated in Moody's

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<sup>45</sup> Kermit L. Stagers, "Reuben A. Torrey: American Fundamentalist, 1856–1928," abstract (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Mark James Toone, "Evangelicalism in Transition: A Comparative Analysis of the Work and Theology of D. L. Moody and His Protégés, Henry Drummond and R. A. Torrey" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1988), 5.

two protégés, Henry Drummond and R. A. Torrey. Toone argued that Torrey defended Moody's theological conservatism, while Drummond imitated Moody's irenic spirit. Toone contended that Fundamentalists—represented by R. A. Torrey—did not perpetuate the work of Moody because they lost his “warm catholicity which was integral to Moody's ministry.”<sup>47</sup> Toone conceived of Moody as a mentor-father figure to Drummond and Torrey, who became “unlikely step-brothers.”<sup>48</sup> Toone acknowledged Torrey's pietistic leanings but did not interact with Torrey's faith and the role his spirituality played in his evangelism.

James P. Cogdill Jr. wrote his 1990 dissertation on “A Major Stream of American Mass Evangelism: The Ministries of R. A. Torrey, J. W. Chapman, and W. E. Biederwolf.” Cogdill presented a clear rationale and thesis: “The rationale for this dissertation is that without the unique contributions of certain evangelists who ministered at the turn of the twentieth century following Moody, it is possible modern revivalism would not be what it is today.”<sup>49</sup> Cogdill purposed to investigate the evangelistic methodologies of Torrey, Chapman, and Biederwolf, “with a view toward realizing and evaluating the influence of these methodologies on current evangelistic ministries.”<sup>50</sup> With respect to Torrey, Cogdill provided a biographical sketch, a summary of Torrey's theology of evangelism, and an overview of his evangelistic methodology. He then analyzed and critiqued Torrey's evangelistic methodology to determine what contributions he made to the practice of evangelism today. Cogdill focused primarily on Torrey's theology of evangelism.<sup>51</sup> He addressed Torrey's teachings about the Holy

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<sup>47</sup> Toone, “Evangelicalism in Transition,” abstract, n.p.

<sup>48</sup> Toone, “Evangelicalism in Transition,” 11–12.

<sup>49</sup> James Paul Cogdill Jr., “A Major Stream of American Mass Evangelism: The Ministries of R. A. Torrey, J. W. Chapman, and W. E. Biederwolf” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990), 2.

<sup>50</sup> Cogdill, “A Major Stream,” 4.

<sup>51</sup> Cogdill, “A Major Stream,” 99.

Spirit, prayer, and personal evangelism as elements of Torrey's "mass evangelistic methodologies to be examined."<sup>52</sup> Cogdill recognized the significance of Torrey's spirituality, particularly his experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the centrality of prayer in Torrey's life. However, he treated Torrey's spirituality as ancillary to his theology and methodology of evangelism.

Eric R. Crouse wrote his thesis in 1996, titled "American Revivalists, the Press, and Popular Religion in Canada, 1884–1914." Crouse relied heavily on secular newspapers and denominational archives to support his thesis. He argued that "a populist and conservative kind of evangelicalism, which upheld the importance of individual salvation and offered a practical faith as a means to renew the spiritual life of churchgoers and bring the unchurched into the fold" retained considerable importance among Canadian Protestants at the turn of the century.<sup>53</sup> Crouse devoted his third chapter to a presentation of Torrey's evangelistic ministry in Canada. Crouse claimed that between 1906 and 1911, Torrey conducted approximately 250 evangelistic meetings in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Fredericton, and Windsor, Nova Scotia.<sup>54</sup> Crouse argued that an analysis of Torrey's revival meetings in Canada is important because of the light it sheds "on the strength of conservative evangelicalism in the early twentieth-century."<sup>55</sup> Crouse's presentation focused on the impact of Torrey's evangelistic meetings in Canada. He acknowledged the reality of Torrey's piety, devoting approximately one and one-half pages to Torrey's views on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. He did not delve further into

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<sup>52</sup> Cogdill, "A Major Stream," 122. Cogdill devoted about 3.5 pages to Torrey's teachings about the Holy Spirit, four pages to Torrey's practice of prayer as it relates to evangelistic ministry, and about 4.5 pages to the place of personal work in Torrey's evangelistic methodology.

<sup>53</sup> Eric Robert Crouse, "American Revivalists, the Press, and Popular Religion in Canada, 1884–1914" (PhD thesis, Queens University, 1996), 21.

<sup>54</sup> Crouse, "American Revivalists," 3. Oswald Smith, who would become a well-known Canadian pastor and evangelist, was converted during an evangelistic meeting Torrey conducted in Toronto in 1906. See Crouse, "American Revivalist," 171–72.

<sup>55</sup> Crouse, "American Revivalists," 23.

the nature of his spirituality or the relationship between Torrey's piety and his evangelistic ministry.

In 2007, Timothy E. W. Gloege wrote a dissertation for the University of Notre Dame titled, "Consumed: Reuben A. Torrey and the Construction of Corporate Fundamentalism." Gloege's dissertation studied "the intersection of Protestant fundamentalism and modern consumer capitalism during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era."<sup>56</sup> Gloege asserted that Torrey "reformulated evangelical religious experience and practice to better accommodate the challenges of modern unbelief, which reinvigorated evangelicalism for a new generation."<sup>57</sup> Gloege argued that "fundamentalists [such as Torrey] came to rely on the structures and assumptions of modern consumer capitalism."<sup>58</sup> Writing with this premise in mind, Gloege examined Torrey's life and the development of Moody Bible Institute as they related to the emergence of modern consumer capitalism.<sup>59</sup> Gloege scrutinized Torrey's practice of living by faith, considered Torrey's beliefs related to faith healing, and outlined many of his core beliefs related to the Holy Spirit (including the baptism with the Holy Spirit), and then summarized, "Torrey came to conceive of the Holy Spirit as brokering a Christian unity through spiritual market mechanisms modeled on modern consumer capitalism."<sup>60</sup> I believe Gloege superimposed upon Torrey an interpretive model, "modern consumer capitalism," in order to understand Torrey's faith in a manner that was foreign to Torrey's actual thought. He read Torrey in a way that is incompatible with the spirit and faith of the man.

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<sup>56</sup> Timothy E. W. Gloege, "Consumed: Reuben A. Torrey and the Construction of Corporate Fundamentalism" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2007), abstract, n.p.

<sup>57</sup> Gloege, "Consumed," abstract, n.p.

<sup>58</sup> Gloege, "Consumed," 8.

<sup>59</sup> Gloege, "Consumed," 8–9.

<sup>60</sup> Gloege, "Consumed," 10.

Torrey cannot be accurately conceived apart from his commitment to the Bible, his experience of the new birth, and the presence of the Spirit of God in his own life.

Adam W. Greenway's 2007 dissertation, "The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism in the Ministry of Reuben Archer Torrey," analyzed Torrey's use of apologetics in his evangelistic ministry. Greenway analyzed Torrey's integration of apologetics in his ministry as a crusade evangelist and Christian educator. He argued that Torrey's commitment to an apologetic-nuanced practice of evangelism was Torrey's "most distinguishing yet largely overlooked contribution to the legacy of American mass evangelism."<sup>61</sup> Greenway further evaluated the "specific nature and method" of Torrey's apologetic approach to evangelism.<sup>62</sup> Greenway claimed that the integration of apologetics into the practice of evangelism, while not serving as a "silver bullet," should stimulate greater evangelistic effectiveness.<sup>63</sup> Greenway maintained that Torrey consistently utilized apologetics in his practice of evangelism. With respect to evangelism, Torrey also stressed being a certain kind of person God uses: a person of prayer, of the Word, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

All of the foregoing dissertations were well written and carefully researched. Each author presented a unique portrayal of Torrey and his influence upon evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Each dissertation added a distinctive contribution to the corpus of research centered on Reuben Archer Torrey.

### **Significance**

Reuben A. Torrey proclaimed the gospel on four different continents. He was committed to crusade-style and personal evangelism. Torrey's crusade work featured

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<sup>61</sup> Adam Wade Greenway, "The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism in the Ministry of Reuben Archer Torrey" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 7.

<sup>62</sup> Greenway, "The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism," 7.

<sup>63</sup> Greenway, "The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism," 204.

noonday sessions that were utilized to equip and challenge ordinary Christians to do personal soul-winning. He pastored five churches, including the famed Chicago Avenue Church and the Church of the Open Door. When Torrey resided in Minneapolis, he pastored Open Door Church between 1883 and 1886. Between 1886 and 1889, he planted the People's Church and also served as the superintendent of the City Missionary Society in Minneapolis. In his various pastorates, he trained his congregants to do personal evangelism. He practiced one-to-one witnessing as a matter of his own Christian discipleship. Whether proclaiming Christ to the masses, small congregations, larger churches, or the single individual, Torrey faithfully bore witness to his Master.

The written dissertations on Torrey did not focus singularly on his spirituality and the impact his spiritual life exerted on his practice of personal evangelism. Cogdill's dissertation detailed elements of Torrey's spirituality but subsumed these elements under his evangelistic methodology. Torrey's spirituality was not a methodology but an expression of his personal and living experience of the risen Christ. His spirituality compelled him to bear witness to the Master who had changed his life. Oftentimes the emphasis in evangelism devolves into methodology and technique. Torrey's life encapsulates a missing ingredient in faithful evangelistic practice: life in the Spirit nurtured by steadfast prayer and meditation on the Word of God. For this reason, though he died in 1928, Torrey still speaks to the church today. His faith deserves a fresh visit and written treatment.

### **Argument**

Chapter 2 presents a select biographical overview of Torrey's life. I focus on his conversion and call to ministry. I examine his emerging spirituality and the experiences that defined his life of faith. I survey his personal journey through the darkness of agnosticism into the light of confident assurance. I isolate two dark trials through which he walked and demonstrate how Torrey's faith held fast in the midst of

suffering. In an attempt to demythologize his life, I consider some vignettes that illustrate Torrey's humanity. The biographical sketch concludes with a consideration of Torrey's final days. I exhibit the reality of his faith even as he experienced declining health.

Chapter 3 explores Torrey's teaching on prayer and the study of Scripture. The chapter demonstrates the centrality these twin practices held in Torrey's life. I pay particular attention to the interrelationship between prayer and the study of the Word. I exhibit that for Torrey, the study of the Word terminated in the practice of meditation. I demonstrate through Torrey's writings the interrelationship between the disciplines of prayer and Scripture intake and the practice of evangelism and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 4 explores Torrey's pneumatology. Torrey did not arrive at his understanding of the Spirit's work in a vacuum. I briefly sketch the historical antecedents to Torrey's views concerning the baptism with the Holy Spirit. I examine his view of the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit and argue that these doctrinal emphases were crucial to Torrey's spirituality. I investigate Torrey's interpretation of the baptism with the Spirit. I attempt to articulate the subtle difference in meaning between his interpretation of the baptism with the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit. I contend that in Torrey's life, the work of the Holy Spirit played an integral role in shaping him into a personal soul-winner.

Chapter 5 features select Torrey sermons in order to illustrate the gospel message he proclaimed. The chapter then scrutinizes examples from Torrey's writings that underscore the importance personal evangelism played in his life. I feature the prominence that evangelism training held in his practice of ministry. Torrey combined deep piety and down-to-earth practicality and exemplified both in his emphasis on personal evangelism. I demonstrate in chapter 5 that the integration of spirituality and evangelism in Torrey's ministry focused on the ordinary believer.

The concluding chapter revisits the thesis and summarizes how each chapter contributes to the advancement of the argument. I offer a brief critique of three of Torrey's teachings that relate to baptism with the Spirit. I suggest four practical applications for the practice of missions from Torrey's life and ministry. I conclude with three recommendations for future Torrey research.

### **Limitations**

In 2003, Biola University hosted the R. A. Torrey Conference. Bob Shuster of the Billy Graham Center Archives prepared a paper, "A Feast of Fragments: The Papers of R. A. Torrey," that was delivered by Wayne Weber, also of the Billy Graham Center Archives. In his paper, Shuster offered an appraisal of the extant unpublished Torrey source materials and the repositories housing them. Shuster notes,

The fact of the matter is . . . R. A. Torrey Sr.'s papers exist nowhere. He was the chief executive of five still thriving institutions—Moody Bible Institute, Moody Church, Biola, Church of the Open Door, and the Montrose Bible Conference. But none of these have his files as he kept them and as at one time, they must have existed. He was, one would guess from his writings and his public image, a man of disciplined and ordered habits, but if he had at home file cabinets of his sermons, correspondence, and files on other activities, projects, and plan, [sic] they no longer exist that I know of. Anyone studying Torrey must do without the clues a true collection of "papers" could have provided.<sup>64</sup>

Anyone who aspires to write about R. A. Torrey must come to grips with the fact that while he could hope more ephemera existed, he is left with "a feast of fragments." As noted in the methodology section of the present chapter, I primarily interacted with Torrey's voluminous books, pamphlets, tracts, and other primary source material produced by his hand. In the delineation of limitations, I acknowledge the known areas where my research falls short.

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<sup>64</sup> Bob Shuster, "A Feast of Fragments: The Papers of R. A. Torrey," Billy Graham Center, last modified June 23, 2006, <https://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/Papers/Torrey/papers.html>.

I did not examine *The Christian Workers Magazine*, *The Institute Tie*, or *Moody Monthly* to access the contributions Torrey made to those publications.<sup>65</sup> I read only selectively from *The Gist of the Lesson*, a concise exposition of the International Bible Lessons. Torrey contributed to this resource for Sunday school teachers and scholars at least until 1928. I restricted my reading of *The Gist* to the specific parameters of my research topic.

Torrey corresponded prodigiously with a variety of individuals, including his family, while he traveled from home. The Moody Bible Institute and Billy Graham Center Archives contain numerous letters written by or to Torrey. For example, the Moody Archives hold over seventy letters written by D. L. Moody to Torrey. I did not examine Moody's correspondence with Torrey, nor did I attempt to exhaustively access all of Torrey's handwritten or typed correspondence held by these institutions.

I did not have the opportunity to visit the Archives at Biola University. In response to an inquiry I made to the Biola Archives, I was informed that Biola held only limited material from Torrey's time at the Institute. Shuster claimed that the files of Torrey's deanship at Biola have not survived.<sup>66</sup>

The family of R. A. Torrey possesses some unpublished material produced by the family patriarch. I did not contact the family to request permission to investigate their holdings.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College holds eight diaries written by Torrey's wife, Clara Smith Torrey (1859–1953). Shuster described Mrs. Torrey's diaries as "touching human documents [that] often contain information that can

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<sup>65</sup> The *Christian Workers Magazine* was the predecessor of *Moody Monthly*, which was titled *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* in its inaugural release in 1920. Archival issues may be accessed via The Online Books Page, "Serial Archive Listings for Moody Monthly," ed. John Mark Ockerbloom, accessed February 1, 2023, <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=moodymonthly>.

<sup>66</sup> Shuster, "A Feast of Fragments."

<sup>67</sup> Timothy Gloege gratefully acknowledged the "kindness, trust and cooperation" of the Torrey family, upon whose goodwill he imposed in order to access some materials held by the family. See Gloege, "Consumed," iv.

not [sic] be found anywhere else, such as details about Torrey's meetings in India and China."<sup>68</sup> I did not consult Mrs. Torrey's diaries as part of my investigation into her husband's life.

The Montrose Bible Conference, Moody Church, and the Church of the Open Door possess some archival resources. I did not attempt to consult any of these institutions to access their materials.

Finally, I could have broadened my research of secondary sources to better understand the historical and cultural context that shaped the life of R. A. Torrey. The literary works of the Holiness and Keswick traditions converged to produce a stream of piety that undoubtedly influenced the man. In the interests of time, I necessarily limited my investigation of these resources.

I make no pretense of having completed an exhaustive examination of Reuben Archer Torrey. In many respects, he remains an enigma. I trust that my research efforts have been comprehensive enough to enable me to write in some measure concerning the integration of spirituality and evangelism in his ministry. I take responsibility for any oversights or omissions contained herein.

### **Conclusion**

In the introduction to this chapter, I briefly introduced Reuben A. Torrey to the reader. I explained the historical background of my interest in and selection of Torrey as a research figure. I set forth the thesis for which I contend as I attempt to advance my argument. I acknowledged core presuppositions in the methodology and summarized the scope of research materials with which I interacted as I prepared to write. I also defined in the methodology the three historical figures who framed the boundaries of my secondary source research. I briefly summarized the eight published dissertations that

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<sup>68</sup> Shuster, "A Feast of Fragments."

addressed Torrey from a variety of perspectives. I demonstrated that among the published dissertations focusing on Torrey, no dissertation has singularly focused on the nature of his spirituality and the relation his piety exerted on his practice of evangelism. I argued for the significance of Torrey as an object of doctoral research and the need for a fresh analysis of the man. I presented a chapter-by-chapter overview of what I intend to address as this project unfolds. Finally, I acknowledged the limitations due to time and the scope of my research that impeded a more exhaustive treatment of Torrey.

Chapter 2 presents a select biographical sketch of Torrey's life. I outline the events and experiences that shaped his spirituality, including his conversion and call to ministry. Torrey's conversion was foundational to his later spirituality, and for this reason, I highlight his life before Christ, the crisis moment of conversion, and the fruit of this life-altering experience. I then trace the contours of Torrey's emerging spirituality and consider Torrey's journey from agnosticism to settled confidence in God. Finally, I explore how Torrey's life of faith sustained him during dark trials and in the waning years of his life when his health declined.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF R. A. TORREY

Reuben Archer Torrey was born on January 28, 1856, in Hoboken, New Jersey. Torrey traced his English ancestry on his father's side back to the Torreys of Coombe St. Nicholas, near Chard in Somerset. The Torrey family sailed for America in 1632 under the leadership of Captain William Torrey, a "sturdy and valiant Puritan."<sup>1</sup> On his mother's side, he traced his ancestry back to Dean Swift. The Swift family left England for America in about 1630.<sup>2</sup> Torrey's father, Reuben Slayton Torrey, was a man of wealth. He held the position of a New York banker at the time of Reuben's birth.<sup>3</sup> Torrey described his mother, Elizabeth A. (Swift) Torrey, as an "earnest Christian [who] before his birth dedicated him to the Lord's service."<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Torrey persisted in prayer for Reuben, a habit he would later acknowledge as instrumental in his own conversion. The timeline on the following page provides an overview of Reuben Archer Torrey's life and ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kennedy Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of Their Lives* (London: S. W. Partridge, 1905), 10–11.

<sup>2</sup> Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander*, 10–11.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), 19. Hereafter, all citations will be given as *Apostle of Certainty*.

<sup>4</sup> Edith C. Torrey to Mr. Perry, November 14, 1958, box 4, folder 10, R. A. Torrey Collection, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago. Hereafter, this collection is referred to as Torrey Collection (Moody).

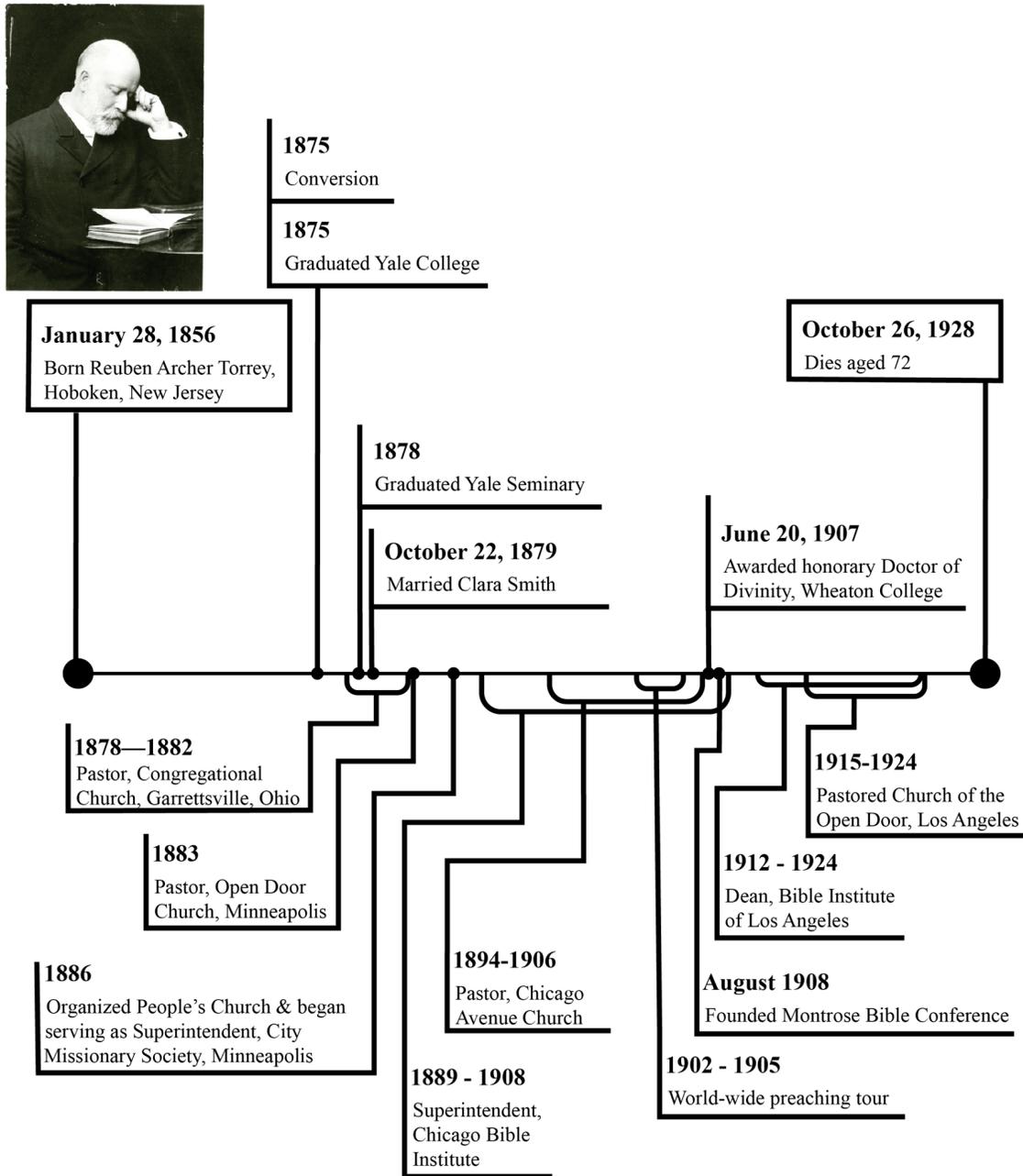


Figure 1. Timeline of Reuben Archer Torrey's life and ministry

## The Early Foundations

Torrey's childhood and conversion provide the necessary backdrop to appreciate the integration of spirituality and evangelism in his ministry.

### Childhood

Reuben A. Torrey was the third of five children. Albert and Nora were older; Edith and Swift were born subsequently.<sup>5</sup> Torrey's father moved the family in about 1858 from Hoboken to Brooklyn, New York. The elder Torrey established himself in a box manufacturing business.<sup>6</sup> The Torreys regularly attended the Old South Congregational Church in Brooklyn Heights.<sup>7</sup> Adam Greenway characterizes the Torrey home as a "hegemony of orthodoxy and heterodoxy."<sup>8</sup> Torrey's father was a self-described "universalist" who rejected the notion of everlasting punishment in hell and embraced the idea of universal salvation for all people.<sup>9</sup> The influence and prayers of Torrey's devout mother ultimately prevailed in shaping the faith and spirituality of her son.

In 1866, shortly after the Civil War, the Torrey family relocated from Brooklyn to an idyllic setting in Geneva, New York. The Torrey home was nestled on two hundred acres of land, which Torrey described as "a beautiful home, a large and spacious mansion, with splendid parks, lawns, stables, horses, coachmen, and footmen, and all that sort of thing."<sup>10</sup> He reveled in the freedom of the spacious countryside and

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<sup>5</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 20. Martin noted that Torrey's father "became even wealthier" in the box manufacturing enterprise, an observation that would imply the elder Torrey was the business owner.

<sup>7</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Adam Wade Greenway, "The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism in the Ministry of Reuben Archer Torrey" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 22.

<sup>9</sup> Greenway, "The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism," 22.

<sup>10</sup> Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander*, 13.

occupied himself with extracurricular activities such as swimming, horse riding, and other sports.<sup>11</sup>

An incident from Torrey's childhood reveals something of Torrey's early ambitions. He recalled a time when he and his siblings were in the sitting room with their father. The children asked their father to state the value of his properties. Torrey recalled the incident in this way: "When he told us of all the possessions he could think of, we all of us added them up and divided them by five to see how much each of us would be worth when my father saw fit to hand things over to us. This looked splendid on paper, and I felt quite rich that night."<sup>12</sup> Torrey went on to recall that a series of financial setbacks reduced his father's once significant holdings to virtually nothing. After his father's death in 1877, Torrey walked away with a matchbox and a pair of sleeve buttons—all there was to show of his father's fortune. Years later, reflecting on the financial loss as a mature Christian, Torrey remarked, "'The world passeth away.' I thank God that that money did pass away. It was one of the best things that ever happened to me."<sup>13</sup> However, before Torrey experienced freedom from pride in possessions, he would pass through an obsession with the world and its pleasures that would almost ruin his life.

### **Conversion and Call to Ministry**

Torrey attended the Walnut Hill school in Geneva during his boyhood. He naturally excelled in academics and did not need to devote undue time to his studies. Surrounded by material abundance, Torrey went in for a life of indulgence. J. Kennedy Maclean describes Torrey's boyhood pursuit of pleasure: "The world to him seemed to be

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<sup>11</sup> Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Revival Addresses* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1903), 105. Torrey made these remarks in a sermon titled "A Solemn Question for Those Who Are Rejecting Christ That They May Obtain the World."

<sup>13</sup> Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 105. The reference to the world passing away is from 1 John 2:17 (KJV).

one large pleasure ground in which he could disport at will—a garden in which he could pluck the fairest flowers.”<sup>14</sup> In 1871, Torrey matriculated to Yale College. His father paid all the school bills and asked his son no questions respecting how he spent his time and money. At Yale, the pursuit of pleasure took the form of card parties, gaming, horse racing, and dancing. Torrey pursued these with hedonistic abandon, sometimes attending three to four dance parties a week.

Torrey’s faithful mother instilled in him the habit of Bible reading when he was but a boy. What effect did Torrey’s early encounters with Christ’s words exert on his spiritual formation? Torrey reflects on the impact of John 4:14<sup>15</sup> on his conscience:

Before I had any thought of becoming a Christian myself, I would come back to this verse again and again and read it over and over. There was to me a fascination in those words that almost no other utterance of our Lord possessed. I did not understand their meaning at all, but they seemed to me like a marvelous strain of music from some far away, heavenly world.<sup>16</sup>

Torrey heard heaven’s music but did not understand its meaning. Instead of following the strain to the source of living water, he sought to satisfy his inner thirst in the endless pursuit of pleasure. Unbeknownst to Torrey at the time, Heaven’s Maestro was pursuing him.

### *Before the Crisis*

Three episodes from Torrey’s early childhood provide the necessary context to appreciate his conversion and call to ministry. When Torrey was a boy living in the family’s Geneva home, he dreamed one night that his mother was dead. In the dream she

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<sup>14</sup> Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14 ESV).

<sup>16</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1927), 101.

appeared to him “with a face like an angel.”<sup>17</sup> Torrey recalled that she appealed to him to enter the Christian ministry. In his dream, he promised his mother that he would indeed enter the ministry. He recalled the effects of the dream: “In a few moments I awoke and found it all a dream, but I never could get away from that promise.”<sup>18</sup>

A significant moment in Torrey’s life occurred when he was thirteen years old. Torrey entered a room on the third floor of the family home in Geneva, a room where the family stored old books. He picked up the Covenant of the First Presbyterian Church in Geneva, the church to which his mother belonged. He began to read and wondered if he could not be a Christian. As he read the qualifications for church membership, he checked off each stipulation, self-satisfied that he could be a Christian. Torrey recalled the incident in these words:

I began to read and assented to everything I read till I came to something to the effect that if I became a Christian I must be ready to go wherever God told me to go and to do whatever God told me to do and to be whatever God told me to be. I then closed the pamphlet and threw it away, saying to myself, “Just as likely as not, God would tell me to be a preacher and I have determined to be a lawyer.” I decided then and there I would not be a Christian, and I went in for a life of pleasure.<sup>19</sup>

Torrey refused to be a Christian for six years because, in his own words, “I felt bound not to preach.”<sup>20</sup> For Torrey, surrender to Christ entailed his willingness to preach the gospel. Torrey set his will against Christ at this very point.<sup>21</sup> When Torrey left home

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<sup>17</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Voice of God in the Present Hour* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 166.

<sup>18</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 166. Regarding the prospect that God might speak to someone in a dream, Torrey did not discount the possibility, but disavowed the medium of dreams as God’s normal manner of communicating with people. He wrote, “The matter of dreams is one in which we should exercise the utmost care, and we should be very careful and prayerful and Scriptural in deciding that any dream is from Him” (166).

<sup>19</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Autobiographical Sheet ‘I,’” box 1, folder 4, Torrey Collection (Moody). Among other pages of autobiographical information, this box contains an account of Torrey’s conversion, on which he typed sheet and page numbers. This quote is found on “Sheet ‘I’” of Torrey’s conversion account.

<sup>20</sup> R. A. Torrey, “How to Receive the Holy Ghost,” in *Keswick’s Triumphant Voice: Forty-Eight Outstanding Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention, 1882–1962*, ed. Herbert F. Stevenson (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1963), 354–55.

<sup>21</sup> Torrey, “How to Receive the Holy Ghost,” 354–55.

to attend Yale College, he continued to be nagged by the Holy Spirit's appeals to him to surrender himself to Christ's call on his life.

An incident from Torrey's days at Yale illustrates the manner of this appeal. As Torrey sat in Cyrus Northrup's class in rhetoric, the professor demonstrated for his class how to outline a speech. Professor Northrup randomly selected the topic, "A Call to the Ministry." Roger Martin summarizes the effect the professor's speech had upon Torrey: "Everything he said made Reuben uneasy, and the troubled student tried desperately to persuade himself that he was not so called. But he found it impossible to dismiss the thought."<sup>22</sup> No matter how persistently the Spirit appealed to Torrey, he continued to drown out Christ's call to surrender all to him. Torrey's own words fittingly summarize his soul's condition during this period:

How well I remember a day and a night in my own life. I had started out one afternoon to have an afternoon and night of pleasure. With a little company of chosen companions, I was in a hall that had been fitted up at great cost for pleasure. For a few moments, I had left my gay companions, and I stood in the distance leaning against a pillar and looking at them yonder. And oh, there was such a cry, such an aching void, such a mysterious despair in my heart that I leaned up against the pillar of that magnificent hall and I groaned in the agony of my spirit. I was starving. What do you think I did? I shook it all off and went right back to spend the afternoon and night as I had started out to spend it.<sup>23</sup>

Torrey's words reflect his inner struggle. Apparently for Torrey, who later described himself as "constitutionally blue," the "aching void" and "mysterious despair" were more serious than he intimated.<sup>24</sup> The following vignette reveals that Torrey's despair was evolving into a suicidal ideation. Torrey had been running from the call of Christ for six years. His Damascus Road experience with the living Christ loomed on the horizon.

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<sup>22</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 33–34. See also Torrey, "Autobiographical Sheet 'I'," Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>23</sup> Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 82. Torrey shared these reflections in a sermon titled "The Drama of Life in Three Acts."

<sup>24</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 66. Torrey described himself in this manner in an address titled "How to Find Rest."

*The Crisis*

Torrey attended orthodox churches every Sunday of his life since his boyhood. He had read the Bible every day of his life since he was about thirteen years of age. He had even taught a Sunday school class. Nevertheless, Torrey did not know how to be saved.<sup>25</sup> In 1875, when Torrey was nineteen years old and a senior at Yale College, he went to bed one night with no intention of becoming a Christian. In the middle of the night, Torrey awakened, jumped out of bed, and proceeded to a washstand where he expected to find an instrument with which he would take his life. Pondering the experience, Torrey wrote, “Something came on me as I stood by that open drawer, and I dropped on my knees . . . and surrendered to God.”<sup>26</sup> He further elaborated, “For some reason or other I could not find it [the instrument with which he intended to end his life]. God did not let me find it, and I dropped upon my knees and said, ‘O God, if you will take this awful burden from my heart, I will preach the gospel.’”<sup>27</sup> Years after his conversion, Torrey reflected,

I became a minister of the gospel simply because I had to or be forever lost. I do not mean that I am saved by preaching the gospel; I am saved simply on the ground of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and that alone; but my becoming a Christian and accepting Him as my Savior turned upon my preaching the gospel. For several years I refused to come out as a Christian because I was unwilling to preach, and I felt that if I became a Christian I must preach. The night that I surrendered to God I did not say, “I will accept Christ,” or “I will give up my sins”; I said, “I will preach.”<sup>28</sup>

For Torrey, his conversion and calling to ministry seemed like that of the apostle Paul: one piece in the tapestry of God’s gracious work in his life (Acts 9:1–19). Were other antecedents in place that drew him to his own Damascus Road experience?

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<sup>25</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), 5.

<sup>26</sup> R. A. Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, Great Pulpit Masters, vol. 3 (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1950), 195–96.

<sup>27</sup> Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 149–50. These reflections were part of a sermon titled “What It Costs Not to Be a Christian.”

<sup>28</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 49–50.

Torrey remarked, “I was awakened to the fact that I needed salvation.”<sup>29</sup> What awakened him to the fact? Torrey mused, “I formerly thought that no human being had anything to do with my own conversion, for I was not converted in church or Sunday school, or in personal conversation with any one [*sic*].”<sup>30</sup> Torrey later remembered two important antecedents to his own conversion. The first was a praying mother. He wrote, “My mother, four hundred and twenty-seven miles away was praying, and praying that I would become a minister of the Gospel. And though I had gotten over sermons and arguments and churches . . . I could not get over my mother’s prayers.”<sup>31</sup> Torrey later learned that a college classmate had chosen him as one to pray for until he was saved.<sup>32</sup> Like Paul, Torrey’s life would never be the same as a consequence of meeting Christ.

#### *After the Crisis*

Torrey’s experience produced fruit. Torrey looked to Christ alone as the answer to an accusing conscience. He approached God on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice. He contended that in consequence of Christ’s merits alone, God heard his prayers. Torrey wrote, “When I pray and my sins of the past come up . . . I think of the perfect sacrifice that has been made that covers all my sins and of my perfect Priest up there, whom the Holy Father always hears, and I become very confident, and dare ask great things and I know I am going to get them.”<sup>33</sup> Torrey did not trust in his merits but looked away from himself to his perfect Priest.

Torrey testified that the Holy Spirit revealed Christ to him. Before his new birth, Torrey knew about Christ. After his new birth, Torrey knew Christ in a personal

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<sup>29</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Pray* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1900), 10.

<sup>31</sup> Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, 195–96.

<sup>32</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Jesus: The Prophet, the Priest, the King*, Biola Publications 52 (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1910), 441, Kindle.

way. When the Spirit of God opened his eyes, Torrey perceived Christ with eyes of faith. He wrote, “Oh! What a change it was when the glorious truth got hold of me.”<sup>34</sup> He testified to the work of the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God and making it a “living thing” to him.<sup>35</sup> Remarking on his conversion experience, and in consequence of the Spirit’s revelation of Christ to him, Torrey wrote, “I have *known* Christ since that; I knew *about* Christ before.”<sup>36</sup> The Holy Spirit illumined Torrey’s eyes to see Christ as the all-sufficient Savior.

Torrey meditated on Scripture, and assurance of salvation welled up in his heart. He related a time when he was walking home one night after an exceedingly busy Sunday. He had preached many times and had walked twelve miles over the course of the day. As he neared his home under a beautiful moonlit night, he reflected on John 10:28–29: “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” Torrey recalled, “My heart was opened not merely to believe these words but to realize them. I was alone on the street late at night, and I shouted, ‘I have eternal life, I have eternal life, I shall never perish,’ and my heart was almost overwhelmed with joy.”<sup>37</sup> Torrey attested to possessing eternal life for a long time, but on this night, as he meditated on Scripture, he *realized* what it meant.

Torrey described himself as “constitutionally blue.”<sup>38</sup> He naturally tended toward a melancholy temperament that predisposed him to despondency. He claimed that after he really received the Lord, his blues evaporated. Torrey remarked on the new-

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<sup>34</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: How to Obtain Him in Personal Experience* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, n.d.), 7. This booklet is a transcription of an undated “address delivered by Rev. R. A. Torrey . . . at the Students’ Conference at Northfield, Mass.”

<sup>35</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: How to Obtain Him in Personal Experience*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: How to Obtain Him in Personal Experience*, 7 (emphasis original).

<sup>37</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Outline Studies on 1 John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 77.

<sup>38</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 66.

found joy he experienced in Christ: “In years gone by, I have said, ‘I know that there is a hell because I have been there.’ But thank God for years and years this glorious Lord Jesus has filled my whole soul day and night with a continuous, rapturous joy.”<sup>39</sup> When Torrey received Christ, the fruit of the Spirit—joy—began to fill his heart.

Torrey’s conversion to Christ produced new loves and new hates in his life. Before he was born again, he observed how he loved the card table, theater, dance hall, horse race, and champagne supper. He hated prayer meeting and Sunday services. When he was born again, he began to love the gathering together of God’s people and the services of the Lord’s Day. Christ reordered Torrey’s disordered affections.<sup>40</sup>

Torrey’s life was not transformed all at once, however. Nor did his experience of the new birth remove all doubts and questions from his mind.

### **From Doubt to Confidence**

Torrey entered the Yale Theological Seminary in the autumn of 1875, subsequent to his conversion earlier in the same year. He opened the door to skepticism when he began to read what he termed “agnostic literature.”<sup>41</sup> What precisely compelled him to read this sort of literature is difficult to explain. He certainly possessed an inquiring mind. He credited the influence of reading men like Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) for the unsettling of his faith. As he reflected on this era of his journey, he noted, “I became utterly unsettled in my faith, and doubted whether the Bible was the Word of God, whether Jesus Christ was the Son of God and whether there was any God.”<sup>42</sup> Torrey would not describe himself as an atheist but as something of an agnostic and skeptic.

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<sup>39</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved*, 118–19.

<sup>40</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Torrey, “Autobiographical Sheet ‘I’, Page 2,” Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>42</sup> Torrey, “Autobiographical Sheet ‘I’, Page 2,” Torrey Collection (Moody).

Torrey made up his mind to learn to “an absolute certainty the truth.”<sup>43</sup> He determined to find out if the Bible was the Word of God, if Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God, and if in fact there was a God. If he concluded that these matters were true, he would act accordingly, but if he concluded that these matters were not true, he would act accordingly. Torrey did not describe the nature and method of his investigation. He did note that the process transpired “not in a day or a month or a year.”<sup>44</sup> Torrey ultimately concluded “to an absolute certainty, that there was a God,”<sup>45</sup> that Jesus Christ was his Son, “in a sense that no other being was the Son of God, a Divine Person . . . [and] that the Bible was the inerrant Word of God.”<sup>46</sup> Despite his new sense of certainty, Torrey was still not free from the throes of skepticism.

Even after his deliverance from agnosticism, Torrey described himself as “very liberal” in his theological viewpoints. He labeled himself as the leader of the new theology and higher criticism wing of the seminary. His graduating thesis dealt with transcendentalism, and he considered himself an admirer of Theodore Parker (1810–1860) and William Channing (1780–1842).

Torrey graduated from Yale Seminary in 1878 lacking clear and definite theological convictions. He was ordained in 1878 as a Congregational minister and accepted the pastorate of the Congregational Church in Garrettsville, Ohio, on November 9, 1878.<sup>47</sup> Torrey also met and married Clara B. Smith.<sup>48</sup> Torrey served the Congregational Church between 1878 and 1882. While Torrey served the church in

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<sup>43</sup> Torrey, “Autobiographical Sheet ‘I’, Page 2,” Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>44</sup> Torrey, “Autobiographical Sheet ‘I’, Page 2,” Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>45</sup> Torrey, “Autobiographical Sheet ‘I’, Page 2,” Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>46</sup> Torrey, “Autobiographical Sheet ‘I’, Page 2,” Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>47</sup> Notes on the minutes of the Congregational Church, Garrettsville, Ohio, October 22, 1878, to October 15, 1882, as cited in Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 56.

<sup>48</sup> The couple was married October 22, 1879, in the Garrettsville church. See Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 49.

Garrettsville, a Yale classmate, Howard Bell, encouraged him to pursue advanced studies in Germany. Bell even offered to pay Torrey's expenses.<sup>49</sup> Though initially hesitant, Torrey eventually accepted Bell's offer and traveled with his wife and young daughter to Germany. The family departed Garrettsville enroute to Germany on October 9, 1882.<sup>50</sup> Ironically, in Germany—the cradle of higher criticism—Torrey surrendered his remaining doubts and stepped into the light of confident faith.

Torrey divided his time in Germany between the Lutheran universities of Leipzig and Erlangen. He resided in Germany approximately one year, between 1882 and 1883.<sup>51</sup> Did Torrey carry the liberal theological baggage with him that he had acquired at Yale? To what degree did his studies in Germany contribute to his confusion at that time? The precise answer is difficult to ascertain.

Years later, Torrey related to a class at Biola something of the quandary he passed through during those days in Germany. John Hunter recalled that Torrey used to tell his classes how his head was all in a “whirl,” as he felt himself “all at sea in his thinking.”<sup>52</sup> Hunter related the way Torrey put it: “[He] sat down at his table and put his head between his hands, for it seemed as though it would burst. Then, as though it were a real voice that spake, he heard these words: ‘Torrey! God knows some things you cannot know.’”<sup>53</sup> At that moment, the light had somehow dawned (again?) for young Torrey. Martin summarized the consequences of this moment of intellectual surrender for Torrey:

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<sup>49</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 58.

<sup>50</sup> R. A. Torrey, diary entry, October 9, 1882, collection 107, box 3, folder 1, R. A. Torrey diary for July 1882 to July 1883, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>51</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 59. Torrey studied under Franz Delitzsch, Ernst Luthardt, August Kahnis, and Reinhold von Frank.

<sup>52</sup> John H. Hunter, “A Faithful and Wise Servant,” *The King's Business* 20, no. 1 (January 1929): 11.

<sup>53</sup> Hunter, “A Faithful and Wise Servant,” 11.

“Slowly but surely he moved away from the critical approach to the Scriptures and accepted the ‘old truth’ in the ‘old garb.’”<sup>54</sup>

What effect did Torrey’s spirituality exert on his journey from doubt to confidence? Torrey testified that he was brought up to pray. He had no doubts that it was his mother who instilled in him the practice of prayer. Even when he had determined to refuse Jesus Christ, he prayed every night. During the wilderness of doubt, he nevertheless prayed nightly. Torrey credited the habit of prayer as the deciding factor in his journey out of theological relativity into the confident assurance of faith: “I prayed every night. I am glad that I was brought up that way. . . . The habit of prayer was so instilled in me that it became permanent, *for it was through that habit that I came back out of the darkness of agnosticism into the clear light of an intelligent faith in God and his Word.*”<sup>55</sup> In many ways, prayer was still largely a matter of form for Torrey. His emerging spirituality blossomed after he departed Germany and accepted a pastorate in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### **Torrey’s Emerging Spirituality**

One wishes that Torrey had maintained journals chronicling his spiritual pilgrimage; however, we must search for clues from Torrey’s diverse source material in order to form an assessment of his emerging spirituality. Torrey did note four epochs in his Christian experience. In the first epoch, he received Christ as his personal Savior. In the second, he embraced the Bible as God’s inerrant Word. He experienced baptism with the Holy Spirit in the third epoch, and in the final epoch, he adopted a premillennial understanding of Christ’s second coming.<sup>56</sup> Observe that two of Torrey’s epochs were

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<sup>54</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 61.

<sup>55</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1954), 85–86 (emphasis added).

<sup>56</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Our Lord’s Second Coming a Motive for Personal Holiness,” *The King’s Business* 5, no. 5 (May 1914): 249.

experiential in nature and two were more doctrinal. In this section, I consider the experiential element in Torrey's emerging spirituality.

### **The Contours of Torrey's Spirituality**

One feature conspicuously missing from Torrey's earliest diaries is the self-centered introspection that one encounters in other journals, like those of the Reverend Henry Martyn (1781–1812). In his journal entries, Torrey did not often look inwardly and reflect on the state of his soul before God. He used his diaries as a sort of travelogue. He recorded details of where he went, whom he met, and what he did from day to day. One of his earliest extant diaries dates to the period between 1882 and 1883. One of the gems from this period in Torrey's life reads as follows:

This evening while reading Edith half awakened from her sleep & as I went to put her in a more comfortable position she seemed breathless. I leaned over her to see if she was really breathing. When I went back to my books I thought how much I loved her & what an inestimable gift from God she was. My thought & soul seemed to go out toward God & I felt His presence & love. I felt there was never any need of distrust or trouble because of outward circumstances. His kind providence over me in all my history has been wonderful.<sup>57</sup>

Torrey has sometimes been depicted as a rather emotionless figure. The aforementioned entry from his diary reveals him as a tender father. He is further pictured as one who was capable of deep feelings for God. Another episode from the early era in Torrey's life offers some insight into Torrey as a person of prayer.

Torrey recollected that he had been brought up to pray. He claimed that so far as his memory could trace, he had never missed a single night of prayer.<sup>58</sup> Torrey acknowledged that early in his pilgrimage, even after he had been converted and entered the ministry, prayer was largely a matter of form. He noted a day—he did not specify how or at what time—when he realized that real prayer meant having an “audience with

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<sup>57</sup> Torrey, diary entry, November 27, 1882, *Torrey Ephemera* (Wheaton).

<sup>58</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 85–86.

God.”<sup>59</sup> He characterized this new perception of prayer as “actually coming into the presence of God and asking and getting things from him.”<sup>60</sup> Torrey confided how this new realization transformed his prayer life.<sup>61</sup> One glimpse of Torrey’s journey into the power of prayer may be noted from his first pastorate, before the family traveled to Germany.

The Garrettsville churches observed a day of prayer and fasting in conjunction with a union meeting. Torrey remembered how God placed a “great burden” on his heart for the salvation of a particular man whom he described as a most unlikely candidate for salvation.<sup>62</sup> The man had lived a “wild roaming life,” and few of his family were Christians.<sup>63</sup> Torrey averred that as he prayed, “God gave me a great confidence that he would come [to the preaching service] and be saved tonight.”<sup>64</sup> He then wrote, “And come he did that night and saved he was that night. There was not a man in that whole town who was more unlikely to be saved than he.”<sup>65</sup> More than forty years after this incident, Torrey’s heart was cheered to learn that the man was still living a Christian life.

Torrey conceded he could not pray for the salvation of every unsaved person in the way he had prayed for that man. Torrey wrote, “God by his Spirit revealed to me his will regarding that man.”<sup>66</sup> In response to the perceived impression of the Spirit of God, Torrey offered his prayer.<sup>67</sup> Observe Torrey’s early sensitivity to the leadership of

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<sup>59</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1924), 76–77.

<sup>60</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 76–77.

<sup>61</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 76–77.

<sup>62</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 156.

<sup>63</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 156.

<sup>64</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 156.

<sup>65</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 156.

<sup>66</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 156.

<sup>67</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 155–56.

the Holy Spirit with respect to prayer. Note well how the Spirit's leadership in his life and the practice of prayer converged in an evangelistic focus.

Having considered the practice of prayer in Torrey's emerging piety, how did the Scriptures fit into the early contours of Torrey's spiritual practice? I asserted earlier that Torrey practiced daily Bible reading from about the age of thirteen. I demonstrated in chapter 1 how, early in Torrey's ministry, after reading a Moody sermon about faith, he was inspired to develop his own faith. Torrey did not make the connection between growing his faith and the instrumentality of God's Word until he read Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." In reading this verse, he believed he had learned one of the great secrets of faith. He wrote, "I commenced to feed my faith on the Word of God; and I have kept on feeding it, it has kept on growing from that day to this."<sup>68</sup> Torrey fed his faith steadily, largely, and daily on the Word of God.<sup>69</sup> Torrey linked the acquisition of faith as a necessary corollary to power for God. When Torrey conceived of "power for God," he consistently wed this power with the practice of evangelism.<sup>70</sup> Pay attention to the correlation in Torrey's thought to the intake of Scripture, the cultivation of faith, and the acquisition of power for the purpose of evangelism.

Torrey described an incident early in his Christian pilgrimage that set him on a course of personal evangelism. D. L. Moody visited New Haven, Connecticut, in 1878, for a series of meetings. Torrey worked in Moody's inquiry rooms during the event. Surveying the inquiry room one day, he observed a young lady he had known during his worldly days. He approached the young woman, spoke to her about Christ, and encouraged her to receive the Savior. She stubbornly refused. Torrey recounted how he

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<sup>68</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 281.

<sup>69</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 281.

<sup>70</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 131.

worked with the woman for two solid hours before she yielded her life to Christ. After the young woman received the Savior, Torrey described the joy he experienced:

When I left the building where this decision was made, it was nearly sunset in the spring-time; the whole world seemed to have a beauty in it that I had never seen in it before. It literally seemed as if I had never seen such a light in the sun, nor such a beauty in the flowers and trees and grass. . . . My heart was filled with a joy I had never known before.<sup>71</sup>

The encounter was Torrey's first ever experience of leading another individual into a definite acceptance of Christ as Savior. Personal work would henceforth characterize his life and ministry.

Another decisive moment in Torrey's emerging spirituality occurred when the family returned from the study tour in Germany in the fall of 1883. Upon his return from Germany, Torrey was presented with two pastoral considerations. He could assume the pastorate of a prosperous and established congregation in Brooklyn, or he could undertake the oversight of a struggling and unorganized group of Christians in Minneapolis. The church in the East offered an attractive salary and a measure of prestige. Torrey ultimately rejected the Brooklyn pastorate and journeyed to the pioneer field of Minneapolis.<sup>72</sup> Torrey's son, Reuben Jr., recalled the significance of this decision in his father's life: "The difficulties and problems he faced during those early years of his ministry drove him to his knees, threw him back upon his Master, and developed that aggressive evangelism and passion for soul-winning which dominated his later years."<sup>73</sup> The younger Torrey observed that his father always considered the decision to relocate to Minneapolis as the great turning point in his life.

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<sup>71</sup> Torrey, *Anecdotes and Illustrations* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1907), 22–23.

<sup>72</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 63.

<sup>73</sup> R. A. Torrey Jr., "Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home: An Address by the Rev. R. A. Torrey, Jr., at the Memorial Service, February 5, 1929," *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, October 1929, 68–70.

Torrey's Minneapolis ministry spanned the years between 1883 and 1889. He initially pastored the Open Door Church, either very late in 1883 or in early 1884.<sup>74</sup> In 1886, after three years with the Open Door Church, he planted the People's Church in the heart of Minneapolis. At the same time, he became superintendent of the City Missionary Society.<sup>75</sup> The Minneapolis tenure was a turning point in Torrey's emerging spirituality, in that he claimed to have encountered the Spirit of God in a manner heretofore unknown to him. In Torrey's estimation, the experience of Spirit baptism empowered his evangelistic endeavors.

Torrey came to a place in his life where he saw that he had no right to preach until he was "definitely baptized with the Holy Ghost."<sup>76</sup> Torrey did not detail the circumstances that led him to this conclusion. Was he inspired by reading other nineteenth-century authors? Had he attended a convention that addressed the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Did pastoral colleagues influence his desire for a deeper experience with the Spirit of God? Had the pressures of pastoral work revealed the fault lines in his own life? I argue in chapter 4 that Torrey's understanding of the baptism with the Holy Spirit was shaped to some degree by the larger forces at work in nineteenth-century evangelicalism surrounding this experience. For now, I simply narrate Torrey's encounter with the Spirit of God during this season of his life.

Torrey determined he would never enter his pulpit again until he had been baptized with the Holy Spirit or until God told him to return to it. He shut himself up in his study and spent his time continually on his knees, asking God to baptize him with the Holy Spirit. Torrey had mapped out in his mind how the experience would unfold. He recalled later how the experience actually transpired:

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<sup>74</sup> Torrey, "Autobiographical Sheet 'II', Page 1," Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>75</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 67–68.

<sup>76</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 202.

I recall the exact spot where I was kneeling in prayer in my study. I could go to the very spot in that house at 1348 N. Adams Street in Minneapolis. It was a very quiet moment, one of the most quiet moments I ever knew; indeed, I think one reason I had to wait so long was because it took that long before my soul could get quiet before God. Then God simply said to me, not in any audible voice, but in my heart, “It’s yours. Now go and preach.”<sup>77</sup>

Torrey contended he became a new minister from that day. The distinctive feature attending his ministry from that day was an expanding ministry of evangelism.<sup>78</sup> The presence of the Holy Spirit exerted distinct, gospel-shaped influences in Torrey’s life.

After Torrey relocated from Minneapolis to Chicago sometime after 1889, he recalled an evening when God again visited him with a fresh outpouring of his Spirit. Observe the seamless way Torrey described the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his life. He sometimes denoted the Spirit’s influence as the baptism with the Spirit and in the same breath denoted this influence as the filling with the Spirit. He wrote, “One night, after I had gone to Chicago, I was waiting upon God that I might know the Holy Spirit in a fuller way than I had ever known him before, that I might be ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’ in a more thorough-going way than I ever had been before.”<sup>79</sup> He continued, “And that night God heard my prayer, and such a filling with the Holy Spirit, such a being taken possession of by the Holy Spirit, as I had never known before, came to me.”<sup>80</sup>

What was the fruit of this new “infilling” of the Holy Spirit? Torrey described two results of this fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He described a “revelation of the infinite majesty and glory of Jesus Christ, the wondrous Son of God,” as the first result.<sup>81</sup> The second by-product was a “revelation of the awfulness of the sin of rejecting such a

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<sup>77</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 202–3.

<sup>78</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 202–3.

<sup>79</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 71–72.

<sup>80</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 71–72.

<sup>81</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 71–72.

glorious Savior.”<sup>82</sup> Torrey’s heightened experience of God’s Spirit produced a distinct Christo-centric recalibration in his life and thought.

What role did the Word of God exert in this experience? One clue may be deduced from Torrey’s reflection on this episode. As a result of this fresh filling with God’s Spirit, Torrey never entertained the “slightest difficulty with the doctrine of future punishment taught in the Bible.”<sup>83</sup> The Spirit of God convinced him of the justice of future punishment, in accord with the testimony of God’s Word. Torrey anchored his understanding of both the majesty of Christ and the certainty of eternal punishment in the clear revelation of Scripture. The Spirit of God simply illuminated for him these scriptural realities.

In summary, during Torrey’s sojourn in Minneapolis, he experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in a sense heretofore unknown to him. He also experimented with a life of complete dependence on God for his material provisions.

### **The Life of Trust**

Torrey read George Müller’s autobiographical work, *The Life of Trust*, during the fall of 1888, while he lived in Minneapolis. As a result of reading Müller’s book, Torrey became convinced of the error of acquiring debt (Rom 13:8). Inspired by Müller’s life of faith, Torrey determined to give up all salary and all contributions for his mission work. He further purposed to no longer run into debt. At the time, Torrey still owed six hundred dollars to Howard Bell, the Yale classmate who had loaned him the money for his study tour in Germany. His monthly expenses totaled one hundred dollars for rent and an equivalent amount for groceries. Torrey wrote of his decision to take such radical measures: “Last fall it became evident to me . . . that if we trusted God and took our stand

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<sup>82</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 71–72.

<sup>83</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 71–72.

upon his plain Word, he would see to it that our needs were met.”<sup>84</sup> On January 1, 1889, Torrey began his own life of trust.

Torrey’s experiment in the life of trust tested his faith severely. He related how at one time he passed three consecutive days without a single penny. He went without dinner two evenings, though his family had plenty to eat. At one point, the potatoes and meat were gone, and very little provision was left in the house. The grocer came as usual to receive the family’s food order, but they had to send him away, for there was no money to buy food. Torrey had determined that if he could not pay, he would not buy. Reflecting on this ordeal, Torrey notes, “I don’t think God wants me to ask man for it [for money]. Unless he helps, we are lost. I praise God for the extremity, for when he answers my very weak faith will be confirmed. How blessed are these trials of faith.”<sup>85</sup> God was teaching Torrey a lesson in his own faithfulness.

During this season of his life, Torrey “lived by prayer to the God of the Bible.”<sup>86</sup> He recorded how “every penny that came to me for the support of myself and wife and four children, for rent of home and of halls, for missionaries, and for everything else, came in answer to prayer.”<sup>87</sup> Torrey proved God faithful and sufficient day-by-day and month-after-month during the first three quarters of 1889. He wrote, “Every mouthful came directly from my Heavenly Father . . . not a meal at our table that was not in answer to prayer; not a coat ever went on my back, nor a dress on my wife’s back, nor clothing

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<sup>84</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How God Answered Prayer* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, n.d.), 3. See entry under April 18, 1889.

<sup>85</sup> Torrey, *How God Answered Prayer*, 9–10. See entry under May 26, 1889.

<sup>86</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1908), 71.

<sup>87</sup> Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered*, 71.

on the backs of the four children . . . that was not in answer to prayer. We got everything from God.”<sup>88</sup>

A single experience during this season illustrates God’s faithful provision for the Torrey family. Torrey needed to buy wood for the approaching winter so that it might dry out. He asked God to furnish the wood by the coming Saturday. Torrey noted, “Day after day passed and no money came. When Saturday came, I spoke to the Lord about it very particularly, but to no one else.”<sup>89</sup> On the very Saturday Torrey had asked for the money to purchase firewood, a man knocked on his door exclaiming that he had heard Torrey needed wood. Torrey responded that he indeed needed wood but would not buy it without the money to pay for it. The man asked Torrey when he expected to have the money, to which Torrey replied, “This afternoon.”<sup>90</sup> The man then said he would call on Torrey again on Monday. Torrey went to teach his Bible class later that same afternoon. A man by the name of N. H. Pierce handed him a check for twenty-five dollars at the close of the Bible lesson, the very sum needed to purchase firewood. Torrey described his feelings: “I was overcome. I told him [his benefactor] the story, and he said that the money was some that he had never expected to get; it had been owed him for years, and coming as it did, he gave it to me.”<sup>91</sup> Torrey experienced the living reality of a God who hears and answers prayer.

In September 1889, Torrey accepted the call to serve as superintendent of D. L. Moody’s fledgling Chicago Bible Institute. Although Torrey had refused a salary during the first three quarters of the year, he consented to receive a regular salary in conjunction with his service at the Institute. Through the Bible Institute, God provided Torrey with a

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<sup>88</sup> George T. B. Davis, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of a World-Wide Revival, a Record and Study of the Work and Personality of the Evangelists R. A. Torrey, D. D., and Charles M. Alexander* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 37–40.

<sup>89</sup> Torrey, *How God Answered Prayer*, 3. See entry under April 18, 1889.

<sup>90</sup> Torrey, *How God Answered Prayer*, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Torrey, *How God Answered Prayer*, 4.

stable source of income. Consistent income notwithstanding, Torrey continued to live by faith. God had instilled in him invaluable lessons of faith, obedience, and prayer. Musing on the lessons learned, Torrey wrote, “Somehow my faith seemed stronger than ever . . . but I don’t know that I was ever so tempted to unbelief. . . . Christ sustained me and will. If I did not believe all the promises of the Word, I could not now believe anything.”<sup>92</sup> Torrey later wrote in reference to his life of trust, “I do not believe that God asks every man to do that, or even that he asks the same man always to do it, but I was entirely sure that God had told me to do it at that time, and I had stepped out in simple faith in God.”<sup>93</sup> Faith in God’s Word buttressed Torrey during this period and would later sustain him when he experienced the dark clouds of a seemingly frowning Providence.

### **Dark Clouds**

Torrey commenced his formal association with Moody and the Chicago Bible Institute in September 1889. The Torreys had four children when they relocated from Minneapolis to Chicago. Edith was born to Reuben and Clara while the couple lived in Garrettsville. Blanche, Reuben Jr., and Elizabeth entered the family during their stay in Minneapolis. A fifth child, Margaret, would arrive during Torrey’s tenure in Chicago.

Torrey claimed God had spared him, his wife, and their family from serious sickness for twelve years or more.<sup>94</sup> They navigated epidemics unscathed until March 1898, when tragedy darkened the Torrey home. Elizabeth, who was born March 5, 1889, was a tender nine years of age when she suddenly became ill and was diagnosed with diphtheria. The Torrey’s consulted a physician, who examined the child but did not believe her condition to be critical enough to warrant an antitoxin. When a nurse later called for the Torreys to come to Elizabeth’s bedside, they discovered their daughter,

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<sup>92</sup> Torrey, *How God Answered Prayer*, 10–11. See entry under May 28, 1889.

<sup>93</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 199.

<sup>94</sup> Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, 143–44.

eyes closed, breathing rapidly, her heart giving out. Martin described the bedside scene, “Torrey quickly dropped to his knees to pray, but before he had time to begin, the little soul had taken its flight Homeward.”<sup>95</sup> Torrey described Elizabeth’s death as a “stunning blow. . . . For the first time, the family circle was broken.”<sup>96</sup> Elizabeth died on March 17, 1898. Dark clouds literally enveloped the Torrey home.

Martin described the funeral as a dismal event. Elizabeth’s disease precluded the possibility of her siblings attending her funeral or even seeing her body again. The day of the funeral was stormy. Rain poured “piteously” on the child’s casket. The only mourners at the graveside were the parents and a trusted associate, William S. Jacoby, who had insisted on coming. The Torreys were obligated to spend that night in a motel while their home was fumigated. Martin described that night: “It was so lonely, and the night was an unceasing flash of lightning and crash of thunder.”<sup>97</sup> In the midst of the dark clouds, God walked with his grieving children.

The morning after Elizabeth’s funeral, Torrey rose early to go to the Institute. On the way to work, overcome with grief, he broke down and exclaimed, “Oh, Elizabeth! Elizabeth!”<sup>98</sup> Torrey testified to the solace of the Holy Spirit in that moment: “[The Holy Spirit] broke forth with such power as I think I had never experienced before, and it was the most joyful moment that I had ever known in my life.”<sup>99</sup> Torrey would later recall the comfort they received from sympathizing friends in the wake of Elizabeth’s passing. He contrasted the comfort offered from well-meaning friends to the comfort of God: “No one

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<sup>95</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 122.

<sup>96</sup> Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, 143–44.

<sup>97</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 122. On Wednesday, March 17, 1926, Torrey wrote in his diary, “Twenty eight years ago today our Elizabeth was taken away to be with Christ. I shall never forget that day” (R. A. Torrey, diary entry, March 17, 1926, collection 107, box 3, folder 3, R. A. Torrey diary for 1926, Torrey Ephemera [Wheaton]).

<sup>98</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 108.

<sup>99</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 108.

sympathized with us so fully, so tenderly, so deeply, so intelligently as God Himself. He saw what no human eye could see and entered into it all.”<sup>100</sup> Torrey reasoned scripturally in the aftermath of his daughter’s passing. He noted how God had “kept His Word” to them as he walked with them through the floodwaters.<sup>101</sup> In Torrey’s grief, the presence of the Spirit and the promises of God’s Word sustained him.

Torrey noted three gracious results in connection with Elizabeth’s passing. First, her death led to heart searching and the confession of sin in his life. Second, her death produced a “new consecration and love for souls and devotion to God.”<sup>102</sup> Third, her death resulted in the answer to prayers which eventuated in his worldwide evangelistic tour. Torrey did not elaborate on the specific way Elizabeth’s death led him on his tour but drew a connection between her passing and his traveling the world to preach the gospel.<sup>103</sup> Observe in Torrey’s grief the confluence of prayer, the Spirit’s consolation, faith in God’s Word, and the practice of evangelism.<sup>104</sup>

Grief darkened the Torrey home again in 1922 while the family lived in Pasadena, California. The Torrey’s youngest child, Margaret, who was born in Chicago on February 16, 1893, passed away December 7, 1922. Martin observed how Margaret’s life had been marked by tragedy. Her first-born child was still born. Margaret had then contracted tuberculosis after the birth of her second child.<sup>105</sup> The Torreys had cared for Margaret while she stayed with them in Pasadena, where she had traveled for

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<sup>100</sup> Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, 143–44.

<sup>101</sup> Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, 143–44.

<sup>102</sup> Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, 143–44.

<sup>103</sup> Torrey, *A Book of Sermons*, 143–44.

<sup>104</sup> For a period of time, Elizabeth’s passing and Torrey’s perceived culpability in delaying medical treatment for her cast a shadow over Torrey in the eyes of some and may have produced stress in his relationship to Moody. For an examination of Torrey’s view about faith healing, the controversy surrounding Elizabeth’s death, and the criticism leveled against Torrey in the wake of her passing, see Timothy E. W. Gloege, “Consumed: Reuben A. Torrey and the Construction of Corporate Fundamentalism” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2007), chap. 4.

<sup>105</sup> Margaret and her husband named the second child Margaret Elizabeth.

convalescence. Margaret ultimately returned to her home in Athens, Georgia, but would never recover. Recalling the “long, weary months” he and Clara had watched Margaret “fade away,” he poured out his heart to God.<sup>106</sup> He prayed thus, “Father of compassion and God of all comfort, I thank Thee . . . that our prayer is answered, though not as we had hoped, but in a far better way, and Margaret is well, *and well forever*. And all pain is gone and gone forever.”<sup>107</sup> Hope in God’s Word and the comfort of God’s Spirit sustained the Torreys when the dark clouds of grief enveloped them. The Torrey home was not immune to suffering. A vibrant family life buoyed them through the passage of time.

### **Home Life**

The Torreys observed forty-nine years of wedded life. Torrey initially met Clara at a temperance revival in Ohio.<sup>108</sup> He was twenty years old at the time.<sup>109</sup> When he took his stand to abstain from the use of all alcohol, he observed a young lady in the congregation who had reached the same conviction. Torrey observed the good looks of the young woman and apparently made her acquaintance.<sup>110</sup> Three years later, when Torrey assumed the pastorate in Garrettsville, who should be in the church but this same young woman. In time, a courtship ensued and the relationship blossomed into love. Martin recorded the rather unromantic proposal Torrey made to Clara B. Smith: ““Well,

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<sup>106</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Death Defeated and Defied: A Message of Comfort, Consolation, and Cheer,” Biola Publications 3 (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1923), 34–35.

<sup>107</sup> Torrey, “Death Defeated and Defied,” 34–35 (emphasis original). Torrey preached this sermon about one week after Margaret’s death.

<sup>108</sup> Torrey exhibited indecision regarding the question of drinking alcohol up until the time he attended the temperance revival. See Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 40.

<sup>109</sup> Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander*, 154–55.

<sup>110</sup> Maclean, *Torrey and Alexander*, 154–55. Martin and Maclean differ in their account of the couple’s initial acquaintance. Maclean claimed Torrey was twenty at the time (1876) and the couple married three years later (in 1879). Martin claimed the couple initially met “over a year ago,” in 1877. See Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 41, 48. I default to Maclean’s account due to the fact he had acquaintance with Torrey and would likely have received the chronology from Torrey’s lips. Martin possibly received the account from Torrey’s son, Reuben Jr.

Clara, I guess we might as well call it engaged,' and she agreed."<sup>111</sup> Torrey traveled a great deal during their married life. He faithfully wrote letters to Clara and his family whenever he traveled. In his letters to Clara, he characteristically addressed her as "My darling Clara" and signed off to her with "Oceans of love, Archie."<sup>112</sup>

After Torrey departed this life, his son reflected on the quality of his parents' marriage: "I hesitate to make any reference to that most sacred of his earthly relationships, but probably there was no phase of his life in which he more consistently honored God than in his fulfilling the command, 'Husbands love your wives.'"<sup>113</sup> The couple observed their forty-ninth wedding anniversary just six days before Torrey passed away on October 22, 1928. His journal entry on that date reads, "Clara's & my 49 wedding Anniversary. 7.30 p.m. Oct. 22nd, 1879. . . . It was one of the wisest steps I ever took. They have been 49 years of increasing love & increasing joy in one another. I knew I was getting a treasure but had no idea of how great a treasure she was."<sup>114</sup> Observe how Torrey remembered the precise hour of their wedding. Torrey's faithfulness to Clara over forty-nine years of marriage displayed the mystery of the gospel (Eph 5:32).

What kind of father did Torrey prove to be to their five children? Reuben A. Torrey Jr. honored his father's memory during a memorial service on February 5, 1929. He described his father as being "full of fun, joking, laughing, patient, always calm and unruffled (except possibly when trying to herd us to the station without a big margin of time to spare), never cross, although as occasion demanded stern, just but tender, firm but

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<sup>111</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 49.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, R. A. Torrey to Clara Torrey, July 7, 1919, collection 107, box 2, folder 1, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>113</sup> Torrey Jr., "Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home," 68–70. When Torrey made the decision to transplant his family from Minneapolis to Chicago, he apparently did so without even consulting his wife. See Torrey, "Autobiographical Sheet 'III', Page 2," Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>114</sup> R. A. Torrey, diary entry, October 22, 1928, collection 107, box 3, folder 4, R. A. Torrey diary for June–October 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

loving, he was an ideal parent.”<sup>115</sup> The positive features of the elder Torrey’s temperament did not always seem so apparent to casual observers. Torrey Jr. went on to describe his father as the center of the home. He wrote, “No meal was complete without his presence, the family prayers lost something of their zest when he was absent.”<sup>116</sup> Torrey Jr. commented on his father’s demanding travel schedule and the long periods of time when he was absent from home. The children anticipated the letters he sent home and the personal references their father made to each of them by name. When the elder Torrey returned from a trip, great was the rejoicing. Father Torrey possessed an almost heroic status in the eyes of his children.

What legacy did he leave to his children’s children? Elizabeth Wiggs Hood, Torrey’s granddaughter, served with her husband in Latin America, presumably in Costa Rica, with the Latin America Mission. She reflected on the influence her grandfather exerted on her life, even though she was only thirteen when he passed away:

He had made his influence felt upon my life. He visited often in our home, and I can still vividly recall his praying for specific individuals as he led our family worship on Sunday afternoons. The definiteness of his prayers and his loving interest in others are impressed upon me as I reread a letter he wrote to me when I was eight years of age at the time of an important event in my life.<sup>117</sup>

The letter to which Elizabeth referred contained encouragement from Grandfather Torrey at the time of her baptism. Torrey wrote the letter to Elizabeth on July 6, 1923. He wrote as follows, “I received your nice letter speaking of your baptism. I am glad that you have confessed your Lord Jesus in Baptism. I had been praying for a long time that you might. I trust you will study your Bible every day and get [to] know

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<sup>115</sup> Torrey Jr., “Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home,” 68–70.

<sup>116</sup> Torrey Jr., “Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home,” 68–70.

<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth Wiggs Hood, introduction to “The Greatest Need of Foreign Missions Today Is Prayer,” by R. A. Torrey, *Latin American Evangelist*, July–August 1957, 68. Elizabeth was the third child of Blanche Torrey Wiggs, the second child born to Reuben and Clara. See also “Torrey Family Chronicle,” collection 107, box 5, folder 3, Torrey Ephemerera (Wheaton).

our wonderful Lord & Saviour better and better every day.”<sup>118</sup> The letter is exemplary in its encouragement and displays the importance Torrey placed on open confession of Christ as Lord and Savior. The letter reveals Torrey as a praying grandparent who did not take the salvation of his family for granted. The letter also demonstrates the value Torrey placed on the practice of daily Bible reading in order to know Christ better.

Helen Renich Myers was the third child of Reuben Jr. In a taped interview in 1980, she reminisced about her grandfather’s influence. She recalled one summer when her family spent time in her grandparents’ home in Asheville, North Carolina. Helen, who was nine at the time, remembered that she attended a summer school in Asheville to improve her reading skills. In one class, the teacher read the biblical story of David and Goliath and then referred to it as a “fairy tale.” The teacher’s words upset Helen, who promptly reported the matter to her father after she arrived home. Helen picked up the narrative, “Before I knew what had happened, my grandfather loomed out of nowhere, and before my father could collect his thoughts or say anything, he bellowed in the voice that filled Albert Hall, and he said, ‘The idea of anybody telling my granddaughter that the Bible is not true!’” Helen recalled that she never doubted the Bible was the Word of God after that incident. She went on to relate, “Grandfather just adored his grandchildren and I think the reason so many of his grandchildren really followed earnestly in the footsteps of the Lord is not only godly parents but the fact that he prayed for all of us.”<sup>119</sup> Torrey left a memorable impression on both his children and grandchildren. His piety at home lent credibility to the message he proclaimed. He lived out his faith before those who knew him best. Nevertheless, he did not live out his faith perfectly.

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<sup>118</sup> R. A. Torrey to Elizabeth Wiggs, July 6, 1923, collection 107, box 2, folder 1, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>119</sup> Helen Torrey Renich, interview by Robert Shuster, May 15, 1980, transcript, collection 124, Helen Renich Papers, Buswell Library Archives and Special Collections, Wheaton College, IL.

## Feet of Clay

The apostle James's words ring true when we consider the life of R. A. Torrey. James wrote, "We all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body" (Jas 3:2). Torrey sometimes stumbled in what he said or wrote. He did not attain full maturity during his earthly pilgrimage. Torrey still struggled with his speech, racial insensitivity, insecurity, pride, and legalism.

Torrey's words could be caustic or unkind. He sometimes directed unkind words to those he loved. Torrey visited China in 1921, his third trip to the vast country. The Torreys' son, Reuben Jr., and his family served as missionaries in China at that time. Torrey corresponded regularly with family back home while he was on these trips abroad. In a letter written to Clara and dated September 15, 1921, Torrey referred to some undated letters he had received from Clara and their daughter Margaret. The undated letters seem to be a source of consternation to Torrey because he could not discern the chronology of the correspondence. He wrote to his wife regarding Margaret's oversight: "Margaret is old enough not to be so careless or stupid. She ought also to have known enough to know that she could get two or three more letters through."<sup>120</sup> Hopefully, Margaret never read her father's words. His words appear all the more hurtful when one considers that Margaret died in 1922. The foregoing letter illustrates the unkindness to which Torrey was sometimes susceptible.

Torrey's words also reveal racial insensitivity. In a sermon he delivered titled "Four More Reasons Why I Believe the Bible to Be the Word of God," Torrey exhibited this racial insensitivity. Torrey's first point in this sermon was "I believe the Bible to be the Word of God because of the immeasurable superiority of its teachings to those of any other book or all other books." He cited the writings of Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and

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<sup>120</sup> R. A. Torrey to Clara Torrey, September 15, 1921, collection 107, box 2, folder 1, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

Confucius as examples of ancient philosophers whose writings pale in comparison to the Bible. In the sermon, Torrey characterized Confucius as a liar and one who taught the propriety of lying. The following words illustrate his racial insensitivity: “There is nothing in which his [Confucius’s] most devoted disciples, the modern Chinese, have proven themselves such adept pupils of their great master as in this single matter of lying; for the Chinese are the one nation of the earth that have reduced lying to a fine art.”<sup>121</sup> Torrey would have stood on solid biblical ground if he had averred that all men use their tongues to deceive (Rom 3:10–13). Lying is not the provenance of the Chinese but characterizes all of fallen humanity. Furthermore, all Chinese do not follow Confucius, just as all Americans do not follow Jesus. Torrey’s words caricature an entire race of people.

Torrey exhibited insecurity, particularly during the final months of his life. During the final ten months of Torrey’s life, he was forced to suspend active public ministry due to declining health and no longer maintained the rigorous travel and preaching schedule that characterized his younger years.<sup>122</sup> When an article appeared in the May 1928 issue of *The King’s Business* representing a downward trend in enrollment at Biola during the latter period of Torrey’s deanship, Torrey took offense.<sup>123</sup> He perceived the perpetrator to be John M. MacInnis, then dean of the school. He wrote MacInnis on May 8, 1928, denouncing the article and demanding an apology. Torrey contended that the article belittled his administration at Biola. Torrey himself wrote a detailed apology, which he demanded MacInnis publish in the next issue of *TKB*. The apology of course aimed to exonerate Torrey.<sup>124</sup> Torrey demanded that no additional

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<sup>121</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Soul Winning Sermons*, vol. 1 (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1926), 54.

<sup>122</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 255.

<sup>123</sup> [John M. MacInnis?], “Facts Regarding Enrollment,” *The King’s Business* 19, no. 5 (May 1928): 296.

<sup>124</sup> R. A. Torrey to John M. MacInnis, May 8, 1928, box 4, folder 4, Torrey Collection (Moody).

copies of the May 28 installment of *TKB* be issued and any remaining copies in MacInnis's possession be destroyed.

Before the offensive article appeared in *TKB*, Torrey wrote James M. Gray, on March 20, 1928, in response to a letter Gray had written him. Gray had asked Torrey for details concerning MacInnis's educational qualifications. Torrey's response to Gray, even before the May offense occurred, reflected a condescending attitude on Torrey's part toward MacInnis. He belittled MacInnis's educational resume while exalting his own. Concerning MacInnis's education, Torrey wrote, "Apparently, he has never taken a regular university course anywhere."<sup>125</sup> Concerning his own education, Torrey wrote, "In regard to myself, you are right in thinking I have various degrees or titles, which I earned in the regular way."<sup>126</sup> Torrey apparently forgot the lesson that putting another man down never exalts oneself.

He also forgot the lesson of Proverbs 27:2, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth." Torrey recounted to Gray his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. He boasted concerning his proficiency in Greek, claiming, "I am so familiar with Greek that I practically never consult a dictionary."<sup>127</sup> He bragged of being offered the presidency and chancellorship of various colleges and one university. He exulted in having written over forty books and then stated, "Mr. [Fleming H.] Revell said he thinks they [Torrey's books] have been translated into more languages than the writings of any other living author."<sup>128</sup> Torrey wrote with a self-inflated view that betrayed his own insecurity. Torrey had only about seven months to live when he wrote Gray. In declining health, essentially laid aside from active ministry, and unable to perform as he had for years, Torrey began

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<sup>125</sup> R. A. Torrey to James M. Gray, March 20, 1928, box 4, folder 4, Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>126</sup> Torrey to Gray, March 20, 1928, Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>127</sup> Torrey to Gray, March 20, 1928, Torrey Collection (Moody)

<sup>128</sup> Torrey to Gray, March 20, 1928, Torrey Collection (Moody).

to measure his worth in terms of his achievements rather than in terms of Christ's unchanging love.

Torrey also exhibited legalistic tendencies. On the one hand he wrote, "The true Christian life is the life of a trusting, glad, fear-free child; not led by rules, but by the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit."<sup>129</sup> He also wrote, "Paul was a man of very pronounced convictions, and he knew that these convictions were true. Nevertheless, he also believed in liberty, he would not force his convictions down another man's throat."<sup>130</sup> While Paul might not force his convictions down another man's throat, Torrey consistently bound the consciences of Christians by his proscriptions against drinking alcohol, using tobacco, playing cards, dancing, and attending the theater.<sup>131</sup>

Torrey assumed the posture of what Joseph Aldrich termed a "professional weaker brother."<sup>132</sup> Because certain activities were sinful for Torrey—the moderate use of alcohol is but one example—he could not countenance another brother having freedom to participate in those questionable activities. The implications of Torrey's legalism for the practice of evangelism need to be considered. A "glad, fear-free" Christian life, "not led by rules" but by the Holy Spirit, presents a winsome witness to a watching world.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> R. A. Torrey, *R. A. Torrey's Daily Meditations: A Thought, a Meditation, and a Related Scripture Passage, for Every Day in the Year*, ed. A. Chester Mann (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), 16.

<sup>130</sup> R. A. Torrey, "Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship," *The King's Business* 8, no. 8 (August 1917): 762–65.

<sup>131</sup> One should remember that Torrey practiced many of these activities before his conversion. These vices had once been a snare to his soul. He could not tolerate opening the door again to their practice in his own life, which is understandable.

<sup>132</sup> Joseph C. Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to Reach the Unbelieving World* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1981), 43. Using the illustration of watching a movie, Aldrich argued that a professional weaker brother says no "because it is sin for him and therefore sin for everyone" (43). The professional weaker brother, in Aldrich's scheme, may be contrasted to the nonparticipating mature brother and the participating mature brother. The nonparticipating mature brother says no either because he does not feel the freedom or because he chooses not to exercise the freedom. The nonparticipating mature brother still recognizes the freedom of the "participating mature brother to involve himself in the particular action or pattern" (43). The participating mature brother obviously feels the liberty to participate in the questionable activity.

<sup>133</sup> Torrey, *R. A. Torrey's Daily Meditations*, 16.

Finally, Torrey sometimes exhibited an unteachable attitude. Torrey preached a ten-part series of messages about “The Real Christ” while he served at the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles. At the conclusion of one service, T. C. Horton, whom Torrey described as a “constant and very appreciative attendant at all the services,” stepped up to him, and in Torrey’s words, “gently laying his hand upon my shoulder, said in a very tender tone, ‘I think you ought to preach a sermon on “Jesus the Prophet.” It would be very timely.’”<sup>134</sup> Torrey then added,

I have seldom been able to speak on subjects others suggest; I am compelled usually to get subjects directly from God. . . . That afternoon I went alone with God and asked Him, and I received a command from a Higher Authority than Mr. Horton or any human authority: “Preach three sermons, one on Jesus The Prophet, one on Jesus The Priest, and one on Jesus The King,” and I obeyed.<sup>135</sup>

Why could God not speak to Torrey through Horton? Could God not provide guidance through one of his children? Torrey’s insistence on receiving only direct impressions from God seems a little over spiritual and at the same time minimizes the role of wise counselors in the matter of guidance (Prov 11:14).

Torrey exemplified Christian spirituality and an unswerving commitment to evangelism, but at the same time he possessed feet of clay. His imperfections remind the modern evangelist to continue pursuing holiness while pointing away from oneself to the Christ, who uses even messengers with feet of clay.

### **Final Days**

Torrey remained productive until the final ten months of his life. As late as 1923, while he was dean at Biola, he could still claim, “God is greatly blessing us in our work here at the present time, but I am very, very busy. However, I am not tired at all. Though I was sixty-seven the twenty-eighth of January I think I have worked harder the

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<sup>134</sup> Torrey, *Jesus: The Prophet, the Priest, the King*, 22.

<sup>135</sup> Torrey, *Jesus: The Prophet, the Priest, the King*, 22.

past year than any other year in my life and with more satisfactory results.”<sup>136</sup> Torrey lived an active life, often rising between five and six in the morning and retiring as late as midnight, and he managed without a great deal of sleep. He exercised almost daily with dumbbells and took a cold bath as a matter of course. Torrey possessed a seemingly boundless energy. God blessed him with a muscular physique, and he stewarded his health well. All this began to change in 1928.

Torrey had to suspend active public ministry in early 1928. Hunter noted some of his ministry achievements in 1928: “Dr. Torrey was still able to prepare the copy of *The Gist of the Lesson* for 1928, to attend the Bible Conference at Montrose, Penn., and to preside at the Annual Meeting of the Council of the Africa Inland Mission.”<sup>137</sup> Though Torrey might have struggled in 1928 with feelings of inferiority, evidenced by remarks he made in the letter to James M. Gray, his remarks did not reveal the complete man.

Torrey’s son, Reuben Jr., captured a different perspective on his father’s final months. Torrey Jr. remarked, “It is one thing to be a radiant victorious Christian when one is in his prime, full of vigor and active in service. It is quite another thing to display the same radiant faith and joyous trust in the goodness and wisdom of God when health is failing, and one has been set aside from active life.”<sup>138</sup> The younger Torrey goes on to recall how, during the ten months of inactivity caused by declining health—an experience new to his father—the elder Torrey “never once manifested the slightest impatience. . . . His beautiful smile persisted, his optimism never faltered, his faith and glad acceptance

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<sup>136</sup> R. A. Torrey to Archibald Thomas Robertson, February 26, 1923, Archibald Thomas Robertson Papers, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

<sup>137</sup> Hunter, “A Faithful and Wise Servant,” 10. Torrey was president of the United States Home Council of the Africa Inland Mission from 1911 until his death. See also Bob Shuster, “A Feast of Fragments: The Papers of R. A. Torrey,” Billy Graham Center, last modified June 23, 2006, <https://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/Papers/Torrey/papers.html>.

<sup>138</sup> Torrey Jr., “Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home,” 69.

of God's will became more evident."<sup>139</sup> Torrey manifested a radiant faith by practicing the spiritual disciplines that had characterized his life for many years. Torrey Jr. continued, "He gave himself to almost continuous Bible study and prayer, and his very presence became a benediction."<sup>140</sup> Torrey's son remarked how, during the final days, his father never idled nor wasted time: "His Bibles and Testaments were ever at hand to be picked up and feasted on at every opportunity. I say feasted because I have never known anyone who read from the Word as constantly as he did, nor who seemed to so delight in it."<sup>141</sup> Torrey sustained himself during his believing life by communing with God in prayer and through the Word. His hunger to be in God's presence did not wane in his final days.

Torrey's eldest child Edith provided another glimpse into her father's faith during his final days. Edith recalled that, due to the "indistinctness of his enunciation and the weakness of his voice," he had to use a tablet to communicate with his wife.<sup>142</sup> One morning when he had experienced particular difficulty swallowing his breakfast, Mrs. Torrey commented to him that she thought he would be discouraged. In response, Torrey wrote on his tablet the following response: "Discouraged nothing. I am improving, and above all, I am trusting in God and living in Phil. 4:6-7, and I want God's will above all else. Perhaps one purpose God has in it is to prove that Phil. 4:6-7 is as good in sickness as in such robust health as I have always had, and Romans 8:28 is as true as ever."<sup>143</sup> I do

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<sup>139</sup> Torrey Jr., "Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home," 69.

<sup>140</sup> Torrey Jr., "Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home," 69.

<sup>141</sup> Torrey Jr., "Dr. R. A. Torrey in His Home," 69.

<sup>142</sup> Edith C. Torrey to "Dear Friends at Wheaton," November 1, 1928, collection 107, box 2, folder 4, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>143</sup> Torrey to "Dear Friends at Wheaton." Edith claimed her father lived "moment by moment" on the words of Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus," and Romans 8:28, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

not believe Torrey lived in denial of the fact that he was dying. I believe his words reflect the optimism that is borne of prolonged meditation on the promises of God's Word.

Torrey stood on the truths of God's Word. They provided an anchor for his faith.

On or around June 25, 1928, Torrey and his wife acquired train tickets from their Asheville home to Montrose, Pennsylvania. They departed for Montrose on June 28. Torrey claimed he weighed at the time 153 pounds with his clothes on, a decrease of fifty-two pounds in just five months. Torrey's diary entries from this time reflect that he was continuing to lose weight, exacerbated no doubt by the difficulties he was having with swallowing and speaking.

On July 15, 1928, then at the Montrose Bible Conference, Torrey wrote, "The Ministerial Institute begins tomorrow night. I shall not be able to take part. My voice is far from normal."<sup>144</sup> Torrey indicated in his diary that he was not attending church on Sundays, as he was afraid he would be asked to lead in prayer, and his voice problems precluded even this activity. Torrey was spending a consistent amount of time sleeping during the day. He would also take walks, visit with family or friends, and hold some interviews with missionaries present at the conference, among whom was Ruth Paxon (1889–1949) of China. On August 11, 1928, Torrey recorded, "I went down town & was weighed this morning & weighed only 144 1/2 lbs, the least I have weighed in 53 years. But I am improving in health. Read & visited in the morning. Took a nap, read & visited in the afternoon."<sup>145</sup> Torrey also recorded that August 11 was a cloudy day. Despite the weather and his weight, his optimism persisted.

Reuben Jr. and his family, including his wife Janet and ten-year-old son, Archer, were home on furlough from China and spent some time at Montrose during this period. On Sunday, September 30, 1928, Torrey recorded,

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<sup>144</sup> Torrey, diary entry, July 15, 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>145</sup> Torrey, diary entry, August 11, 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

It has been a beautiful day. Reuben preached this morning at the Presbyterian Church and all the rest of the family went. I stayed home & read my Bible: did not think it wise to risk going, think I would have rejoiced to hear Reuben. In the afternoon I took a long nap & then we all drove up to the top of the hill back of the auditorium & had a prayer meeting in the car. I prayed, then Reuben offered a long & beautiful prayer. Then Archer (10 years old) prayed: his was a very intelligent & beautiful prayer. Then Janet prayed & then Clara.<sup>146</sup>

Torrey went on to note in his September 30 entry that his wife was under a heavy strain when she thought about their son and his family returning to China. He failed to mention that she must have been under a heavy strain for her husband as well. On October 4, 1928, Torrey and Clara departed Montrose for the final time as a couple. Before leaving, they sat in a porch swing, enjoyed the beautiful grounds, and made a memory.

On Saturday, October 6, 1928, Torrey recalled in his diary, “Had a fine nap in a chair in the living room. . . . I have had one season of prayer, praying for Japan, China, Korea, India, New Zealand, Tasmania, & Australia & Africa, bringing persons & institutions I know there & shall have another season of prayer before retiring. It is now 11.08 p.m.”<sup>147</sup> Then, on Thursday, October 18, 1928, Torrey recalled, “I woke at 5 a.m. this morning from a beautiful dream in which I was to preach at a Plymouth Brethren Assembly & did not know it until just before & God gave me a sermon on Heb. 1:9. I will, I think, preach it someday.”<sup>148</sup> Torrey’s diary entries reveal he was finding a great deal of time for prayer. His prayers focused on the nations and revealed his missionary heart. His dream revealed his longing to proclaim God’s Word.

The final entry in Torrey’s diary was on Thursday, October 25, 1928. He recorded the following simple words: “Pain when I coughed. Had Dr. R. at 10. a.m. My temp 97. She gave me a short treatment. I coughed up some mucous. She told me to stay

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<sup>146</sup> Torrey, diary entry, September 30, 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>147</sup> Torrey, diary entry, October 6, 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>148</sup> Torrey, diary entry, October 18, 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton). Torrey notes Hebrews 1:9, “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

in bed. I ate nearly a shredded wheat & some applesauce. Drank some milk.”<sup>149</sup> The entry for October 26, 1928, contains Clara’s words. She wrote,

“God’s finger touched him, and he slept.” Probably slipped away about 4 or 5 a.m. without a struggle. God has sustained us all marvelously and answered our prayers. He could not have dealt with us more kindly, saving us distress of mind because we know Archie just crossed the threshold and entered into glory painlessly and peacefully, and we all wanted God’s will and so did Archie: he wanted it above everything else.<sup>150</sup>

Torrey was subsequently buried on the grounds of the Montrose Bible Conference Center. His headstone was inscribed with Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (KJV). Regarding the words on Torrey’s tombstone, Greenway summarized them as “an epitaph well befitting this man who was indeed mighty in both Word and Spirit.”<sup>151</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I sketched in broad brush strokes the life of R. A. Torrey. Torrey grew up in affluence. He would later turn his back on material affluence to follow Christ in simplicity and sacrifice. I described the influence his mother’s faith exerted on him and the role her prayers played in his conversion. Torrey’s life before Christ involved the idolatrous pursuit of pleasure, fueled in part by his birth family’s material prosperity. In Torrey’s experience, surrender to Christ as Lord and Savior involved an acquiescence on his part to God’s will for him to preach the gospel. I detailed five of the changes that transpired as he began to walk in the newness of life. One cannot appreciate Torrey’s spirituality and his evangelistic lifestyle divorced from his experience of new birth and conversion to the Lordship of Christ.

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<sup>149</sup> Torrey, diary entry, October 25, 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>150</sup> Torrey, diary entry, October 26, 1928, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>151</sup> Greenway, “The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism,” 58.

I traced the contours of Torrey's piety by noting several examples from his early life in Christ that illustrated his nascent spirituality. Specifically, I illustrated from Torrey's writings the confluence of prayer, Scripture intake, personal evangelism, and the Spirit's role in his life. I demonstrated the relationship between these practices and the gospel-centered focus of his ministry. I presented Torrey in the context of his home life, demonstrating him to be a faithful, though sometimes thoughtless, husband. I detailed the impact of his faith on his children and grandchildren. I depicted Torrey as a man who stumbled in his words and attitudes even as he sought to follow Christ. Torrey is worthy of respect but not worship. With this assertion he would no doubt concur. Finally, I focused on the final months of Torrey's earthly journey and showed how the confession of his faith held firm till the end of his life.

In chapter 3, I explore in detail Torrey's disciplines of Scripture intake and prayer. I relate these spiritual habits to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the practice of evangelism.

CHAPTER 3  
SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER IN THE LIFE  
OF R. A. TORREY

The twin practices of Scripture intake and prayer were foundational to R. A. Torrey's life. In Torrey's experience, these practices were not merely activities to check off a list but the means of communion with God. Torrey's communion with God was an expression of his love for God, and his lifestyle of communing with God through prayer and Scripture-focused meditation fueled his love for God and man.

In a sermon titled "The Secret of Abiding Peace," Torrey expounded the meaning of Genesis 5:24, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."<sup>1</sup> Despite the title, the real point of the message was about walking with God. Torrey asked the question, "What is it to walk with God?" He answered the question in this manner: "In a word, to walk with God is to live in the real, constant, conscious companionship of God."<sup>2</sup> Torrey listed four aids to conscious companionship with God: the study of God's Word, prayer, thanksgiving, and worship.<sup>3</sup> Thanksgiving is, of course, a form of prayer. Torrey further noted that the Holy Spirit makes one's walk with God "true and real."<sup>4</sup> Observe in Torrey's words three of his four-fold strand of Christian spirituality.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1954), 167.

<sup>2</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 167.

<sup>3</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 176.

<sup>4</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 176.

<sup>5</sup> I noted in chapter 1 a four-fold strand of Christian spirituality observable in Torrey's life. This four-fold strand consisted of the disciplines of prayer, Scripture intake, personal witnessing, and the experience of the Spirit's baptism. See chap. 1, sec. "Introduction" (3n12).

Torrey emphasized the cruciality of serving God through faithful gospel witness. Nevertheless, he understood the priority of communion with God over serving him—even in gospel proclamation. Regarding Enoch’s walking with God, he wrote, “God wants our company, God wants us to walk with Him, and He is well pleased when we do.”<sup>6</sup> Torrey then shifted his illustration to the example of Martha and Mary: “Martha was taken up with her service for her Lord, but Mary was taken up with her Lord Himself, and He testified that Mary had chosen the better part.”<sup>7</sup> In Torrey’s thinking, the practice of evangelism grows out of communion with God. Torrey drove home this point, “It is quite possible today to be so occupied with our work for God that we forget Him for whom we work. If we would please Him we should first see to it that we walk with him.”<sup>8</sup> Torrey walked with God through Scripture intake and prevailing prayer, the focus of the present chapter.

### **Torrey and Scripture**

Torrey believed success in Christian living depended on the intake of Scripture. He wrote, “All who get on in the Christian life are great feeders on the Word of God.”<sup>9</sup> How does the Christian take the Word into their life? Four Scripture intake methods are discernible in Torrey’s writings: reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating.

#### **Reading**

The simple reading of Scripture occupied less attention in Torrey’s writings. The default terminology Torrey employed to denote the Scripture intake habit was Bible

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<sup>6</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 173.

<sup>7</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 173.

<sup>8</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 173–74.

<sup>9</sup> R. A. Torrey, ed., “How to Make a Success of the Christian Life,” in *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival, with Suggestive Outlines* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1901), 186.

study. Bible study became the umbrella term Torrey utilized to refer to the practice of Scripture intake. Torrey did nonetheless isolate the practice of Bible reading as a discernible method. Concerning the habit of Bible reading, Torrey observed, “Read for food for your own soul.”<sup>10</sup> The priority in Bible reading is not the development of a sermon or Bible lesson but the nourishment of one’s soul. Torrey continued, “Read a great deal on your knees. The Bible has become in some measure a new book to me since I have taken to reading it on my knees.”<sup>11</sup> Torrey’s Scripture reading posture suggests an attitude of humble attentiveness before God, Scripture’s author.

Torrey observed that his practice of Bible reading consisted of daily reading three chapters from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament, and a psalm.<sup>12</sup> Torrey further “determined to read the A. V. through every year, the R. V. through every year, and the N.[ew] T.[estament] in Greek through every year.”<sup>13</sup> Concerning this routine, he remarked, “It has proved exceedingly profitable, and I would not willingly give it up.”<sup>14</sup>

Torrey’s reading habits raise some questions. Did he read three Old Testament chapters, a New Testament chapter, and a psalm each day, in both versions? Did he vary the places in Scripture from which he read the two versions? Did he read the versions consecutively from Genesis to Revelation? Torrey did not elaborate in specific detail an answer to these questions, however he testified to the blessing he experienced as he read

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<sup>10</sup> Torrey, “How to Make a Success of the Christian Life,” 186.

<sup>11</sup> Torrey, “How to Make a Success of the Christian Life,” 186. Müller also practiced reading Scripture on his knees. One wonders if Torrey acquired this habit from Müller.

<sup>12</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Getting the Gold Out of the Word of God; or How to Study the Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1925), 22.

<sup>13</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896), 87. Torrey used the abbreviation “A. V.” to denote the Authorized Version of the Bible and “R. V.” to denote the Revised Version. The Authorized Version is also known as the King James Version (KJV). I will use the KJV abbreviation since readers of this thesis will be more familiar with this abbreviation.

<sup>14</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 87.

the Word of God. Observe how he deftly interchanged the words “reading” and “study” as he described the joy of Scripture intake:

How often have I reached home at night, after a hard day’s labour, completely tired out. But before I go to bed I open my Bible, get down on my knees, and ask God to give me something out of the Bible as I read, and God opens up His purposes of love, and as I read His wonderful promises my tired heart forgets its weariness, and I fairly shout for joy. . . . The sweetest . . . joy I know is when I bend over this Book in prayerful study.<sup>15</sup>

For Torrey, reading and study seamlessly flowed together and produced joy in his Christian experience. Reading Scripture naturally flowed into a more concentrated study of the Word.

### **Studying**

What distinguished Bible reading from Bible study in Torrey’s thinking?

Whereas Bible reading might be practiced with less attention, Bible study involved “close mental application.”<sup>16</sup> Torrey believed that “undisturbed concentration of thought” was a great secret of profitable study.<sup>17</sup> Bible reading is profitable when Scripture truth is digested; therefore, reading should serve as a gateway into a more thoughtful consideration of Scripture. Torrey was once asked, “Tell me in a single word, how to study the Bible?”<sup>18</sup> He responded, “If I must put it into one word, this is the word, ‘thoughtfully.’ Study the Bible thoughtfully, give your whole attention to the Bible as you study it.”<sup>19</sup> Torrey counseled believers to avoid the daily reading of a prescribed

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<sup>15</sup> George T. B. Davis, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of a World-Wide Revival, a Record and Study of the Work and Personality of the Evangelists R. A. Torrey, D. D., and Charles M. Alexander* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 44.

<sup>16</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Work for Christ: A Compendium of Effective Methods* (London: James Nisbet, 1901), 478.

<sup>17</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 478.

<sup>18</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study: How to Properly Study and Interpret the Bible* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1921), 27.

<sup>19</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 27.

number of chapters and instead allocate a “definite amount of time for study.”<sup>20</sup> In Torrey’s view, trying to read too many chapters in a day led to “skimming” and “thoughtless reading.”<sup>21</sup> Torrey did not lay down hard and fast rules for the length of study. He suggested the time might be no more than fifteen or thirty minutes. Nevertheless, he advocated at least one hour of Bible study as a desirable standard.<sup>22</sup>

Torrey believed consistent time devoted to Bible intake was key for the most profitable study. He wrote, “The spasmodic student, who at certain seasons gives a great deal of time to the study of the Word, and at other seasons quite neglects it . . . does not achieve the results that he does who plods on regularly day by day.”<sup>23</sup> Torrey noted, “What regularity in eating is to physical life, regularity in Bible study is to spiritual life.”<sup>24</sup> Thoughtful attention to the Word, consistent feeding, and the allocation of a definite amount of time—ideally one hour—constitute three of Torrey’s core Bible study principles. What more did he recommend for profitable Bible study?

Torrey advised believers to use pen and paper when they approach the study of God’s Word.<sup>25</sup> He counseled believers to dedicate “the best portion of the day” to study.<sup>26</sup> He wrote, “Do not put your Bible study off until nearly bed-time. Do not take the time immediately after a heavy meal. The early hours of the day are the best for Bible study.”<sup>27</sup> He further counseled, “It is well whenever possible, to lock yourself in and lock

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<sup>20</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 478. Torrey read a prescribed number of chapters. He seems to have allocated time in both the early morning and late at night for Scripture intake.

<sup>21</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 478.

<sup>22</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 116.

<sup>23</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 116.

<sup>24</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 117.

<sup>25</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The New Topical Textbook: A Scripture Textbook for the Use of Ministers, Teachers, and All Christian Workers* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 4.

<sup>26</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 118.

<sup>27</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 118.

the world out, when you are about to give yourself up to the study of the Bible.”<sup>28</sup> Torrey advised the student of God’s Word to look for Christ in the passage under examination. He wrote, “Look for Christ in every verse you study, and even the genealogies and catalogues of the names of towns will begin to have beauty and power.”<sup>29</sup> The use of pen and journal, the reservation of undistracted morning hours, and the Christo-centric reading of Scripture represent three more of Torrey’s practical study suggestions.

When a person approaches the study of Scripture, Torrey recommended five points to observe in each chapter. A person should observe the subject of the chapter. Torrey recommended the individual “state [the] principal contents of a chapter in a sentence.”<sup>30</sup> Next, the student should note the principal persons in the chapter. The relevance of this point is especially apparent in narrative portions of Scripture, like the Gospels. The student should then note the “leading lesson” of the chapter, including the truth most emphasized in the lesson.<sup>31</sup> At this point in the process, Torrey seems to shift focus to the application of the text to daily life. He then advises the student to evaluate between competing truths emerging in the text by stating the “best lesson” observed.<sup>32</sup> Finally, Torrey encouraged the student to isolate the “best verse” so that he or she might “ponder it and mark it.”<sup>33</sup> Torrey’s five points of observation pertain to studying the Bible in sequential order and provide a practical framework to focus attention on the Word.

Torrey advocated the study of individual books of the Bible, topical study, biographical study, the study of types, the study of Bible books in sequential or

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<sup>28</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 118.

<sup>29</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 119.

<sup>30</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 479.

<sup>31</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 479.

<sup>32</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 479.

<sup>33</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 479.

chronological order, and the study of Scripture for practical usefulness when dealing with men.<sup>34</sup> Torrey believed the study of individual Bible books was the most thorough and difficult of the seven approaches to Scripture study, but also the one that “yields the largest and most permanent results.”<sup>35</sup> In his opinion, individual book study “should occupy the greater portion of our time.”<sup>36</sup> Torrey delineated seven “works” in the study of an individual book of the Bible.

The first work is to select a book of the Bible to study. Torrey suggested the selection of a short and “comparatively easy” book.<sup>37</sup> He further suggested the selection of a book “that is rich enough in its teaching to illustrate the advantages of this method of study and thus give a keen appetite for further studies of the same kind.”<sup>38</sup> He recommended either 1 Thessalonians or 1 John.<sup>39</sup>

The second work is to master the general contents of the book. Torrey recommended “reading the book through without stopping and then reading it through again, and then again, say a dozen times in all, at a single sitting.”<sup>40</sup> He remarked how the book begins to “open up [and] new relations between different parts of the book begin to disclose themselves. Fascinating lines of thought running through the book appear.”<sup>41</sup> One can understand how the practice of careful Bible reading serves as the handmaiden of Bible study in Torrey’s thinking.

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<sup>34</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 7. Torrey advised his readers to have three concurrent methods of Bible intake, e.g., studying the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation, the study of an individual book, and a topical study. See also Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 87.

<sup>35</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 14–15.

<sup>38</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 15–16.

<sup>40</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 16.

Torrey's third work involved the preparation of an introduction to the book. He recommended the Bible student write down at the top of separate sheets of paper the following questions:

1. Who wrote this book?
2. To whom did he write?
3. Where did he write it?
4. When did he write it?
5. What was the occasion of his writing?
6. What was the purpose for which he wrote?
7. What were the circumstances of the author when he wrote?
8. What were the circumstances of those to whom he wrote?
9. What glimpses does the book give into the life and character of the author?
10. What are the leading ideas of the book?
11. What is the central truth of the book?
12. What are the characteristics of the book?<sup>42</sup>

With his twelve papers spread before him, as the student reads the text of Scripture, he should observe the answers to these questions and note them on the appropriate sheet. Torrey did not advocate consulting outside helps until the student completed his own investigation, a process he estimated would require reading through the book several times.<sup>43</sup> Torrey believed the time and effort required to prepare this kind of introduction would be repaid to the student as he proceeded in his study.

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<sup>42</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 17–18. Concerning these twelve questions, Torrey wrote, “All the questions given will not apply to every book in the Bible” (Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 19).

<sup>43</sup> As a resource for biblical background and introduction, Torrey recommended James Alexander McClymont, *The New Testament and Its Writers* (London: A. & C. Black, 1899).

Torrey's fourth work is to divide the book into its proper sections. The book should be read so as to observe its natural divisions and subdivisions. A brief, terse caption should be written to describe the contents of each division.

The fifth work is to study each verse in order. Torrey encouraged the student to seek the "exact meaning" of the verse.<sup>44</sup> Torrey listed three steps in ascertaining the meaning of a verse. The first step is to determine the meaning of any "doubtful" words, words whose meaning is unclear to the student.<sup>45</sup> He recommended the use of a Bible concordance for this step.<sup>46</sup> The second step is to observe the meaning of the verse in relation to its context. The third step is to observe parallel passages of Scripture that treat the same subject.<sup>47</sup> Only after taking these three steps did Torrey recommend consulting commentaries to compare the student's conclusions with those of others.<sup>48</sup> Even after these steps, the work is not complete. Torrey recommended the student analyze each verse and note the truths contained therein. He wrote, "We ought to come back to the same verse of the Bible again and again, until we have gotten, as far as it is possible to us, all that is in the verse."<sup>49</sup> Torrey believed the Bible was a "great deep" and the student of God's Word must therefore dig and dig in order to mine its treasures.<sup>50</sup>

Torrey's sixth work involved a verse-by-verse analysis of a passage and the creation of a subject-arranged listing of each and every lesson observed. For example, if a

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<sup>44</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 22.

<sup>45</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Torrey's top recommendation was *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. See James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986).

<sup>47</sup> Torrey recommended *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (TSK)* as a resource for finding parallel passages. The *TSK* was first created by publisher Samuel Bagster and published around 1830. The *TSK* can be now accessed online. See *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, MasonSoft Technology, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://tsk-online.com/Home/RATorrey>.

<sup>48</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 20–34.

<sup>49</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 30.

<sup>50</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 33.

student were studying 1 Thessalonians, he would undoubtedly discover many lessons related to the coming of Christ. The student would list all the lessons learned about the second coming of Christ and every other subject uncovered during the book study. Torrey's seventh work, meditation upon the lessons learned, I treat discretely and subsequently.

As Torrey interacted with Scripture, careful reading of the text was the necessary first step. Thoughtful reading eventuated in the diligent mining of God's words in Bible study. Bible study, then, should lead the believer to hide some of the gems of scriptural truth in the heart.

### **Memorization of Scripture**

Torrey claimed to "have committed whole chapters and whole books to memory."<sup>51</sup> He said, "I have stored it in my heart."<sup>52</sup> In Torrey's view, not only should the believer study the Bible, but he also "should commit large portions of the Bible to memory."<sup>53</sup> He wrote, "Fill your mind and your memory with it. . . . What is there in all this world that is so good to fill the memory and the heart with as the golden words of God? Happy is the man who has his memory full of them."<sup>54</sup> Torrey observed from Scripture some of the salutary benefits of Scripture memory:

It will keep you from sin (Ps 119:11), from false doctrine (Acts 20:29, 30, 32; 2 Tim 3:13–15), it will fill your heart with joy (Jer 15:16), and peace (Ps 85:8), it will give you victory over the Evil One (1 John 2:14), it will give you power in prayer (John 15:7), it will make you wiser than the aged and your enemies (Ps 119:98, 100, 130), it will make you "complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim 3:16, 17, R.V.).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God? And Was the Body of Jesus Raised from the Dead?* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922), 51.

<sup>52</sup> Torrey, *Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God?*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> Torrey, *Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God?*, 52.

<sup>54</sup> Torrey, *Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God?*, 52–53.

<sup>55</sup> Torrey, *The New Topical Textbook*, 6.

In Torrey's view, Scripture was useful for Christian living. Hiding God's Word in the heart facilitated practical Christian living.

Torrey offered two suggestions to aid in Scripture memorization. First, he advocated the systematic memorization of biblical texts: "Do not have a jumble of disjointed texts in your mind, but classified and associated texts. Association is the great secret of a retentive memory. Group your memorized passages together, classify them in a logical and orderly way."<sup>56</sup> Second, Torrey advocated memorizing texts together with their chapter and verse: "Memorize by chapter and verse that you may know where to put your finger upon the text if anyone disputes it."<sup>57</sup> Torrey's suggestion that someone might dispute a text cited by a Christian implies an apologetic witnessing encounter. Torrey's advocacy of Scripture memorization held forth practical ramifications for the practice of evangelism.

Memorized Scripture facilitated the practice of meditation. In Torrey's thinking, the *terminus* of all Scripture study was the habit of meditation on the Word of God. The practice of meditation was the *sine qua non* of all Scripture intake.

### **Meditation on Scripture**

Torrey referred to the practice of scriptural meditation as a "lost art."<sup>58</sup> Christians neglect the habit of thinking deeply on the words of Scripture. Hurry is one of the enemies of prolonged concentration on the Word.<sup>59</sup> In a message titled, "The Secret of Blessedness in Heart, Beauty in Character, Fruitfulness in Service, and Prosperity in Everything," Torrey returned to an earlier theme: the Christian must be prepared to spend

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<sup>56</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 32–33.

<sup>57</sup> Torrey, *The New Topical Textbook*, 6.

<sup>58</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Voice of God in the Present Hour* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 202–4.

<sup>59</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 204.

all his allocated time in Scripture intake meditating on a single verse, even a single word. He counseled, “We should not so much say, ‘I will read so many chapters in a day,’ as ‘I will spend so much time each day in really studying and feeding upon the Book.’”<sup>60</sup> Using Psalm 23:1, Torrey illustrated the pathway of meditation. He weighed the meaning of each word, chewing as it were on the words of Scripture, asking questions of the text, and then pondering possible answers.

In *How to Succeed in the Christian Life*, Torrey touched upon the danger of haste in Scripture intake. He admonished the Christian against hurrying as he approached his Bible. He isolated “haste and heedlessness” in Bible study as two of the worst faults to be avoided.<sup>61</sup> He cautioned, “It is better to read one verse attentively than to read a dozen chapters thoughtlessly. Sometimes you will read a verse that takes hold of you. Don’t hurry on. Linger and ponder that verse. As you read, mark in your Bible what impresses you most. Meditate upon what you mark.”<sup>62</sup> Torrey observed that God pronounces “blessed” the person who meditates day and night on Scripture (Ps 1:2).

Torrey illustrated the practice of meditation by reference to the delicious strawberries available in Southern California. He imagined a person coming to visit who had never tasted California’s wonderful strawberries. A host sets a bowl of juicy berries before a friend and remarks to him how delicious they taste. The host is called away but in an hour or two returns to ask his friend, “How did you like those strawberries?”<sup>63</sup> The host is stunned to hear his friend reply, “I did not care for them.”<sup>64</sup> After a few puzzled

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<sup>60</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 203.

<sup>61</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 186.

<sup>62</sup> Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life*, 186.

<sup>63</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 201.

<sup>64</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 201.

moments the host asks, “Did you eat the berries?”<sup>65</sup> The friend replies, “I did not eat them. I smelled of them and I have smelled many things that smell better.”<sup>66</sup> Torrey then made his point: “That is the way that many . . . treat the Word of God. They just smell of it, they skim over a few verses, or many verses, or many chapters, but they do not stop to eat a single verse. They do not chew the words, swallow them and assimilate them. Oh how different the Word of God becomes when we really *eat* it.”<sup>67</sup> For Torrey, Scripture should be ingested and digested so that it might be assimilated into one’s life. Meditation facilitated the assimilation of Scripture.

Torrey lamented Scripture intake that observed, analyzed, and classified the Word but stopped short of digestion and assimilation.<sup>68</sup> He wrote, “There is perhaps nothing so important in Bible study as meditation (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2–3).”<sup>69</sup> After a Christian has completed the six works in a Bible-book study, he should take the “classified teachings” observed in his study and “go slowly over them, and ponder them point by point, until these wonderful truths live before you and sink into your soul, and live in you, and become part of your life.”<sup>70</sup> Torrey compared the process of meditation to a bird that sits upon an egg. The incubation process facilitates the egg hatching. A believer who meditates day and night upon scriptural truth subjects that truth to an internal incubation. The habit of meditating on the truth of Scripture causes that truth to “fructify” in the believer’s heart.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 201.

<sup>66</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 201.

<sup>67</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 201 (emphasis original).

<sup>68</sup> As noted above, observation, analysis, and classification are subsumed under Torrey’s six “works” associated with individual Bible-book study.

<sup>69</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 54.

<sup>70</sup> Torrey, *How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit*, 55.

<sup>71</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 31.

Torrey believed that the “Eternal and all-wise God” was the author of the Bible. For this reason, in Torrey’s view, everything taught in the Bible is worthy of “profound and prolonged consideration.”<sup>72</sup> He wrote, “We should ponder it . . . weigh it . . . thoroughly masticate and digest it” and as the believer goes about his daily work, “meditate on it day and night.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, the study of Scripture should culminate in the practice of meditation. Meditation on Scripture should then lead the Christian to appropriate and obey God’s Word.

Torrey advocated setting aside a definite and dedicated time to meditate on the Word. One benefit to hiding the Word in the heart is that the Christian can improve “golden moments” during the day by meditating on Scripture.<sup>74</sup> Torrey wrote, “One of the best ways to conserve golden moments that might otherwise be squandered is to meditate upon the Word you have been studying.”<sup>75</sup> A Christian who is walking on the street or in the field or who is riding on the trolley car can utilize these spare moments to meditate on truth. Torrey continued, “Turn God’s Word over and over and over again in your mind. . . . Look at all the facets of each diamond of truth. Let the Word soak in, let it saturate your life, your thoughts, your feelings, your will. Bible-soaked thoughts are God-like thoughts.”<sup>76</sup> One benefit to pondering the Word during the course of business, household duties, or whatever one does is the experience of joy. Torrey remarked, “How much lighter and pleasanter the drudgery of life becomes if we go about it with the Word of God in mind and heart, meditating thereon in the midst of our wearing toil.”<sup>77</sup> In

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<sup>72</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 31.

<sup>73</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 31.

<sup>74</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 31.

<sup>75</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 31.

<sup>76</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 31.

<sup>77</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 204.

Torrey's view, blessedness and spiritual prosperity attended the practice of biblical meditation.

### **The Relationship between Scripture Intake and Prayer**

Torrey believed true prayer and true Bible study fit together hand-in-glove in the “work of nourishing the soul.”<sup>78</sup> He contended that prevailing prayer rested on the promises of Scripture. Believing prayer needed a warrant; the only certain warrant was the Word. Torrey argued, “Faith must have a warrant. We cannot believe God will grant us a certain thing unless we have some warrant for believing it. . . . The sure warrant is the Word of God.”<sup>79</sup> The child of God approaches Scripture to ascertain the promises of God contained therein. When a promise of God, rightly interpreted, has been discovered in the Word, a believer may pray with confidence.<sup>80</sup> In Torrey's view, prevailing prayer and what he called “the prayer of faith” cannot be maintained when the Word of God is neglected.<sup>81</sup> Torrey's teaching connected the habit of biblical meditation to prevailing prayer:

If we are to obtain from God all that we ask from him, Christ's words must abide or continue in us. We must study his words, fairly devour his words, let them sink into our thought and into our heart, keep them in our memory, obey them constantly in our life, let them shape and mold our daily life and our every act. It is vain to expect

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<sup>78</sup> R. A. Torrey, *R. A. Torrey's Daily Meditations: A Thought, a Meditation, and a Related Scripture Passage, for Every Day in the Year*, ed. A. Chester Mann (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), 23.

<sup>79</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Light on Puzzling Passages and Problems,” *The King's Business* 7, no. 7 (July 1916): 590–91.

<sup>80</sup> To examine some of Torrey's hermeneutical principles, see “How to Interpret the Bible So as to Find Its True Meaning,” in *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 44–73.

<sup>81</sup> Torrey, *R. A. Torrey's Daily Meditations*, 45. In Torrey's understanding, prevailing prayer is prayer that asks and receives “precisely what we ask and . . . all we ask” (R. A. Torrey, *How to Pray* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1900), 21). Torrey defined “the prayer of faith” as “the prayer that has no doubt whatever that God has heard the prayer and granted the specific things which we have asked of him” (R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1924], 158).

power in prayer unless we meditate much upon the words of Christ and let them sink deep and find a permanent abode in our hearts.<sup>82</sup>

Torrey believed that when prayer was birthed by the practice of biblical meditation, such a prayer “soars upward most easily to God’s listening ear.”<sup>83</sup> The Word of God births faith that empowers prevailing prayer. What, then, is the role of the Holy Spirit in Scripture intake, according to Torrey’s understanding?

### **The Relationship between Scripture Intake and the Holy Spirit’s Ministry**

The Holy Spirit is the author of revelation—the written Word of God. The Holy Spirit is the ablest interpreter of what he has revealed. Torrey believed the Holy Spirit was “right at hand” to interpret his Word for the child of God.<sup>84</sup> Torrey wrote, “To understand the book we must look to him, and the darkest places become clear.”<sup>85</sup> Torrey believed in the necessity of the inward illumination of God’s Spirit, enabling the believer to correctly understand the Word of God. He wrote, “It is not enough that we have the objective revelation in the written word, we must have the (subjective) inward illumination of the Holy Spirit to enable us to comprehend it. It is a great mistake to try to comprehend a spiritual revelation with the natural understanding.”<sup>86</sup> In Torrey’s estimation, the attempt to interpret the Word of God using purely natural faculties, unaided by the Spirit’s illuminating ministry, resulted in the “bog of the higher criticism.”<sup>87</sup> The Holy Spirit illuminates the believer’s understanding, guiding him to an

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<sup>82</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 22.

<sup>83</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 23.

<sup>84</sup> R. A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches: A Thorough and Comprehensive Study of What the Bible Has to Say Concerning the Great Doctrines of Which It Treats* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1898), 257.

<sup>85</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 257.

<sup>86</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 257.

<sup>87</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 257.

accurate interpretation of Scripture's meaning and application.

The Holy Spirit also empowered effective Christian living. Torrey taught that the secret of "effectual" living is "knowing the power of the Spirit through the Word."<sup>88</sup> Torrey warned of some who attempted to magnify the Holy Spirit's ministry in Christian living, to the neglect of the Word. An emphasis on the Spirit's role in Christian living that neglects the Word of God results in "fanaticism, baseless enthusiasm, [and] wildfire."<sup>89</sup> Torrey likewise warned of others who magnify the Word but ignore the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Of this extreme, he warned, "It leads to dead orthodoxy, truth without life and power."<sup>90</sup> The balanced Christian life recognizes the "instrumental power of the Word through which the Holy Spirit works, and the living, personal power of the Holy Spirit who acts through the Word."<sup>91</sup> Torrey advocated a Christ-centered spirituality of the Word and the Spirit.

While Torrey served as dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, he contributed monthly articles to the school's periodical, *The King's Business*. Torrey served as either editor, associate editor, or contributing editor of the publication between October 1912 and (at least) July 1919. One of his monthly contributions was a series of devotional comments on the New Testament titled, "Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship." Torrey's devotional comments spanned the Gospel of Matthew through Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Commenting on Colossians 3:16, Torrey drew a parallel between Paul's admonition to the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," and his

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<sup>88</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power in Christian Life and Service* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 44. Effectual living was a very comprehensive descriptor for Torrey. Effectual living included, but is not limited to, freedom from the law of sin and death (50–52), Christlikeness of character (55–57), and the power to communicate God's truth to others (64–66).

<sup>89</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 44.

<sup>90</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 44–45.

<sup>91</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 45.

admonition to the Ephesians, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Torrey wrote,

What in the passage before us [Colossians 3:16] is ascribed to being full of the Word, is in the Epistle to the Ephesians . . . ascribed to being *full of the Spirit*. The explanation of this is very simple . . . the Word is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses, and therefore, what is ascribed in one place to the Person who does the work, is in the other place ascribed to the instrument through which He does it. It is empty nonsense for one to think of speaking of being “filled with the Spirit” if he does not fill himself with the Word.<sup>92</sup>

In Torrey’s view, the Holy Spirit illumined the believer for an accurate understanding of God’s Word and empowered the believer through the instrumentality of the Word to live an effectual Christian life.

### **The Relationship between Scripture Intake and Evangelism**

What connection did Torrey make between the Word of God and the practice of evangelism? In a sermon titled “The Fourfold Christ,” Torrey stressed the indispensable necessity of a personal relationship with Christ. His message presented Christ from four vantage points, “Christ for Us, Christ in Us, Christ on Us, and Christ with Us,” and was based on Colossians 2:9, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”<sup>93</sup> Torrey’s third point makes an inferential correlation between Scripture intake and evangelism.

Torrey argued that a believer must have Christ on him, clothing him with his own likeness. The secret to a Christlike life was the practice of “beholding Christ” (2 Cor 3:18). Torrey reasoned, “Christ is the Sun, we are the mirrors; we catch His rays and reflect them out upon the world. If you wish men to see more of Christ *on* you . . . keep looking up into His glorious face and thus keep reflecting the glory you see there.”<sup>94</sup> How

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<sup>92</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship,” *The King’s Business* 9, no. 12 (December 1918): 1100–1101 (emphasis original). See “Monday, December 9. Col. 3:16.”

<sup>93</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Uplifted Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 92–104.

<sup>94</sup> Torrey, *The Uplifted Christ*, 101 (emphasis original).

is a believer to “behold Christ?” Torrey does not specifically mention Scripture intake, but he does write, “*Spend much time alone with Jesus.*”<sup>95</sup> He warns of “the danger of letting our *work for Christ* crowd out our *communion with Christ.*”<sup>96</sup> For Torrey, spending time alone in communion with Christ was inconceivable apart from Scripture intake. The believer who communes with Christ reflects Christlikeness “out upon the world.”<sup>97</sup> The Christian who beholds Christ in the Word becomes a mirror that reflects Christ for men to see.

In a devotional comment on Acts 18:4–5, Torrey’s correlation between the Word and witness is even tighter. Torrey commented, “Paul must have been thoroughly tired by the end of the week, but he found no excuse for absenting himself from the synagogue.”<sup>98</sup> Paul reasoned with the Jews in an effort to persuade them that Jesus was the Christ. Torrey then continued,

Note the expression in v. 5, “Paul was constrained by the Word” (R.V.). It means that Paul had meditated upon the Word of God until it had gotten such a hold on him that he could not keep still. The Word impelled him on. The Word showed him that Jesus was the Christ and so overpowered him with the thought that he could not keep it to himself, he must tell it out.<sup>99</sup>

Torrey drew a definite line between Paul’s practice of scriptural meditation and his inward compulsion to proclaim Christ. The Word—pondered in Paul’s heart through the habit of meditation—impelled him to make Christ known.

Torrey observed that while he served as superintendent of the Chicago Bible Institute, students were required to engage in personal evangelism as part of their

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<sup>95</sup> Torrey, *The Uplifted Christ*, 101 (emphasis original).

<sup>96</sup> Torrey, *The Uplifted Christ*, 101 (emphasis original).

<sup>97</sup> Torrey, *The Uplifted Christ*, 101.

<sup>98</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship,” *The King’s Business* 8, no. 3 (March 1917): 266. See “Sunday, March 4. Acts 18:4, 5.”

<sup>99</sup> Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies (March 1917),” 266.

preparation for ministry. Commenting on the requirements placed on students, he remarked, “Now we require of every student in that Bible Institute that some definite work to save the lost should go hand in hand with Bible study.”<sup>100</sup> Torrey explained the rationale behind this requirement: “Bible study, unless it is accompanied with actual work for the salvation of souls, will dry up a man’s soul quicker than almost anything else.”<sup>101</sup> The Christian who only receives the Word, without a commensurate outlet in the form of personal evangelism, becomes stagnated.

Scripture intake and personal evangelism provide a matrix for healthy Christian spirituality. These practices significantly impacted Torrey’s spirituality and piety, as did the habit of prevailing prayer.

### **Torrey and Prayer**

As he prayed, Torrey expressed his indomitable faith in an omnipotent God. For Torrey, the practice of prayer directed the power of God into his life. Torrey put it this way: “Prayer can do anything that God can do, and as God can do anything, prayer is omnipotent.”<sup>102</sup> Torrey believed God’s resources were unlimited, and prayer was the God-ordained means to receive God’s limitless supply. Torrey wrote, “Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God’s infinite grace and power.”<sup>103</sup> Torrey understood prayer to be an essential spiritual practice in a successful Christian life. Torrey lamented the omission of prayer in Christian living. He remarked, “The one who would succeed in the Christian life must lead a life of prayer. Very much of the failure in Christian living today, and in Christian work, results from neglect of prayer.”<sup>104</sup> Torrey described several

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<sup>100</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Revival Addresses* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1903), 258. Torrey’s comments were recorded in an address titled “Three Fires.”

<sup>101</sup> Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 258.

<sup>102</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 17.

<sup>104</sup> Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life*, 192.

important principles relating to the practice of prayer, seven of which are detailed in the following section.

### **The Time and Place of Prayer**

In the 1927 edition of *The Gist of the Lesson*, Torrey commented on Christ's prayer habits.<sup>105</sup> He observed in Mark's Gospel that the Savior sought renewal and refreshment in God's presence: "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35 ESV). Commenting on these words, Torrey further observed, "His choice of a time and place to pray are full of suggestiveness, and severely condemns the folly of those who think they can do all the necessary praying while at their work and can pray equally well at all times and in all places."<sup>106</sup> Concerning the best time to pray, Torrey commented, "We can pray at any time and in any place, but the best time to pray is late at night or in the early morning hours when others are at sleep and when therefore we shall not be disturbed."<sup>107</sup> Regarding the best place to pray, Torrey recommended, "The best place to pray is the solitary place, a place where we can get as far away from man and his intrusions as possible."<sup>108</sup> Torrey then made a comment which has implications for the practice of evangelism, though he did not specify evangelistic enterprise: "The man who

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<sup>105</sup> *The Gist of the Lesson* was a series of little booklets that Torrey authored between 1899 and his death in 1928. Torrey's terse and concise comments were based on the Scripture text of the International Sunday School lessons, a Sunday school curriculum followed by many Protestant churches at the time. Torrey wrote *The Gist* as an aid to Sunday school teachers, to assist them in the preparation of their Bible lessons. He intended *The Gist* to be a tool to stimulate thoughtful meditation on God's Word. See also <https://scriptoriumdaily.com/the-gist-of-the-lesson/>.

<sup>106</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Gist of the Lesson: A Concise Exposition of the International Sunday School Lessons for the Year 1927* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1927), 16–17. See "Lesson 3, January 23, 1927, 'Prayer in the Christian Life.'"

<sup>107</sup> Torrey, *The Gist of the Lesson*, 17.

<sup>108</sup> Torrey, *The Gist of the Lesson*, 17. Concerning solitary prayer, Torrey also observed, "If you have never known what it is to kneel down in the woods where no human voice could be heard, or beneath a tree in the silent starlight or moonlight and look up with open eyes toward the face of God and talk to him, you have missed a blessing that cannot be described, but that every child of God should know" (Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 133).

would help his fellowmen by intimate fellowship with them must cultivate a still more intimate fellowship with God.”<sup>109</sup> One who is in intimate fellowship with God and experienced in prayer is prepared to serve his fellowmen in a variety of manners, including evangelism.

### **The Manner of Prayer**

Torrey taught the necessity of persistence in prayer. He called persistent prayer “praying through.”<sup>110</sup> A believer ought to pray *persistently*. Why does God not grant his believing child the very thing they ask upon first request? Torrey answered, “God would do more for us, and better for us, than to merely give us that thing. He would do us the far greater good of training us into persistent faith.”<sup>111</sup> Torrey believed that the strong person of prayer, when they begin to pray for a certain matter, keeps on praying until they pray it through and obtain what they ask. Torrey continued, “There is no more blessed training in prayer than that which comes through being compelled to ask again and again and again, even through a long period of years before one obtains that which he seeks from God.”<sup>112</sup> Torrey bemoaned the habit of giving up in prayer when an answer was not immediately forthcoming: “Here is where many fail. They do not pray through. They pray for a thing once or twice and then conclude it is not God’s will to give it.”<sup>113</sup> Torrey exhorted believers to not give up in prayer, for they may be on the verge of receiving just when they lose heart. He warned, “Many a person prays and prays up to the very point of getting a thing, and then fails because he does not pray through.”<sup>114</sup> Torrey believed that

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<sup>109</sup> Torrey, *The Gist of the Lesson*, 17.

<sup>110</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 172.

<sup>111</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 171.

<sup>112</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 173.

<sup>113</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1908), 100.

<sup>114</sup> Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions*, 100–101.

God was looking for a “resolute determination to obtain the things that we seek, a determination that will not be put to shame by any seeming refusal or delay on God’s part.”<sup>115</sup>

### **The Motive of Prayer**

Torrey believed that the ruling motive behind prayer should be the glory of God. He wrote, “The supreme desire of every believer’s heart should be that God be duly honored and revered.”<sup>116</sup> The highest motive, the chief purpose in all prayer, “should be that God may be glorified in granting our petitions.”<sup>117</sup> Torrey further taught that the believer who asks great things of God honors God’s name. He asked, “Do you realize that we honor the name of Christ by asking great things in that name? Do you realize that we dishonor that name by not daring to ask great things in that name?”<sup>118</sup> Motivated by a desire for God’s glory, Torrey encouraged the believer to ask great things of God.

### **The Object of Prayer**

Torrey believed the child of God should pray directly *to* God the Father *through* the mediatorship of Christ the Son and *in* the power of God the Holy Spirit.<sup>119</sup> Torrey’s theology of prayer was distinctly Trinitarian. The doctrine of the triune nature of God became intensely relevant in the practice of prayer. Torrey wrote, “There are many who think that the doctrine of the Trinity is a purely abstract, metaphysical and utterly impractical doctrine. Not at all. It involves our whole spiritual life, and it is of the highest importance in the very practical matter of praying.”<sup>120</sup> Torrey taught that prayer should be

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<sup>115</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 168–69.

<sup>116</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 430.

<sup>117</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 430.

<sup>118</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 144.

<sup>119</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 84 (emphasis original).

<sup>120</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 84.

directed *to* God the Father *through* God the Son and uttered *in* God the Holy Spirit's power. He further elaborated, "The prayer that God answers is the prayer that is to God the Father, that is on the ground of the atoning blood of God the Son, and that is under the direction and in the power of God the Holy Spirit."<sup>121</sup>

Torrey believed that prayer should be directed to God the Father but that Scripture also taught and permitted prayer to God the Son. He wrote, "One of the most distinctive characteristics of Christians is that they pray to Jesus Christ. They were spoken of in apostolic days as those who called on the name of Jesus (Acts 9:14, 21; 1 Cor 1:2)."<sup>122</sup>

In the 1898 publication of *What the Bible Teaches*, Torrey attempted to answer the question, "Ought we to pray to the Holy Spirit?"

There is no recorded prayer in the Bible to the Holy Spirit, but the communion of the Holy Spirit is spoken of. This may imply prayer, but it may mean the partaking of the Holy Spirit. (Compare 1 Cor. 10:16) We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit for everything, and so must look to Him, which implies prayer. Yet it is the Father and the Son who give the Holy Spirit. ([John] 14:16, 17; 15:26; Acts 2:33) It would seem then that if we wished Him, instead of praying directly to Him, we should pray to the Father or Son for Him.<sup>123</sup>

Torrey believed the Holy Spirit was fully divine, equal with the Father and the Son. The Spirit was worthy of worship and adoration. While Torrey could make a case for prayer directed to the Holy Spirit, his standard teaching and practice of prayer seem to address the Father as the object of prayer.

If prayer should be directed to the Father, what did it mean to pray in Jesus's name? Torrey offered the following answer: "To pray in the name of Christ is to pray relying upon what Christ is and has done, to pray on the ground of Jesus Christ's

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<sup>121</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 96.

<sup>122</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 416–18.

<sup>123</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 418. Later in 1908, Torrey cited one recorded example of a prayer addressed to the Holy Spirit. See Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions*, 98. The doubtful text cited was, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live" (Ezekiel 37:9 ESV).

acceptability with the Father.”<sup>124</sup> The one characteristic that distinguishes Christian prayer from pagan prayer is that it is offered in the name of Christ.<sup>125</sup> For Torrey, praying in the name of Jesus meant more than merely “attaching that phrase, ‘In Jesus’ name,’ or ‘For Jesus’ sake,’” to one’s prayers.<sup>126</sup> Torrey taught that the child of God held no claim on heaven’s bank. Praying in Jesus’s name meant recognizing that Jesus Christ possessed “infinite claims” on heaven’s bank. He wrote, “[Praying in the name of Jesus] means that we go to the bank of heaven . . . upon which Jesus Christ has infinite claims, and in Jesus’ name . . . ask whatever we need.”<sup>127</sup> In Torrey’s theology, then, the scriptural pattern of prayer offered supplication on the basis of Christ’s merits, the proper object of prayer was God the Father, and the Holy Spirit empowered prayer.

### **The Relationship between Prayer and Scripture Intake**

I addressed the relationship between Scripture intake and prayer in the foregoing section. I necessarily restrict my comments somewhat at this point. One nuance in Torrey’s thought concerning the relationship between prayer and Scripture intake concerned the matter of faith. Torrey wrote, “We must pray with faith. . . . There must then be confident, unwavering expectation. . . . But how can one get this faith?”<sup>128</sup> Torrey answered his question by an appeal to Romans 10:17, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” He wrote, “If we are to have faith, we must study the Word of God and find out what is promised. . . . If I am to have faith when I pray, I must find some promise in the Word of God on which to rest my faith.”<sup>129</sup> The daily and

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<sup>124</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 446.

<sup>125</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 446.

<sup>126</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 137.

<sup>127</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 137.

<sup>128</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 19.

<sup>129</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 19–20.

careful study of the Word of God was necessary to grow a faith that prevailed in prayer.

### **The Relationship between Prayer and the Holy Spirit's Ministry**

How did Torrey elaborate on the role of the Holy Spirit in the practice of prayer? In an address based on Acts 6 and 7 and titled "A Christ-like Man," Torrey presented Stephen as a Christlike individual and outlined his Christlike character. Torrey observed that Stephen was a man "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). He argued that because Stephen was a man of faith and filled with the Holy Spirit, he was also a man of prayer. He contended that Stephen was a man of prayer because, in the hour of trouble, when Stephen was threatened with loss of life, Stephen's "spontaneous" impulse was prayer. Torrey further argued that Stephen's last two recorded utterances were prayers modeled after the utterances of Christ. Based on Stephen's example, Torrey then averred, "No man can be full of the Holy Ghost who is not a man of prayer."<sup>130</sup> Does one pray because he is full of the Holy Spirit? Is prayer instrumental in receiving the Holy Spirit's fullness? Torrey would answer the first question affirmatively. His teaching, however, laid greater emphasis on the practice of prayer as a means of receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit. Torrey argued, "Prayer has power to bring the Holy Spirit in all his blessed power and manifold gracious operations into our hearts and lives."<sup>131</sup>

Torrey observed in Scripture a connection between prayer and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Torrey cited a string of biblical texts to substantiate his observation. One of his frequently cited texts was Luke 11:13, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." Torrey observed from this text that God gives the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. Torrey then cited Acts 1:14 and Acts 2:4 to demonstrate that it

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<sup>130</sup> Torrey, *The Voice of God*, 228.

<sup>131</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 88.

was “after the first disciples had continued in prayer and supplication that they were filled with the Holy Ghost.”<sup>132</sup>

Torrey observed from Acts 4:31 that when the disciples had prayed, “the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (KJV).<sup>133</sup> Citing Acts 8:15–17, Torrey observed that when Peter and John went to Samaria and found young converts who had not yet experienced the fullness of the Spirit, they “prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost . . . and they received the Holy Ghost” (KJV).<sup>134</sup> Torrey then summarized his argument: “It is manifestly prayer that brings the fullness of the Spirit’s power into our hearts and lives. One great reason why so many of us have so little of the Holy Spirit’s power in our lives and service, is because we spend so little time and thought in prayer.”<sup>135</sup> In Torrey’s understanding, prayer was the principal means of receiving the Spirit’s fullness.

Prayer was not only a means of receiving the Spirit’s fullness; the Spirit empowered the practice of prayer. Torrey proposed that the Holy Spirit helps, guides, and gives power to the believer in prayer.<sup>136</sup> Torrey believed the Holy Spirit teaches a believer how to pray. In Torrey’s understanding of prayer, true prayer was prayer uttered “in the Spirit” (Eph 6:18; Jude 20). Torrey consistently defined praying in the Holy Spirit as “the prayer the Spirit inspires and directs.”<sup>137</sup> Torrey admonished the believer to recognize their inadequacy and weakness in prayer and to cast themselves on the Holy Spirit. He wrote of this dependence on the Spirit in prayer:

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<sup>132</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 88. Torrey cited Acts 1:14, “All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.” As a result, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

<sup>133</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 88.

<sup>134</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 88.

<sup>135</sup> Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, 89.

<sup>136</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 261.

<sup>137</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 261. See also Torrey, *How to Pray*, 18–19.

When we come into God's presence we should recognize our infirmity, our ignorance of what we should pray for, or how we should do it, and in the consciousness of our utter inability to pray aright look up to the Holy Spirit and cast ourselves utterly upon him to direct our prayers, to lead out our desires and guide our utterance of them.<sup>138</sup>

Torrey averred that "the prayer that God the Holy Spirit inspires is the prayer that God the Father answers."<sup>139</sup> Because prayer offered in the Holy Spirit makes prayer effectual, the believer should seek to pray under the Spirit's influence and inspiration rather than "rushing heedlessly into God's presence and asking the first thing that comes into our mind, or that some thoughtless one asks us to pray."<sup>140</sup> In Torrey's view, heedless and thoughtless prayer was not praying in the Spirit and was not true prayer.<sup>141</sup>

What should one do when he does not feel like praying? Should he cease praying until he does feel like it? Torrey counseled, "Not at all. When we feel least like praying is the time when we most need to pray. We should wait quietly before God and tell him how cold and prayerless our hearts are."<sup>142</sup> During seasons when a believer does not feel like praying, Torrey further advised, "Look up to him and trust him and expect him to send the Holy Spirit to warm our hearts and draw them out in prayer."<sup>143</sup> God operates through his Spirit to warm cold hearts. Reflecting on the Spirit's heart-warming influences in his own life, Torrey wrote,

I can testify today that some of the most wonderful seasons of prayer I have ever had, have been times when as I first knelt to pray I had no real sense of God. There seemed to be no one there. I seemed as if I were talking into empty space; and then I have just looked up to God and asked him and trusted him to send his Holy Spirit to teach me to pray, to lead me into his presence, and to make him real to me, and the

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<sup>138</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 261.

<sup>139</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 261.

<sup>140</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 261.

<sup>141</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 261.

<sup>142</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 19.

<sup>143</sup> Torrey, *How to Pray*, 19.

Spirit has come, and he has made God so real to me that it almost seemed that if I opened my eyes I could see him.<sup>144</sup>

Torrey advocated simple honesty before God when one does not feel like praying. Torrey eschewed pretense in prayer and favored transparency. When the believer confesses the coldness of his heart to God, “It will not be long before the glow of the Spirit’s presence will fill our hearts, and we will begin to pray with freedom, directness, and power.”<sup>145</sup> When the Spirit’s presence fills the believer’s heart and guides his prayers, he prays in the Spirit, which is true prayer.

### *Praying in the Holy Spirit*

Concerning how one prays in the Holy Spirit, Torrey outlines seven essential steps.<sup>146</sup> The first step is the complete surrender of the believer’s will to God. Unless the Christian makes an absolute surrender of his life to God, the Holy Spirit cannot take control of his life, much less his praying. Torrey’s second step is scrupulous obedience to God in every department of life. Torrey believed effective praying was not possible apart from obedience to the will of God. The third step is a recognition of complete dependence on the Holy Spirit to pray wisely and prevailingly. In the fourth and fifth steps, a Christian must definitely ask for the Spirit’s guidance in prayer and then expect that guidance. Torrey’s sixth step is repeatedly being filled with the Holy Spirit. Torrey wrote at this point, “A Spirit-filled man will always be a prayerful man, and his prayers will be in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>147</sup> The final step to praying in the Spirit is to study the Word of God “daily and earnestly.”<sup>148</sup> Torrey’s emphasized, “The written Word of God is the

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<sup>144</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 89.

<sup>145</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Southern Cross Special Mission Number*, September 10, 1902, box 3, folder 2, page 16, Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>146</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 182–87.

<sup>147</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 186.

<sup>148</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 186.

visible instrument through which the invisible Spirit of God works, so if you would keep filled with that Spirit you must keep full of the Word.”<sup>149</sup> In Torrey’s mind, a believer filled with the Spirit’s truth is more likely to pray in the Spirit’s power.

Torrey also described the characteristics of prayer in the Holy Spirit. The first mark of prayer in the Spirit is “intense earnestness.”<sup>150</sup> Torrey connected this earnestness in prayer to the teaching in Romans 8:26b, “The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”<sup>151</sup> He bemoaned the lack of intense longing in the soul to obtain the answer to one’s prayer, even when praying for the salvation of a lost person. He wrote, “We pray even for the salvation of the lost with much indifference, though we ought to realize that if our prayers are not heard they are going to spend eternity in hell.”<sup>152</sup> Observe the application Torrey made between praying in the Spirit and the practice of evangelism. Torrey believed that men and women under the control of the Holy Spirit “cry mightily to God” for the conversion of sinners.<sup>153</sup> The second characteristic of praying in the Spirit is intelligent praying. Torrey related this characteristic to Romans 8:27, which states, “And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”<sup>154</sup> The third characteristic of praying in the Spirit is confidence that God has heard and answered one’s prayer. The final characteristic of Spirit-directed prayer is persistence

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<sup>149</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 186.

<sup>150</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 178.

<sup>151</sup> Torrey did not explain the connection he observed between the Spirit’s deep groanings *on behalf of the believer* and the *believer’s* own intense earnestness in prayer. Presumably a believer who is filled with the Spirit will echo the deep groanings uttered by the Holy Spirit. One wishes Torrey had elaborated more on the relationship between the Spirit’s earnest prayers and the believer who prays with intense earnestness.

<sup>152</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 179.

<sup>153</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 179–81.

<sup>154</sup> Torrey did not elaborate on the relationship he observed between the Spirit who prayed according to the mind of God *on behalf of* the saint and the Spirit’s enabling the believer to pray intelligently. Presumably again, a believer who prayed under the guidance of the Spirit would pray in accord with God’s mind and will. One wishes Torrey had expounded on this connection more fully.

and determination in prayer.<sup>155</sup> The Holy Spirit empowered the Christian to “pray through.”<sup>156</sup>

### *The Prayer of Faith*

One further dimension of Torrey’s teaching concerning prayer and the Holy Spirit’s enabling work needs to be addressed. Torrey believed in the prayer of faith. As a scriptural basis for the prayer of faith, he often cited 1 John 5:14–15, “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.” The other text Torrey frequently cited was Mark 11:24, “Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Torrey defined the prayer of faith as “the prayer that has no doubt whatever that God has heard the prayer and granted the specific thing which we have asked of him.”<sup>157</sup> In Torrey’s thinking, the Word of God formed the warrant for the prayer of faith. Prayer that accords with God’s will as revealed in Scripture constitutes the prayer of faith. The normal warrant for the prayer of faith was Scripture.

However, Torrey believed it was possible for a child of God to pray the prayer of faith in the absence of a definite promise from the Word. Torrey counseled Christians to study the Word of God to ascertain its promises. With a correctly interpreted promise of God in hand, Torrey urged Christians to plead that promise before God with confident assurance that he would answer the prayer.

In the absence of a clear scriptural promise, Torrey believed the Holy Spirit sometimes imparted knowledge of God’s will in matters not specifically addressed in Scripture. Torrey wrote of this confident assurance based on the Spirit’s direct impression

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<sup>155</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 181–82.

<sup>156</sup> Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions*, 100–101.

<sup>157</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 158.

in a believer's heart: "The Holy Spirit . . . oftentimes makes clear to us as we pray what it is the will of God to do, so that, listening to his voice we can pray with absolute confidence . . . that God has heard our prayer and granted the thing that we asked."<sup>158</sup> For Torrey, this was the prayer of faith.

Torrey believed God willed to give his children many blessings not specifically promised in the Word of God. Torrey wrote, "There are many things which we need which are not definitely promised in the Word, and it doesn't follow at all that because they are not definitely promised in the Word that they are not 'according to the will of God.'"<sup>159</sup> If a certain matter is not addressed in the Word of God, how does God impart assurance to his praying child to pray in faith? Torrey answered, "It is the method of God, when we pray, to give us, by the direct illumination of the Holy Spirit, to know his will even in regard to things about which he has given no definite promise."<sup>160</sup> Torrey did not believe these impressions from the Spirit could be manipulated. In the absence of an impression from the Spirit, Torrey wrote, "It is not always possible to pray the 'prayer of faith,' only when God makes it possible by the leading of His Holy Spirit."<sup>161</sup> In Torrey's theology of prayer, God remained sovereign over Spirit-given impressions.

Torrey offered three examples of the prayer of faith. One example pertained to the healing of a sick individual. The second example related to the conversion of a lost person. The final example concerned the supply of a needed sum of money. In each example, the Holy Spirit gave an impression to the praying person(s) that the request lay within the will of God, that the request was heard by God, and that the petition offered

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<sup>158</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 163.

<sup>159</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 154.

<sup>160</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 154.

<sup>161</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 164.

would soon be answered. Torrey averred that he could not always pray with such confidence.<sup>162</sup>

The Spirit of God empowered faithful prayer. Faithful prayer was the conduit to receive the fullness of God's Spirit. Prevailing prayer also played a key role in Christian witness.

### **The Relationship between Prayer and Evangelism**

Torrey connected time spent with God in prayer with the cultivation of Christlike character. Torrey reflected on 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Torrey observed that as a consequence of tarrying long in God's presence, Moses's face reflected the glory of God. Torrey wrote, "Even so we, going up into the Mount of prayer, away from the world, alone with God, and remaining long alone with God, catch the rays of his glory so that *when we come down to our fellow men . . . we reflect out upon the world the moral glory of God.*"<sup>163</sup> Torrey posited that time spent communing with God facilitated the acquisition of Christlike character. The acquisition of Christlike character, acquired through lingering in God's presence, directly influenced one's service to his fellowman.

One distinctly Christlike characteristic is love. In Torrey's thought, God's love for man is antecedent to man's love for both God and his fellowman. He wrote, "We love because God first loved us. His love *to* us awakens love *in* us: first to him and then to man."<sup>164</sup> How is love for one's fellowman fanned into flame? Torrey answered, "God

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<sup>162</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 154–57.

<sup>163</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*, 20–21 (emphasis added).

<sup>164</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 405 (emphasis original).

imparts increasing love in answer to prayer.”<sup>165</sup> Prayer was the means of grace that channeled God’s love into the believer’s life. Love to both God and man, then, constituted the wellspring of evangelism.<sup>166</sup>

Did Torrey make additional connections between prayer and evangelism?

Torrey wrote three articles for a publication titled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. The twelve-volume series was published quarterly from 1910 to 1915. The series was intended to “confront the growing tide of skepticism and unbelief”<sup>167</sup> in Protestant Christianity and “to set forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith.”<sup>168</sup> Torrey himself edited the final two volumes of the publication.<sup>169</sup> Torrey penned three articles that appeared in *The Fundamentals*, including an article titled “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism.”<sup>170</sup>

In this article Torrey wrote, “The most important human factor in effective evangelism is *prayer*.”<sup>171</sup> In the article Torrey lamented that the practice of evangelism at home was becoming more mechanical, while evangelistic methods were being resorted to that “are more and more revolting to all spiritually minded people.”<sup>172</sup> Torrey bewailed the practice of evangelism on the foreign field because, evangelism overseas was

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<sup>165</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 407.

<sup>166</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 363–64. See also R. A. Torrey, *Outline Studies on 1 John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 67–69. Torrey connected prayer and meditating on Scripture to the awakening of love for both God and man.

<sup>167</sup> Adam Wade Greenway, “The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism in the Ministry of Reuben Archer Torrey” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 56–57.

<sup>168</sup> R. A. Torrey, preface to *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 3, ed. A. C. Dixon (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917), 5.

<sup>169</sup> Greenway, “The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism,” 56–57.

<sup>170</sup> R. A. Torrey, ed., “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 11 (Chicago: Testimony, 1915), 97–107.

<sup>171</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 97 (emphasis original).

<sup>172</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 103.

becoming “merely educational and sociological.”<sup>173</sup> Torrey recommended a solution: “What is needed above everything else today is prayer, true prayer, prayer in the power of the Holy Ghost, and prayer that meets the conditions of prevailing prayer so plainly laid down in the Word of God.”<sup>174</sup> Torrey also made specific recommendations for the practice of prayer.

Torrey recommended that every minister and Christian construct a prayer list: “He should write at the top of a sheet of paper the following words: ‘God helping me, I will pray earnestly and work persistently for the conversion of the following persons.’”<sup>175</sup> The Christian should then wait on God to reveal to him the names of specific individuals to place on the prayer list. He then advised, “Each day he [the Christian] should go to God in very definite prayer with that prayer list and cry to God in the earnestness of the Holy Spirit for the conversion of these individuals and never cease to pray for them until they are definitely converted.”<sup>176</sup>

Torrey also believed prayer should be offered to God for the spiritual awakening of the church and recommended offering specific prayer requests, including, “Pray that the members of the church be clothed upon with power from on high and filled with a passion for the salvation of the lost.”<sup>177</sup> The church needed awakening. When the church experienced awakening, one result would be a zeal for the salvation of lost people. Torrey believed that while a church prayed for revival, they should at the same time “put themselves at God’s disposal for Him to use them in any way He will, in personal work or testimony.”<sup>178</sup> Torrey contended that when a church went out under God’s leadership,

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<sup>173</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 103.

<sup>174</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 103.

<sup>175</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 104.

<sup>176</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 104.

<sup>177</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 104.

<sup>178</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 105.

dealing in love, wisdom, and persistence with lost people, a revival “is bound to result.”<sup>179</sup> In Torrey’s thinking, genuine awakening in the church resulted in a renewed evangelistic endeavor on the part of God’s people. Awakening was both the fruit of prayer and evangelistic faithfulness.

One final comment from Torrey illustrates the vital connection in his thinking between prayer and evangelism. In a pastoral letter to the Church of the Open Door that appeared in the 1923 edition of *The Open Door Reporter*, Torrey admonished the congregation toward greater faithfulness in prayer and evangelism:

There is nothing upon which the whole life and usefulness of a church depends so much as upon our praying. If we pray as we ought, “In the Holy Ghost” (Jude 20; Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26, 27) and in the name of Jesus, with that intense earnestness and determination that the Holy Spirit Himself imparts to us, all our problems will be solved, all difficulties will be overcome and the power of God will come upon us as a church and as individuals, so that we shall have that consuming passion for the salvation of the lost that we ought to have, and put forth the definite effort for the salvation of others that we ought to put forth.<sup>180</sup>

Torrey could almost be accused of construing prayer as the proverbial “silver bullet” in evangelistic effectiveness. Observe three recurrent emphases in his theology of prayer. He advocated prayer offered “in the Holy Ghost.” He stressed prayer offered in the name of Jesus. He emphasized determination or earnestness in prayer. Observe also that when a church prays determinedly, in the Spirit, and in the name of Christ, the results will be two-fold: the church will experience a “consuming passion” for the salvation of lost people, and the people of God will exert effort to reach lost people. Torrey connected prevailing prayer and the practice of evangelism.

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<sup>179</sup> Torrey, “The Place of Prayer in Evangelism,” 105.

<sup>180</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Message from Our Pastor,” *The Open Door Reporter*, box 4, folder 13, page 2, Torrey Collection (Moody). This publication was probably printed in late 1923 or early 1924. The document contains a treasurer’s report for 1923 and a proposed budget for 1924. The pastoral letter from Torrey to the congregation may have been written in the last days of 1923. The letter itself is undated but it is safe to conjecture a date in late 1923 or early 1924.

## **Conclusion**

Torrey prioritized communion with God through Scripture intake and prayer. Bible study and prayer intertwined in Torrey's devotional practice, one naturally feeding and flowing into the other. The twin practices of Scripture intake and prayer constituted two strands in the mosaic of his spirituality.

Likewise, the Spirit of God played an integral role in the outworking of Torrey's spiritual disciplines. The Spirit of God empowered prayer, while prayer served as an essential conduit of the Spirit's fullness in Torrey's life. The Spirit of God illuminated the Word of God to Torrey's understanding. In Torrey's view, a spirituality of the Word and the Spirit characterized a balanced spiritual life. According to Torrey's interpretation, the experience of being filled with the Spirit and allowing the Word of Christ to dwell richly within constituted the same experience; they also bore striking resemblance to one another in Pauline parlance.

Torrey's disciplines of the Word and prayer nurtured his practice of evangelism. Torrey spent time in God's presence, feeding on the Word and communing with him in prayer. These spiritual practices served as a conduit of God's grace. By means of communion with God, Torrey cultivated a Christlike character and stimulated his love to God and man. For Torrey, the wellspring of evangelism was love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the next chapter, I examine in detail Torrey's pneumatology and exhibit how the Spirit-filled life empowered Torrey for a lifestyle of witness for his Master.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PNEUMATOLOGY OF R. A. TORREY

The Holy Spirit ignited spiritual life within R. A. Torrey and animated his Christian spirituality. In time, he came to reverently regard the Holy Spirit as a “personal friend.”<sup>1</sup> In his lived experience, the Holy Spirit energized Torrey’s practice of prayer, his intake of Scripture, and his testimony to the living Christ. Torrey did not regard the Spirit as an abstraction of Christian theology. For Reuben Torrey, the Spirit of God was a divine person who, like an artesian well, satisfied his deepest longings.

In chapter 2, I alluded to the impact of John 4:14 on Torrey before he ever came to faith in Christ.<sup>2</sup> The text contains the words of Christ spoken to the Samaritan woman: “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Torrey commented on these words in his “Studies in the Gospel According to John,” published in *The King’s Business*. He interpreted the water to which Christ alluded as the Holy Spirit. Torrey commented, “[Christ’s words] show how the Holy Spirit whom one receives . . . comes to dwell within the one who thus drinks and fully and forever satisfies every deepest longing of the heart.”<sup>3</sup> Torrey’s comments highlight the soul-satisfying presence of the Holy Spirit in personal experience.

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Torrey, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” box 3, folder 2, Torrey Collection (Moody), 3. Torrey wrote, “I know the Holy Spirit is divine by my own conscience. The Holy Spirit is a personal friend of mine. The Holy Spirit is more real in my life than any person I have ever met on earth.” While the Word of God informed Torrey’s understanding of the Holy Spirit, he also understood the person and work of the Holy Spirit experientially.

<sup>2</sup> See chap. 2, sec. “Conversion and Call to Ministry” on p. 28 for my reference to Torrey’s comments on John 4:14 concerning his early spiritual formation.

<sup>3</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Studies in the Gospel According to John,” *The King’s Business* 5, no. 6 (June 1914): 330–31.

Torrey wed Christian theology to his experience of the Holy Spirit. He believed the living God existed as a triune being. His confession of faith in the Trinity accorded with orthodox statements of faith. Torrey believed that Christians generally possessed a doctrinal and experiential knowledge of the Father and the Son. He pointed out that Christians assent to at least a credal knowledge of the Third Person of the triune God. For example, Torrey observed that many Christians recite the apostolic benediction every Sunday: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14 ESV). While many Christians intellectually affirm the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the lived experience of some falls short of the apostolic testimony. Torrey wrote, “Anyone who knows God the Father, and God the Son, and does not know God the Holy Spirit, has not attained unto the Christian conception of God, nor to a fully Christian experience.”<sup>4</sup> Torrey’s teaching about the Holy Spirit aimed to remedy what he perceived to be a deficiency in Christian understanding and spirituality.

The Holy Spirit empowered Torrey for life and ministry. Torrey perceived his inadequacy to live the Christian life through his own strength. He wrote, “How utterly dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit at every turn of Christian life and service.”<sup>5</sup> In Torrey’s view, the Holy Spirit empowered Christian life and ministry. He wrote, “Christian life is not to be lived in the realm of the natural temperament, and Christian work is not to be done in the power of natural endowment, but Christian life is to be lived in the realm of the Spirit, and Christian work is to be done in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> In Torrey’s theology, the Holy Spirit enabled the believer to live a God-honoring life and to

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<sup>4</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1927), 28.

<sup>5</sup> R. A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches: A Thorough and Comprehensive Study of What the Bible Has to Say Concerning the Great Doctrines of Which It Treats* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1898), 267.

<sup>6</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 267.

bear effective witness for Christ.

As he studied the Word of God, Torrey formulated his theological convictions regarding the Holy Spirit's person and work. The historical milieu in which he came to faith also shaped his understanding of the Holy Spirit, particularly his doctrine of baptism with the Spirit. The following section explores the historical context that shaped Torrey's views on baptism with the Holy Spirit.

### **Spirit Baptism in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism**

Certain theological presuppositions extant during the nineteenth-century informed Torrey's thinking about baptism with the Holy Spirit. Teaching about the Spirit's person and work proliferated during the late nineteenth century. C. I. Scofield observed in 1899, "Within the last twenty years, more has been written and said upon the doctrine of the Holy Spirit than in the preceding eighteen hundred years."<sup>7</sup> Historian George Marsden appraised Scofield's assessment as "not implausible."<sup>8</sup> Marsden went on to note that a "resurgence of interest in the Holy Spirit" swept through American evangelicalism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The historical antecedent to this resurgence of interest in the Holy Spirit was the Wesleyan-Holiness movement of the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Marsden remarks, "Most of these speculations [about the Holy Spirit that emerged in the last quarter of the nineteenth century] developed in the vigorous 'Holiness' movement that emerged during

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<sup>7</sup> C. I. Scofield, *Plain Papers on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1899), 9.

<sup>8</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 72.

<sup>9</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Marsden capitalized Holiness when he referred to the Methodistic wing of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. He used the lowercase when he referred to the broader, non-Methodistic branch of the Wesleyan-holiness movement. I attempt to follow his approach herein.

the last third of the [eighteenth] century, basically out of Methodism.”<sup>11</sup>

Reuben Torrey came of age during this resurgence of interest in the Holy Spirit during the nineteenth century’s last quarter. In addition to the Wesleyan-Holiness influence, two characteristics of American Protestant Christianity contributed to the religious ferment of the nineteenth century.

Grant Wacker points to the “dry rot” and “powerlessness” of American Protestant Christianity as the two characteristics that helped “precipitate the religious ferment of the late nineteenth century.”<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, new theology proponents perceived the “dry rot” within mainstream conservatism as “morbidness.”<sup>13</sup> New theology proponents regarded conservative Christianity’s emphasis on personal sin and eternal punishment as morbid teachings.

On the other hand, holiness and higher life leaders regarded conservative Christianity’s powerlessness as a significant problem. The perceptions of higher life leaders influenced the resurgence of interest in the Holy Spirit in nineteenth-century America. Wacker notes, “For the higher life leaders . . . the problem with mainstream conservatism was not so much its austerity as its impotence, its lack of a supernaturally imparted vitality, its inability to inspire and to empower believers for Christian service.”<sup>14</sup> While the new theology reacted against conservative Christianity’s morbidness, higher life leaders reacted against conservatism’s apparent lack of spiritual vitality. Torrey embraced conservative Christian theology while lamenting the anemic condition of the Christian church.

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<sup>11</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 72.

<sup>12</sup> Grant Wacker, “The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age in American Protestantism, 1880–1910,” *Journal of American History* 72, no. 1 (June 1985): 60–62.

<sup>13</sup> Wacker, “The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age,” 62.

<sup>14</sup> Wacker, “The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age,” 61.

Wacker describes a sense of expectation that existed within the nineteenth-century evangelical movement: “The whole nineteenth-century evangelical movement, Wesleyan as well as Reformed, might well be defined as historic Protestant orthodoxy spiced with a tingling expectation that the power of the Holy Spirit, lost since the days of the apostles, was about to be restored.”<sup>15</sup> Into this atmosphere of “tingling expectation” regarding the person of the Holy Spirit, Reuben Torrey was converted and came of age spiritually.

In this section, I consider five individuals and two movements that contributed to the emphasis on Spirit baptism in nineteenth-century American evangelicalism. I do not provide a detailed description of the individuals and movements; rather, I succinctly summarize the key figures and movements and illustrate their contribution to nineteenth-century views on the baptism of the Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Holiness Movement**

The undercurrent that influenced the nineteenth-century doctrine of the baptism with the Holy Spirit more than any other was the broader holiness movement.

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<sup>15</sup> Wacker, “The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age,” 54.

<sup>16</sup> Marsden noted that nineteenth-century speculations about the Spirit of God developed during the last third of the preceding century. John Wesley (1703–1791) embraced a vision for an ethical Christian faith that found its most definitive expression in his teaching concerning “entire sanctification” (John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* [London: Epworth Press, 1952]; Melvin E. Dieter, “The Wesleyan Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 11). The experience of entire sanctification, Marsden noted, “usually involved both a growth in grace and a dramatic experience” (Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 73–74). According to Dieter, while entire sanctification need not be chronologically distinct from regeneration and justification, “Logically it is distinct from them in the continuum of salvation” (Dieter, “The Wesleyan Perspective,” 18). Wesley’s teaching opened the door for a work of grace subsequent to regeneration. Wesley did not refer to the experience of entire sanctification as the baptism of the Spirit. John Fletcher (1729–1785), Wesley’s coworker, conceptualized Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection in terms of Spirit baptism. Fletcher stated that “adult perfect Christianity . . . is consequent upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, administered by Christ Himself” (John Fletcher, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, vol. 2 [New York: Carlton and Porter, 1791], 523). Some disagreement exists among scholars regarding Wesley’s approval of Fletcher’s Pentecostal terminology. Roland Wessels contends that Wesley regarded Fletcher’s interpretation to be “erroneous” (Roland Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism, Nineteenth Century Roots,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 131). Dieter, on the other hand, writes, “Explicitly in sermon and letter and implicitly in his editing of some of Fletcher’s writings on these themes, John Wesley accepted, or at least showed no special concern for, the implications of Fletcher’s methodology” (Dieter, “The Wesleyan Perspective,” 44). Ultimately, Wesleyan-holiness preachers in the nineteenth century would follow Fletcher’s appellation.

Roland Wessels argues that the Wesleyan-holiness movement was “first on the field” in the nineteenth-century to provide an answer to the church’s impotence.<sup>17</sup> In the early decades of the nineteenth century, between 1810 and 1830, Wesleyan preachers had “neglected their uniquely Wesleyan witness.”<sup>18</sup> During the 1830s, they “recalled the mission to proclaim Christian perfection and how to receive a clean heart.”<sup>19</sup> Wesleyan preachers based their teaching on scriptural promises and the teachings of John Wesley.<sup>20</sup> The message of early nineteenth-century Wesleyan preachers focused on a second work of grace that eradicated the “sin principle.”<sup>21</sup> One of the most well-known nineteenth-century holiness preachers was a woman named Phoebe Palmer.

### **Phoebe Palmer**

Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874) was an “inspiring Bible teacher, [who] promoted holiness renewal through her ‘Tuesday Meetings’ in New York City from 1837 until her death in 1874.”<sup>22</sup> Palmer herself had sought the experience of Christian perfection unsuccessfully until July 1837.<sup>23</sup> In 1837, Palmer came to three realizations. Her first insight was that God wanted of her “naked faith in a naked promise.”<sup>24</sup> Palmer’s second

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<sup>17</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 130–31.

<sup>18</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 130–31.

<sup>19</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 130–31.

<sup>20</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 130–31.

<sup>21</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 130–31.

<sup>22</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 74–75.

<sup>23</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 132.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 18. White noted, “The idea of ‘naked’ faith . . . is faith based on no other evidence than the statements in the Bible [and] is present in both John Fletcher and John Wesley” (White, *Beauty of Holiness*, 261n83). Torrey employed similar terminology. Did he adopt this language from Palmer? He never explicitly mentioned her in his writings. While it may be plausible that Torrey was influenced by Palmer in his choice of this vocabulary, it is difficult to prove a correlation between Palmer’s language and Torrey’s use of the same. The possible connection between Palmer’s phraseology and Torrey’s employment of the same is nevertheless intriguing. For an example of Torrey’s use of “naked faith” terminology, see R. A. Torrey, “How to Receive the Holy Ghost,” in *Keswick’s Triumphant Voice: Forty-Eight Outstanding Addresses*

insight involved the recognition that she must place her “all on the altar” in an act of complete surrender to God’s will.<sup>25</sup> Her third insight was to publicly praise God for keeping his promise to sanctify completely.<sup>26</sup> Palmer presumably experienced the complete sanctification she had been searching for after she actualized these new insights.

The holiness movement advanced in the early decades of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Palmer and others. Holiness teachers did not initially use the Pentecostal language, Spirit baptism, to describe the experience of entire sanctification.<sup>27</sup> After 1840, Wesleyan thinkers began to employ the language of Spirit baptism to describe the second work of grace that resulted in sanctification.<sup>28</sup> At about the same time, another subtle shift in emphasis occurred concerning the Spirit’s baptizing work.

As the nineteenth century entered its midpoint, Wessels observed a shift in emphasis with respect to holiness teaching. Wessels noted that “in mid-century a distinct interpretation . . . came to be associated with the term ‘the baptism in the Holy Spirit.’”<sup>29</sup> Wessels observed that the new center of concern was not so much holiness or sanctification, but “a successful Christian ministry.”<sup>30</sup> Wessels wrote, “It was said, the

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*Delivered at the Keswick Convention, 1882–1962*, ed. Herbert F. Stevenson (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1963), 358–59.

<sup>25</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 74–75; Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 132. In Torrey’s seven steps to receive the baptism with the Spirit, he would also emphasize the necessity of absolute surrender to God, reminiscent of Palmer’s “all on the altar” language. I think the similarities between Palmer and Torrey may point to a cross-pollination that was occurring among holiness and higher life thinkers regarding the conditions upon which a second blessing experience could be realized. I cannot demonstrate from Torrey’s words that Palmer directly influenced his thinking on the subject.

<sup>26</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 132.

<sup>27</sup> John L. Gresham Jr., *Charles G. Finney’s Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 65–66.

<sup>28</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 131.

<sup>29</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 134.

<sup>30</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 134.

baptism in the Holy Spirit, subsequent to conversion, endues the Christian with power to be an effective witness.”<sup>31</sup> Four names emerge with respect to this new emphasis on Spirit baptism and power for ministry.

### **John Morgan**

John Morgan (1802–1884) was a professor of New Testament literature at Oberlin College. In 1845, he published an article in the *Oberlin Quarterly Review* titled “The Gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>32</sup> Morgan observed that the “effusion of the Holy Ghost” on the day of Pentecost endued the primitive church with a “superhuman wisdom, energy, boldness, and success with which the before timid and inefficient Apostles, [now] preached the Gospel.”<sup>33</sup> Morgan termed this effusion of the Holy Ghost the baptism of the Spirit. He taught that the Spirit of God testified to the believer of his adoption as a child of God.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the Spirit effected a union between Christ and his people.<sup>35</sup> Morgan believed that the baptism of the Spirit was not confined to the primitive church but was available for contemporary ministers and Christians.<sup>36</sup> Morgan argued that until saints were endued with the baptism of the Spirit, they were not prepared to “convert the nations to God.”<sup>37</sup> Torrey would later echo many of Morgan’s emphases in his teachings concerning the Holy Spirit.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 134.

<sup>32</sup> John Morgan, “The Gift of the Holy Ghost,” *Oberlin Quarterly Review* 1, no. 1 (August 1845): 90–116.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan, “The Gift of the Holy Ghost,” 94.

<sup>34</sup> Morgan, “The Gift of the Holy Ghost,” 102.

<sup>35</sup> Morgan, “The Gift of the Holy Ghost,” 102.

<sup>36</sup> Morgan, “The Gift of the Holy Ghost,” 115.

<sup>37</sup> Morgan, “The Gift of the Holy Ghost,” 115.

<sup>38</sup> Torrey never mentioned Morgan in any of his writings. Morgan is illustrative of holiness teachers who must have, either directly or indirectly, influenced Torrey’s thinking about the Spirit baptism.

## **Asa Mahan**

Another holiness writer who figured significantly in the development of the nineteenth-century doctrine of Spirit baptism was Asa Mahan (1799–1889). Mahan continued to develop the theme Morgan had introduced, that baptism in the Holy Spirit endues a person with power for effective Christian witness and service.<sup>39</sup> Mahan maintained that the baptism in the Spirit, subsequent to conversion, delivers a person from bondage to sin.<sup>40</sup> To this theme of the “higher Christian life” he added the theme Morgan had introduced, that the Holy Spirit empowers the Christian for his ministry.<sup>41</sup> In 1870, Mahan published *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit*.<sup>42</sup> In Marsden’s estimation, Mahan’s title reveals the thematic shift developing in nineteenth-century evangelicalism from an earlier “Christocentric” theme to an “emphasis on the outpourings of the Holy Spirit such as took place at the first Christian Pentecost.”<sup>43</sup> Mahan maintained that subsequent to a Christian’s conversion experience, “‘The Holy Ghost comes upon,’ ‘falls upon,’ and is ‘poured out upon him,’ and thus ‘endues him with power from on high’ for his life mission and work.”<sup>44</sup> Mahan argued that the baptism of the Spirit was essential for Christ to finish the work the Father had given him. In the same manner, the believer must be baptized with the Spirit as the “immutable means and condition of our finishing the work which Christ has given us to do.”<sup>45</sup>

## **Charles G. Finney**

Charles G. Finney (1792–1875) shines as a luminary in the constellation of

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<sup>39</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 139.

<sup>40</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 139.

<sup>41</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 139.

<sup>42</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 75.

<sup>43</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 75.

<sup>44</sup> Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (New York: George Hughes, 1870), 16.

<sup>45</sup> Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, 21–22.

nineteenth-century holiness and revivalist preachers. In his memoirs, Finney described his conversion to Christ during the autumn of 1821. Reflecting on his experience after he surrendered to Christ, Finney wrote, “All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out and the thought of my heart was, ‘I want to pour my whole soul out to God.’ The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office to pray, but my mind was too much absorbed with the interview to remember anything that I said.”<sup>46</sup> What Finney described next in his account of his conversion is significant. After his mind calmed down somewhat, he returned to the front office to sit by the fire, and then he wrote, “I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>47</sup> Finney recounted that he had no expectation of such a baptism. He had no recollection of any person ever mentioning to him that a baptism of the Spirit existed. Finney reflected, “The Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul.”<sup>48</sup> When he was later tempted to doubt the experience, he sensed a gentle reproof from the Spirit: “Will you doubt? Will you doubt? I cried ‘No! I will not doubt. I cannot doubt!’”<sup>49</sup> The Spirit of God had come to take possession of Finney’s soul.<sup>50</sup> From this time forward, Finney would be a new and different man.

The most notable difference in Finney’s life after he received the baptism of the Spirit was a passion for lost souls. Finney wrote, “But now after receiving these baptisms of the Spirit I was quite willing to preach the Gospel. . . . Nothing, it seemed to me, could compete with the worth of souls, and no labor, I thought, could be so sweet and

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<sup>46</sup> Charles G. Finney, *The Autobiography of Charles G. Finney*, ed. Helen Wessel (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1977), 21. When Finney wrote of “the interview,” he was speaking about his conversation with the Lord Jesus.

<sup>47</sup> Finney, *Autobiography*, 21.

<sup>48</sup> Finney, *Autobiography*, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Finney, *Autobiography*, 24.

<sup>50</sup> Finney, *Autobiography*, 24.

no employment so exalted as that of holding up Christ to a dying world.”<sup>51</sup> In Finney’s *Lectures on Revival*, a textbook the reader will recall Reuben Torrey read, Finney regarded a Christian who lacked the Spirit’s filling as blameworthy for his evangelistic impotence. In a chapter titled “Be Filled with the Spirit,” Finney wrote, “God placed His Spirit at your disposal, and if you lack Him, God has the right to hold you responsible for all the good you would do if He could fill you. You sin against all heaven—you should be adding to their happy number.”<sup>52</sup> As a result of the Spirit of God’s work in his soul, Finney dedicated himself to proclaiming the gospel.

In 1840, Finney published two letters to gospel ministers from all denominations. The letters appeared in the *Oberlin Evangelist*, and in them, Finney stressed the importance of the Spirit’s baptism.<sup>53</sup> Finney contended, “The main design and bearing” of the Spirit’s baptism, both for the apostles at Pentecost and for ministers in his time, “was to fill them with light and love and power in preaching the gospel.”<sup>54</sup> At this stage in his ministry, Finney was clearly associating the baptism of the Spirit with the work of gospel proclamation.

Finney continued to pair Spirit baptism and gospel proclamation when he addressed the National Council of Congregational Churches at Oberlin College in 1871. Finney chose the topic, “The Baptism of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>55</sup> Commenting on the address delivered to the Council, Wessels wrote, “Finney declared that the life work of every Christian is to convert the world. In order to do this, Christians must be baptized in the

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<sup>51</sup> Finney, *Autobiography*, 27–28.

<sup>52</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revival* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1988), 82. Torrey picked up this theme and argued similarly. The believer who lacks the Spirit baptism is culpable for all those who might have been saved but were not due to his failure to appropriate the Spirit’s power.

<sup>53</sup> Gresham, *Finney’s Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> Charles G. Finney, *The Promise of the Spirit: Charles G. Finney on Christian Holiness*, ed. Timothy L. Smith (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1980), 263, quoted in Gresham, *Finney’s Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 142.

Holy Spirit.”<sup>56</sup> Finney argued that Christians should not rest in the conversion experience. They should not be satisfied until they have obtained the enduement of power that comes from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This enduement of power from God’s Spirit was the “indispensable condition” for performing the work of gospel proclamation.<sup>57</sup> Observe the common thread woven through the Oberlin theology as represented by Morgan, Mahan, and Finney. The baptism of the Spirit was connected with power for Christian witness.

### **Dwight L. Moody**

Dwight Lyman Moody (1837–1899) followed Finney’s interpretation of the enduement of power from the Spirit, calling it “the baptism of the Holy Spirit for service.”<sup>58</sup> Moody experienced his own personal Pentecost while walking the streets of New York in 1871.<sup>59</sup> Torrey himself asserted that one of the reasons God used Moody was because “he had a very definite enduement with power from on high, a very clear and definite baptism with the Holy Ghost.”<sup>60</sup> As a result of Moody’s receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, when he later traveled to London in 1872, “The power of God wrought through him mightily.”<sup>61</sup> As a result of the Spirit’s new anointing upon Moody, “hundreds were added to the churches, and that was what led to his being invited over to the wonderful campaign that followed in later years [1873–1875].”<sup>62</sup> The experience of the Spirit baptism worked a personal transformation in Moody’s life and catapulted him

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<sup>56</sup> Wessels, “The Spirit Baptism,” 142.

<sup>57</sup> Charles G. Finney, *The Enduement of the Holy Spirit* (Noblesville, IN: J. Edwin Newby, 1966), 141.

<sup>58</sup> Dwight Lyman Moody, *Moody: His Words, Work, and Workers*, ed. W. H. Daniels (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1877), 396.

<sup>59</sup> Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 156.

<sup>60</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1923), 51.

<sup>61</sup> Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody*, 53–54.

<sup>62</sup> Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody*, 53–54.

into a renewed evangelistic ministry.

During his trip to England in 1872, Moody attended the Mildmay conference and met the Reverend William Pennefather (1816–1873), an evangelical Anglican. Dorsett noted the “indelible mark” the Mildmay conference, and Pennefather’s address in particular, made on Moody.<sup>63</sup> Pennefather invited Moody to address the conference. Dorsett noted, “Moody spoke and his reception was overwhelming.”<sup>64</sup> Moody’s introduction to Pennefather and the evangelicals at the Mildmay conference placed him within the orbit of a movement that impacted nineteenth-century evangelicalism.

### **The Keswick Movement**

In 1873, a series of meetings convened in England that emphasized Bible study and the pursuit of holiness.<sup>65</sup> These meetings grew into a larger conference that eventually settled in the Lake District site of Keswick in 1875.<sup>66</sup> Keswick historian Steven Barabas writes that the Keswick conference made “the Spirit-filled life the central, dominating theme” of its movement.<sup>67</sup> Keswick speakers generally employed terms like “the filling of the Spirit” to speak of the Pentecostal experience, rather than using the “Methodistic-Holiness terms such as ‘the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.’”<sup>68</sup> Keswick is significant for this survey because Moody became associated with a number of Keswick leaders during his visits to England and subsequently invited some of them to

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<sup>63</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 163.

<sup>64</sup> Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls*, 163–64.

<sup>65</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 77.

<sup>67</sup> Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1952), 147.

<sup>68</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 78. See also Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, 128–47.

speaking at his Northfield Conferences.<sup>69</sup> Torrey's formal association with Moody, which began in 1889, brought him within the compass of Keswick higher life teachers and their views. In 1904, Torrey was invited to speak at the Keswick convention, "where he was received with unusual enthusiasm."<sup>70</sup> I believe Torrey formulated his views on the baptism with the Holy Spirit independently of Keswick. Nevertheless, Torrey's interaction with Keswick thinkers must have exerted a refining effect on his understanding of the person and work of God's Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

Keswick teaching underscored the importance of power for ministry consequent upon the Holy Spirit's outpouring. Marsden notes, "The aspect of Keswick teaching which aroused the greatest enthusiasm among Moody's *aides-de-camp* was the

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<sup>69</sup> F. B. Meyer and Webb-Peploe are but two examples. See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 249n36.

<sup>70</sup> Marsden asserts that Torrey's presence at a Keswick conference as a speaker implies a broad agreement on Torrey's part with Keswick teachings. See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 248–49n34. Similarly, the fact that Keswick leaders invited Torrey to speak at a Keswick convention implies an endorsement of his experience and teaching. Barabas observes, "Speakers are chosen for the Keswick platform who know experimentally the doctrine of sanctification by faith, and who know how to bring others into the enjoyment of this blessing" (Barabas, *So Great Salvation*, 34). However, observe Barabas's comment regarding Keswick's theological stance: "It is the teaching of Keswick that the Holy Spirit dwells in every child of God. There are Christians who hold that the 'baptism of the Spirit' is a spiritual experience in addition to, and subsequent to, regeneration which they speak of as 'a second blessing.' . . . This view, Keswick says, is utterly unauthorized by Scripture" (*So Great Salvation*, 130–31). Barabas's comments may reflect an evolution in Keswick teaching, an evolution in their understanding of Spirit baptism that was not so convictionally embraced and enforced in 1904. Torrey clearly believed the baptism with the Spirit was subsequent to regeneration, as we shall see.

<sup>71</sup> I asserted that Torrey formulated his views independently of Keswick influence. I believe this is true because first, Torrey experienced his own baptism with the Spirit while he resided in Minneapolis, sometime between 1883 and 1889. His personal experience of Spirit baptism antedated his affiliation with Moody and his subsequent introduction to the constellation of Keswick speakers at Northfield. Secondly, in *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, published in 1897, and presumably his first published work on the subject, Torrey wrote, "It was a great turning point in my ministry when, after much thought and study and meditation, I became satisfied that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was an experience for today and for me, and set myself about obtaining it" (209). Torrey must have been reflecting on his time in Minneapolis, if not earlier. Torrey then made this comment: "It is an occasion of great joy that so many and such excellent books on the person and work of the Holy Spirit have appeared *of late*. I wish to call especial attention to two of these: 'Through the Eternal Spirit,' by James Elder Cumming and 'The Spirit of Christ,' by Andrew Murray" (R. A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* [New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897], 209 [emphasis added]). The books were published around 1896 and 1888 respectively. Torrey's reference to these works published "of late" creates the impression that they were not available to him when he was formulating his own views. Third, Marsden supports my premise, that Torrey formulated his views independently of Keswick. Marsden notes, "Torrey apparently formulated his views on the Holy Spirit somewhat independently of Keswick teachers and persisted in using the phrase 'The baptism with the Holy Spirit'" (Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, see 248–49n34, 37).

practical concept of ‘power for service.’”<sup>72</sup> Torrey surely embraced this emphasis. Marsden continues, “This phrase [power for service] became a favorite of Moody’s and seems to have been adopted by nearly all his lieutenants.”<sup>73</sup> Marsden then connects the Keswick emphasis on power for service with the activism of Finney and Mahan, noting, “These concerns [power for service] harked back to the activism of Finney, Mahan, and other precursors of Keswick who had stressed the importance of ‘power,’ especially for witnessing.”<sup>74</sup> One can observe a link between the holiness and the Keswick emphases on power for service, consequent upon the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

What can we conclude from this overview of the baptism with the Spirit in nineteenth-century American evangelicalism, with regard to R. A. Torrey? With respect to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Torrey found a mentoring influence in nineteenth-century holiness teachers, particularly Charles Finney. With respect to Keswick’s association of the Spirit’s outpouring and power for service, Torrey found common ground.

Torrey did not formulate his views on Spirit baptism in a theological vacuum. Robert Menzies delivered a paper at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2018 titled “R. A. Torrey’s Enduring Theological Legacy: The Pentecostal Movement.”<sup>75</sup> In this address, Menzies writes,

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

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<sup>72</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 79.

<sup>73</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 79.

<sup>74</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 79.

<sup>75</sup> Robert P. Menzies, “R. A. Torrey’s Enduring Theological Legacy: The Pentecostal Movement” (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Evangelical Theological Society, Denver, Colorado, November 12–15, 2018). For further information regarding Menzies’s discussion, the reader should consult chapter 1 in Robert P. Menzies, *Christ-Centered: The Evangelical Nature of Pentecostal Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020).

particularly striking or novel. *Here, Torrey stood in a growing line of Holiness preachers and revivalists.*<sup>76</sup>

I believe we can draw a solid line between Charles Finney and Reuben Torrey with regard to the baptism of the Spirit. Torrey read Finney's memoirs and his *Lectures on Revival*. He cited Finney approvingly as a ministry mentor. Finney provided the vocabulary of Spirit baptism that became Torrey's default vocabulary in his own writing. Finney's experience of Spirit baptism and the connection he drew between this experience and gospel proclamation must have influenced Torrey. Torrey retained Finney's emphasis on the necessity of the Spirit baptism as the prerequisite for effective evangelism.

I believe a similar line can be traced between Dwight L. Moody and Torrey's emphasis on Spirit baptism. Moody regularly encouraged Torrey to preach on baptism with the Holy Spirit. Torrey wrote, "Time and again Mr. Moody would come to me and say: 'Torrey, I want you to preach on baptism with the Holy Ghost.' I do not know how many times he asked me to speak on that subject."<sup>77</sup> Moody's personal experience with the Holy Spirit and his commitment to evangelism encouraged and shaped Torrey as a young man.

Roland Wessels credited Torrey with providing the capstone teaching on Spirit baptism in the nineteenth century. He wrote, "The distinctive thought pattern associated with the term 'baptism in the Spirit . . . finds its culmination in the work of Reuben Archer Torrey."<sup>78</sup> Wessels averred that Torrey's emphasis on the baptism with the Spirit "summarized the ideas of Finney and Moody."<sup>79</sup> The nineteenth-century doctrine of

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<sup>76</sup> Menzies, "R. A. Torrey's Enduring Theological Legacy," 8 (emphasis added).

<sup>77</sup> Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody*, 54.

<sup>78</sup> Wessels, "The Spirit Baptism," 150.

<sup>79</sup> Wessels, "The Spirit Baptism," 150. Wessels contends that Torrey's teachings on the baptism with the Spirit furnished "the bridge to the emphasis developed in the Pentecostal movement" ("The Spirit Baptism," 150). Menzies would concur with this view.

baptism with the Holy Spirit traces an unbroken line from Finney through Moody to Reuben Torrey.

In the next section, I develop Torrey's pneumatology, paying particular attention to his teaching on baptism with the Holy Spirit. I then endeavor to relate Torrey's views on the Holy Spirit to his practice of evangelism.

### **R. A. Torrey's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

Reuben A. Torrey believed in one true and living God. This true and living God revealed himself in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and in the person of Jesus Christ. Torrey embraced a monotheistic faith, but he also believed Trinitarian doctrine stood on solid scriptural ground. In his most comprehensive doctrinal work, *What the Bible Teaches*, Torrey wrote of the Trinitarian doctrine: "It has been said that the doctrine of the Trinity is not taught in the Bible, and it is true that it is not directly taught; but the doctrine of the Trinity is the putting together of truths that are taught."<sup>80</sup> Torrey then confessed his Christian faith: "It is clearly taught in the Bible that there is but one God. It is also clearly taught that there are three divine persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."<sup>81</sup> Torrey aimed in his preaching and writing to expound scriptural truth concerning this triune God.

With respect to the Holy Spirit, Torrey consistently returned to the personality and deity of the Spirit of God in his teaching. With respect to the works of the Holy Spirit, Torrey consistently emphasized the baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>82</sup> I follow Torrey's emphases in my treatment of his pneumatology.

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<sup>80</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 235. By "not directly taught," Torrey meant that the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible.

<sup>81</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 235.

<sup>82</sup> To examine Torrey's most complete treatments of the Holy Spirit, see Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 223–89 and R. A. Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), 63–81.

## The Personality of the Holy Spirit

Torrey regarded the personality of the Holy Spirit as intensely relevant to Christian living. Torrey presented five evidences that pointed to the Holy Spirit's personality.

### *The Use of Personal Pronouns*

Torrey observed that biblical writers employed personal pronouns to speak about the Spirit. He pointed to texts such as John 15:26, 16:7–8, and 13–14, noting, “Various pronouns that clearly imply personality are repeatedly used of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>83</sup> Biblical authors referred to the Spirit with pronouns such as “he” and “him,” implying that the Spirit is not an impersonal force, but a personal being. Torrey emphasized John 16:13 to make his argument: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”<sup>84</sup> Torrey commented, “The apostle . . . was so dominated by the conception of the Holy Spirit as a person, that he overlooked the usage of Greek, and used a masculine pronoun with the neuter noun, thus bringing out the personality of the Holy Spirit in the Greek far more emphatically than it is in the English.”<sup>85</sup> Torrey understood John's use of a masculine pronoun to modify the neuter noun “Spirit” as an intentional choice on John's part. The biblical author thus underscored his belief in the Spirit's personality.

### *The Characteristics of Personality*

Torrey believed that “all the distinctive marks or characteristics of personality

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<sup>83</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 225–26.

<sup>84</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: How to Obtain Him in Personal Experience* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, n.d.), 2–3. Torrey referenced the Revised Version.

<sup>85</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: How to Obtain Him in Personal Experience*, 2–3. John used the masculine demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* with the neuter noun *pneuma*: “When the Spirit (*pneuma*) of truth comes, he (*ekeinos*) will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). John departed from conventional Greek grammar when he used a masculine pronoun to modify a neuter noun, instead of using a neuter pronoun (*ekeino*) to modify *pneuma*.

are ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the Bible.”<sup>86</sup> What are the distinctive marks of personality? A person is characterized as one who possesses knowledge, will, and emotion. Torrey averred, “The Holy Spirit thinks, feels, purposes, knows, wills, loves, [and] grieves (1 Cor 2:10–11; 12:11; Rom 8:27; 15:30; Neh 9:20; Eph 4:30).”<sup>87</sup> Commenting on the love of the Spirit mentioned in Romans 15:30, Torrey wrote, “The love of the Spirit . . . is a wonderful thought. . . . The Holy Spirit is not a mere blinding influence or power . . . that comes into our hearts and lives, but he himself is a divine person, loving us with the tenderest love.”<sup>88</sup> Torrey recalled the love of the Holy Spirit for him during his pre-Christian days: “If it had not been for the love of the Holy Spirit to me, leading him to come down to this world in obedience to the Father and the Son, to seek me out in my lost condition. . . . If it had not been for this patient, long-suffering, never-wearying love of the Spirit of God to me . . . I would have been a lost man today.”<sup>89</sup> The love of the Spirit was intensely personal in Torrey’s experience.

### *The Performance of Personal Works*

The Holy Spirit, Torrey contended, performed actions only a person can perform. The performance of these works would be inconceivable if carried out by a blind, impersonal, unintelligent force. For example, the Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God (1 Cor 2:10), speaks (Rev 2:7), intercedes for God’s people (Rom 8:26), teaches all truth (John 14:26), bears witness to Christ (John 15:26), and calls men to missionary labor (Acts 13:2). The actions performed by the Spirit reveal him to be an intelligent, purposeful being.

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<sup>86</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 30–31.

<sup>87</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 225–29.

<sup>88</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 33–34.

<sup>89</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 33–34.

### *The Ascription of a Personal Office*

Torrey asserted that a personal office is ascribed to the Spirit in John 14:16–17. The Holy Spirit is designated as “another Comforter.” Torrey stated, “It is the office of the Holy Spirit to be ‘another Comforter’ to take the place of the absent Savior. Is it possible that Jesus Christ could use such language in speaking of an impersonal influence or power?”<sup>90</sup> Torrey believed that the office of “another Comforter” is an office that “could only be predicated of a person.”<sup>91</sup> The Holy Spirit was coming to take the place of the Lord Jesus, and “this other Paraclete is with us wherever we go, every hour of the day or night. He is always at our side.”<sup>92</sup> The language Christ used to describe the Spirit of God would be incomprehensible if the Spirit were an impersonal entity.

### *The Ascription of Personal Treatment*

Torrey remarked that personal treatment is ascribed to the Spirit that could only be ascribed to one who is a person. For example, the Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:3), blasphemed (Matt 12:31–32), and rebelled against and grieved (Isa 63:10). These personal treatments, carried out against the Holy Spirit, would be incomprehensible if the Spirit were merely a force.<sup>93</sup> Torrey believed one could treat the Holy Spirit as he would treat a real person.

### **The Deity of the Holy Spirit**

Not only did Torrey believe the Holy Spirit was a personal being, but he also regarded him as a fully divine Person. He observed in Scripture no less than five evidences of the deity of God the Spirit.

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<sup>90</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 225–29.

<sup>91</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 41–44.

<sup>92</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 41–44.

<sup>93</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 225–29.

### *The Spirit Possesses Divine Attributes*

The Holy Spirit possesses the four distinctively divine attributes: omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and eternity. The power of the Most High God is placed in parallel association with the Spirit of God (Luke 1:35). Omniscience is ascribed to the Spirit of God, who “searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor 2:10 ESV). If the Spirit of God is capable of searching the very depths of God, he must be an omniscient being. Omnipresence is ascribed to the Spirit (Ps 139:7–10). Torrey observed that “there is no place in heaven, earth, or hades whither we can go from his presence.”<sup>94</sup> The Spirit of God is described as an eternal being (Heb 9:14). Torrey stated, “The four distinctively divine attributes, the four attributes that no one but God possesses, are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.”<sup>95</sup>

### *The Spirit Performs Divine Works*

Torrey discovered from Scripture three divine works that are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God authors divine prophecies (2 Sam 23:2; 2 Pet 1:21). The Spirit of God is the agent of creation (Job 33:4; Ps 104:30). The Spirit imparts life: spiritual life (John 6:63), resurrection life to the body (Rom 8:11), and physical life (Gen 2:7).<sup>96</sup> Torrey asserted, “Three distinctively divine works are ascribed to the Holy Spirit”<sup>97</sup> and observed that the Spirit performs works that only God can do.

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<sup>94</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 75–78.

<sup>95</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 75–78. Wayne Grudem lists five incommunicable attributes of God: independence, unchangeableness, eternity, omnipresence, and unity. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 190–214. Millard Erickson, on the other hand, does not strictly categorize God’s incommunicable attributes. He writes instead of attributes of God’s greatness: spirituality, personality, life, infinity, and constancy. See Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 263–81.

<sup>96</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 75–78; Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 230–33.

<sup>97</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 230–33.

*Statements Ascribed to Jehovah in the Old Testament Are Ascribed to the Spirit in the New Testament*

Torrey noted that statements ascribed to “the Lord or Jehovah in the Old Testament are applied to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.”<sup>98</sup> Torrey observed in Isaiah 6:8–10 words ascribed to the Lord Jehovah. Torrey remarked that Paul ascribed the very words of Jehovah found in Isaiah 6:8–10 to the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25–27). Torrey also observed that the very words ascribed to the Lord in Isaiah 6:8–10 are applied to the Lord Jesus in John 12:37–41. Torrey then asked, “May it be that in the threefold ‘holy’ of the seraphic cry in Is 6:3 we have a hint of the tri-personality of the Jehovah of Hosts and hence the propriety of the threefold application of the [Isaianic] vision?”<sup>99</sup> Torrey remarked that in New Testament thought, “the Holy Spirit occupies the place . . . that the Lord Jehovah occupies in the Old Testament.”<sup>100</sup> The interchange between the words of Jehovah and the words of the Spirit illustrates that the writers of Scripture regarded the Spirit as a divine being.

*The Spirit Is Coupled with the Father and the Son*

Torrey argued that the Holy Spirit is coupled with God the Father “in a way that it would be impossible for a reverent and thoughtful mind to couple the name of any finite being with that of deity.”<sup>101</sup> Torrey cited Matthew 28:19 to illustrate his point: “If the Holy Spirit is not God, it would be shocking to couple his name in this way with that of God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus, His Son.”<sup>102</sup> Torrey observed the manner in which New Testament authors coupled references to the Spirit with references to the

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<sup>98</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 230–33.

<sup>99</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 230–33.

<sup>100</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 75–78.

<sup>101</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 75–78.

<sup>102</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 75–78.

Father and Son and concluded that the Holy Spirit is a divine being.<sup>103</sup>

### *The Spirit Is Called God*

Torrey perceived in Scripture that the Holy Spirit is called God. Torrey wrote, “The Holy Spirit in so many words is called God. This we find in Acts 5:3–4. In the third verse we are distinctly told that it was to the Holy Spirit to whom Ananias lied, and in the fourth verse we are told that it was to God that Ananias lied. Putting the two statements together, it is evident that the Holy Spirit is God.”<sup>104</sup> Torrey believed the Holy Spirit is a person of divine nature.

### **The Distinction of Persons in the Triune God**

Torrey embraced Trinitarian monotheism. At the same time, he avoided the error of modalism.<sup>105</sup> He affirmed the distinction of persons in the divine being and maintained that each person is fully divine. He perceived a distinction of persons in the triune God in passages of Scripture such as Luke 3:21–22. Of Christ’s baptism, Torrey noted, “A clear distinction is drawn between Jesus Christ, who was on the earth, the Father who spoke to him from heaven, and the Holy Spirit who descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him.”<sup>106</sup> Torrey also cited Acts 2:33, wherein Peter’s words are recorded on the day of Pentecost. Peter explained to the gathered crowd the reason behind the foreign languages spoken at Pentecost. Torrey commented, “A clear distinction is drawn between the Son exalted to the right hand of the Father, and the Father himself, and the Holy Ghost, whom the Son receives from the Father and sheds

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<sup>103</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 75–78. Torrey also cited 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 as other examples that illustrated his point.

<sup>104</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 78.

<sup>105</sup> Modalism refers to the error “that God is not really three distinct persons, but only one person who appears to people in different “modes” at different times” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 284).

<sup>106</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 234–35.

upon the church.”<sup>107</sup> Torrey observed from these and other texts that the Bible drew a clear distinction between the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son. He concluded, “They are separate personalities, having mutual relations to one another, acting upon one another, speaking of or to one another, applying the pronouns of the second and third persons to one another.”<sup>108</sup> Torrey based his affirmation of distinct persons in the triune God on scriptural teaching.

### **The Subordination of the Spirit to the Father and the Son**

Torrey did not believe in an ontological subordination of the Spirit to the other persons in the triune God.<sup>109</sup> Torrey perceived a subordination in the Spirit’s *role* in his relation to the Father and the Son. Torrey noted this role subordination in texts such as John 14:26 and John 15:26. He remarked, “The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and also by the Son.”<sup>110</sup> In another example of the Spirit’s subordination to the Father and the Son, Torrey noted, “The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>111</sup> Torrey observed the Spirit’s subordinate role in John 16:13. He commented, “The Holy Spirit speaks not from himself but speaks the things which he hears.”<sup>112</sup> Finally, Torrey witnessed in John 16:14 the Spirit’s primary role: the Holy Spirit aims to glorify Jesus Christ. Torrey compared the Spirit’s subordination to Christ and the Son’s subordination to the Father. For example, whereas the Spirit worked to glorify Christ, Christ himself

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<sup>107</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 234–35.

<sup>108</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 234–35.

<sup>109</sup> Grudem expresses the dual affirmations necessary to a true Trinitarian doctrine, that is, in relation to the Father, the Son, and Spirit are “equal in being but subordinate in role” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 293).

<sup>110</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 236–37.

<sup>111</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 236–37. Torrey cited Romans 8:9.

<sup>112</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 236–37.

sought the glory of the Father who sent him.<sup>113</sup> Torrey averred that in his present work, the Spirit is subordinated to the Father and Son.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, the Spirit is fully divine.

### **The Importance of the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit**

Torrey contended that a true apprehension of the Spirit's personality and deity is important for three reasons. First, from the standpoint of worship, we must embrace the personality and deity of the Spirit. Torrey wrote, "If the Holy Spirit is a person and a divine person . . . and if we do not know him as such, if we think of the Holy Spirit only as an impersonal influence or power, then we are robbing a divine person of the worship which is his due, and the love which is his due, and the confidence and surrender and obedience which are his due."<sup>115</sup>

Torrey further argued that if we worship a mere influence, we are idolaters. He compared the worship of an influence to fetish worship. Does it make any difference if God is a person or a thing? Torrey answered, "The difference is the difference between idolatry and true worship."<sup>116</sup> In Torrey's thinking, the Spirit's personality and deity constituted a distinctive Christian teaching.

Second, the Spirit's personality and deity are significant because of practical importance. If we conceive of the Holy Spirit as a power or force that we are to obtain and use, this conception is "heathenish."<sup>117</sup> If a Christian thinks of the Spirit as a mere influence or power, then his thought will be, "How can I get hold of the Holy Spirit and

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<sup>113</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 236–37.

<sup>114</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 236–37.

<sup>115</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 63–64.

<sup>116</sup> Torrey, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," box 3, folder 2, page 3, Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>117</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 225.

use it?”<sup>118</sup> If, however, a Christian thinks of the Spirit in a biblical manner as a divine person, then his thought will be, “How can the Holy Spirit get hold of me and use me?”<sup>119</sup> The biblical conception of the Spirit of God leads to “self-humiliation, self-emptying, and self-renunciation; the other conception leads to self-exaltation.”<sup>120</sup> In Torrey’s viewpoint, a biblical conception of the Spirit is of the highest practical import.

The third reason the Spirit’s personality and deity are important is experimental in nature. Torrey argued that many people could testify to the transformation of their Christian experience after coming to know the Holy Spirit as a person.<sup>121</sup> One experimental benefit of an awareness of the Spirit’s personal nature relates to prayer. Torrey wrote, “When the personality of the Holy Spirit gets possession of you, the first thing you will do every time you come into the presence of God will be to wait for this person to guide you in your supplication, adoration, and thanksgiving.”<sup>122</sup> Torrey faulted much “mechanical and powerless prayer” on a lack of dependence on the Spirit when we pray, a lack of dependence traceable to ignorance of the Spirit’s personal nature.<sup>123</sup>

In a message titled “The Personality of the Holy Spirit,” Torrey admonished his audience, “Do you know the communion of the Holy Ghost? The fellowship of the Holy Ghost? The partnership of the Holy Ghost? The comradeship of the Holy Ghost? The intimate personal friendship of the Holy Ghost? Herein lies the whole secret of a real

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<sup>118</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 63–64.

<sup>119</sup> Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 63–64.

<sup>120</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 225.

<sup>121</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 31.

<sup>122</sup> Torrey, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” lecture 1, page 3, Torrey Collection (Moody).

<sup>123</sup> Torrey, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” lecture 1, page 3, Torrey Collection (Moody).

Christian life.”<sup>124</sup> Torrey argued that true Christian living hinged on knowing the Holy Spirit as an ever-present friend and surrendering all of one’s life to the Spirit of God.<sup>125</sup>

### **The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: Preliminary Considerations**

I must offer a caveat before I venture to describe Torrey’s views on baptism with the Holy Spirit. Reconciling Torrey’s diverse teachings about the Spirit baptism is difficult. I do not believe Torrey contradicted himself; he was too intelligent to be guilty of self-contradiction. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that Torrey spoke copiously on the subject of the Holy Spirit, at different times and places. He would preach at one time and place with varying emphases. In some instances, his preaching notes apparently became the basis for his books. At other times, it appears that Torrey’s sermons may have undergone some editing to render them suitable for a reader rather than a hearer.

If we assume that many of Torrey’s books on the Holy Spirit were originally public addresses, we can sympathize with Torrey’s diverse remarks. One who has done much public speaking can understand that “in the heat of the moment,” illustrations and emphases change. Torrey no doubt would have benefited from an editor to force him to define his terms more clearly, to be concise, and to clarify disparate claims. I aim to allow Torrey to speak for himself and, when appropriate, offer my interpretation of Torrey’s teaching. I make no claim to infallibility as I endeavor to interpret the words of a man who died almost one hundred years ago.

### *The Definition of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit*

Torrey consistently described the baptism with the Spirit in a manner that functioned like a definition. In Torrey’s own words, “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is

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<sup>124</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1954), 37–38.

<sup>125</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 37–38.

the Spirit of God *coming upon* the believer, *filling his mind* with a real apprehension of truths, especially of Christ, *taking possession* of his faculties, *imparting to him gifts* not otherwise his but which qualify him for the service to which God has called him.”<sup>126</sup> I employ this definition because it contains one element absent from Torrey’s otherwise consistent definitions. The Spirit baptism involves the Spirit of God coming upon the believer. The baptism with the Holy Spirit consists of the Spirit’s taking possession of the Christian’s faculties.<sup>127</sup> The baptism with the Spirit includes the impartation of gifts for service that do not naturally belong to the believer. The one unique element in the definition above is the aspect of the Spirit “filling” the believer’s mind with a lively “apprehension of truths, especially of Christ.”<sup>128</sup> Torrey testified that the baptism with the Spirit produced a clearer view of Jesus and divine truth.<sup>129</sup> Observe in particular that when the Spirit baptism occurs, the Spirit imparts spiritual gifts for service to God. Baptism with the Spirit is essential to fruitful service.

### *The Motivation for Seeking Baptism with the Spirit*

Why should a believer desire baptism with the Spirit? If he has been baptized with the Spirit, why should he pray for a new filling with the Spirit? Torrey answered, “In order that God may be glorified in our being baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures and in Personal Experience* (London: James Nisbet, 1910), 109–11 (emphasis added). See also Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 213; R. A. Torrey, *How to Bring Men to Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1893), 168.

<sup>127</sup> Torrey seemed to equate a “Christian’s faculties” with his “whole personality, mind, feeling, and will taken [*sic*] possession of by the Spirit of God.” See R. A. Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship,” *The King’s Business* 6, no. 9 (September 1915): 827 (under “Wednesday, September 15, Luke 1:13–17”).

<sup>128</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures and in Personal Experience*, 109–11.

<sup>129</sup> See my comments in chapter 2, section “The Contours of Torrey’s Spirituality.”

<sup>130</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), 196. Observe how Torrey interchanges “baptized” or “filled” when he writes of Spirit baptism.

Torrey believed God was dishonored by “low” living and ineffective service.<sup>131</sup> The Christian should desire to be empowered by the Spirit in order to lead a God-honoring life through more effective service.<sup>132</sup>

*The Necessity of Baptism  
with the Holy Spirit*

Torrey contended that baptism with the Spirit was necessary for effective Christian ministry. He argued this claim by pointing to Jesus himself, then to his disciples, and finally to contemporary Christians.

Torrey perceived in Scripture that Christ was anointed with the Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38). At his baptism, the Spirit descended upon him (Luke 3:21–22). Torrey further observed that Christ was “full of the Holy Spirit” and returned from his wilderness temptation experience “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1, 14). Torrey then concluded, “It was at the Jordan in connection with his baptism that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, and he did not enter upon his public ministry until he was thus baptized with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>133</sup> The Spirit came upon Christ, took control of his life, and empowered him to serve God. Empowered by the Spirit, Christ proclaimed the gospel (see Luke 4:14–15, 18–19). In Torrey’s reasoning, if Christ needed the anointing of the Spirit, how much more do contemporary Christians?

Torrey pointed to the disciples as prime examples of persons who needed the baptism with the Spirit. He considered their qualifications: they spent three years with Christ; they witnessed his miracles and heard his teachings; they witnessed his death, resurrection, and ascension; and they had lived in closest intimacy to Christ. Were they

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<sup>131</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 196.

<sup>132</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 184. Observe how Torrey links Spirit baptism with service to God. Torrey consistently defined service to God in terms of evangelism, as we shall observe later in this chapter.

<sup>133</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 112.

not well-fitted for Christian work? Torrey replied, “No. . . . There is another preparation in addition to the preparation already received, so absolutely necessary for effective work that you must not stir one step until you receive it. This other preparation is the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>134</sup> Torrey pointed out that the whole world was perishing, and the disciples alone knew the saving truth. Nevertheless, Jesus commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until they had been endued with power from on high—the baptism with the Spirit.

Torrey believed baptism with the Spirit was necessary for contemporary Christians. Torrey asked, “If the apostles, with their altogether exceptional fitting for the work which they were to undertake needed this preparation for work, how much more do we?”<sup>135</sup> Torrey argued that a Christian who was baptized with the Spirit could accomplish more in one day than he ever could in years without the Spirit’s power. In Torrey’s view, baptism with the Spirit is a gift available to all Christians of all times and is absolutely necessary for effective Christian ministry.

### **The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: Summary Propositions**

Torrey did not classify his teachings about the baptism with the Holy Spirit as summary propositions, nor did he organize his teachings in the manner I employ. I classify his teachings in this manner to make them more accessible to my reader. In the following section, I consider Torrey’s teaching on the baptism with the Spirit under five headings: the terminology of Spirit baptism, the distinction between the baptism and filling of the Spirit, the characteristics of Spirit baptism, the Spirit indwelling versus the Spirit baptizing, and the Spirit baptism in light of 1 Corinthians 12.

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<sup>134</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 111–12.

<sup>135</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 111–12.

### *The Terminology of Spirit Baptism*

Torrey observed from Scripture that John the Baptist was the first to employ the expression, “He [the Messiah] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt 3:11 ESV).<sup>136</sup> Jesus later took up this expression: “For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5). Torrey detected in Scripture a cluster of phrases that he interpreted to designate one and the same experience: the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In this section, I review the various expressions that Torrey averred denominated the experience of Spirit baptism. I then demonstrate that Torrey believed these various expressions pointed to the experience of Spirit baptism.

Torrey enumerated the following list of expressions and asserted that they “cover one and the same experience.”<sup>137</sup>

1. Baptized with the Holy Ghost. Acts 1:5.
2. Filled with the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:4; 4:8.
3. Received the Holy Ghost. Acts 19:2.
4. The Holy Ghost fell on them. Acts 10:44; 11:15, 17.
5. The gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:38; 10:45.
6. The Holy Ghost came on them. Acts 19:6.
7. Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Heb. 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:4, 11, 13.
8. I send the promise of my Father upon you. Luke 24:49.
9. Endued with power from on high. Luke 24:49.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 101. Torrey did not believe John the Baptist was pointing to two different baptisms, but one baptism with “the Holy Wind and fire” (Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 101). Torrey believed that Christ himself was the agent of the Spirit baptism. In a message titled “The Ascension of Jesus, the Christ of the Bible, and His Exaltation to the Right Hand of God the Father,” Torrey said, “*It is the ascended Christ who baptizes with the Holy Ghost*” (R. A. Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible* [New York: George H. Doran, 1924], 198–200 [emphasis original]).

<sup>137</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: An Outline Study* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, n.d.), 2.

<sup>138</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: An Outline Study*, 2.

Observe that Torrey equated these various designations with the “one experience” of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>139</sup> The baptism with the Spirit is variously described in different contexts. For example, Torrey compared the text of Acts 10:44–47 with that of Acts 11:15–16, stating, “We find that the expressions ‘the Holy Spirit fell on them,’ and ‘the gift of the Holy Ghost,’ and ‘received the Holy Ghost,’ are all equivalent to ‘baptized with the Holy Ghost.’”<sup>140</sup> In Torrey’s view, the biblical authors employed a multiplicity of expressions to denote the common experience of Spirit baptism.

In an 1893 monograph titled *How to Bring Men to Christ*, Torrey singled out three texts from the above list and noted, “In Acts 1:5, Luke 24:49, and Acts 2:4, we have three expressions: ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit,’ ‘endued with power from on high,’ and ‘filled with the Holy Spirit.’ By a careful comparison of these and related passages we will find that these various expressions refer to one and the same experience.”<sup>141</sup> Torrey consistently associated the varied expressions denoting the experience of receiving the Spirit with the baptism with the Spirit.

Torrey regularly singled out two expressions from the larger grouping of nine noted above and paired them together: the baptism and the filling with the Spirit. In his comments on Acts 2:4 written for the International Sunday School Lessons in January 1916, Torrey demonstrated his proclivity for pairing these two expressions:

[In Acts 2:4] “They were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit.” This is clearly a fulfillment of chapter 1:5, but in that verse, the expression used is “*baptized in the Holy Spirit*,” here [in Acts 2:4] the expression is “*filled with the Holy Spirit*.” So it is clear that these two expressions are practically synonymous. The expression here used [in

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<sup>139</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 209. Torrey referenced the KJV.

<sup>140</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 209.

<sup>141</sup> Torrey, *How to Bring Men to Christ*, 166.

Acts 2:4] brings out the thought that the Holy Spirit takes complete possession of the faculties of the one who is filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>142</sup>

Observe that Torrey regarded the expressions “baptized in the Holy Spirit” and “filled with the Holy Spirit” as essentially synonymous terms that denoted one and the same experience. Observe also that Torrey employed one element of his definition of Spirit baptism to define the experience of being filled with the Spirit. I develop the contrast between Torrey’s definition of Spirit baptism and Spirit filling in the subsequent section. Note for now that the experience of being filled with the Spirit involves the Spirit taking “complete possession of the faculties” of the one who is filled.

In February 1916, an article appeared in the *Christian Worker’s Magazine* containing an address Torrey delivered in 1911. The occasion of the address was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Moody Bible Institute (MBI). Torrey averred that MBI embraced the reality, necessity, and indispensability of the Holy Spirit in Christian life and ministry.<sup>143</sup> Torrey stated that the Holy Spirit alone teaches a man how to pray and makes him a successful teacher of the Word of God.<sup>144</sup> According to Torrey, MBI believed that every Christian worker and preacher needed “a special endowment of power from on high.”<sup>145</sup> Regarding the endowment of power from on high, Torrey noted,

While different ones of us have differently phrased it, some of us insisting upon a baptism of the Holy Spirit, others insisting upon a filling of the Holy Spirit, we have not stopped to fight over phrases of words, but both alike have stood for the thought that no man and no woman is fit for the work of God until they be especially endued with power from on high.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> R. A. Torrey, “International S. S. Lessons,” *The King’s Business* 7, no. 1 (January 1916): 51 (emphasis original).

<sup>143</sup> R. A. Torrey, “What the Moody Bible Institute Has Stood for during the Twenty-Five Years of Its History and What It Still Stands for Today,” *Christian Worker’s Magazine* 16, no. 6 (February 1916), 442.

<sup>144</sup> Torrey, “What the Moody Bible Institute Has Stood for during Its History,” 443.

<sup>145</sup> Torrey, “What the Moody Bible Institute Has Stood for during Its History,” 443.

<sup>146</sup> Torrey, “What the Moody Bible Institute Has Stood for during Its History,” 443.

In this address, Torrey did not insist on rigid phraseology. One individual might prefer to speak of the enduement of power as the baptism with the Spirit and another might speak of it as the filling with the Spirit. In Torrey's mind, the important matter was that a Christian possessed the enduement of power from God. I believe Torrey's flexibility in terminology demonstrates that he essentially regarded the Spirit baptism and the Spirit filling as one and the same experience.<sup>147</sup>

*The Distinction between the Spirit  
Baptism and the Spirit Filling*

I demonstrated in the preceding section that Torrey equated the baptism and the filling of the Spirit. He regarded as essentially synonymous the expression, "the baptism with the Holy Spirit," and a variety of other scriptural expressions. In the present section, I demonstrate some nuance in Torrey's thought with regard to the Spirit baptism and the Spirit filling.

Torrey believed that "no matter how definitely one has been baptized with the Holy Spirit, he needs to be filled again and again."<sup>148</sup> Torrey entertained the question, "Shall we call these new fillings with the Holy Spirit 'fresh baptisms' with the Holy Spirit?"<sup>149</sup> Torrey responded negatively, writing, "The expression 'baptism' is never used

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<sup>147</sup> Torrey drove this point home forcefully in the classroom, as evidenced in unpublished class notes used at MBI. He wrote, "There are several expressions of this same experience: 'Baptism of the Holy Ghost,' 'Filled with the Holy Ghost,' 'Receiving the Holy Ghost,' 'The gift of the Holy Spirit,' 'The Holy Ghost came upon them' . . . 'The promise of my Father,' 'Endued with power from on high,' and they all cover one and the same experience, all being different forms of expression for one and the same experience" (Torrey, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," lecture 12, page 1, Torrey Collection [Moody]). Because Torrey regarded (at least at the time he delivered these lectures at MBI) the baptism with the Spirit and the filling with the Spirit as identical experiences, he could say in a subsequent lecture, "The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an experience which needs frequent repetition. A new filling is needed for every new emergency of Christian service" (Torrey, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," lecture 14, pages 3–4, Torrey Collection [Moody]).

<sup>148</sup> R. A. Torrey, "Explanations of Puzzling Passages and Problems," *The King's Business* 9, no. 8 (August 1918): 656. Torrey made this statement in response to the question, "Having once received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, can a person lose the experience?"

<sup>149</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 116–17.

in the Scriptures of a second experience and there is something of an initiatory character in the very thought of baptism, so if one wishes to be precisely biblical, it would seem better not to use the term ‘baptism’ of a second experience but to limit it to the first experience.”<sup>150</sup>

Torrey distinguished the baptism with the Holy Spirit as an experience that possesses an initiatory character. The baptism with the Spirit then, it would seem, would not need to be repeated. While there is one baptism, there are many fillings of the Spirit available for the Christian. The experience of being filled with the Spirit needs to be continually repeated in Christian living. Torrey detected that the experience of “new fillings are never called ‘baptisms’ in the Bible. . . . In the Bible, the expression ‘baptized with the Holy Ghost’ is always limited to the first experience of the individual.”<sup>151</sup> Thus, Torrey averred that it is more biblical to speak of one baptism and many fillings.<sup>152</sup>

Torrey preferred the essential experience of the Spirit’s work over uttering the precise shibboleth. He wrote,

I would a great deal rather that one should speak about new or fresh baptisms with the Holy Spirit, standing for the all-important truth that we need repeated fillings with the Holy Spirit, than that he should so insist on exact phraseology that he would lose sight of the truth that repeated fillings are needed. . . . I would rather have the right experience by a wrong name, than the wrong experience by the right name. This much is as clear as day, that we need to be filled again and again and again, with the Holy Spirit.<sup>153</sup>

In summary, Torrey distinguished the baptism with the Spirit as the initiatory experience that ushers the believer into a life of power for service. The initial (and logically unrepeatable) experience of Spirit baptism needs to be supplemented by repeated fillings with the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>150</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 116–17.

<sup>151</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 152–53.

<sup>152</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 116–17.

<sup>153</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 117.

How do I account for the differences in Torrey's emphases between his undated class notes and his subsequent writings?<sup>154</sup> Torrey's undated class notes were likely delivered in class lectures between 1889 and 1901, during the time he was actively teaching at MBI. Torrey's text, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures and in Personal Experience*, was published in 1910, and his text, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, was published in 1927. The later texts likely reflect a development in Torrey's *presentation* of his doctrine, if not a maturation in his understanding of the doctrine.<sup>155</sup> In Torrey's thinking, regardless of what nomenclature one employs to designate the experience, the altogether important point is that one experiences an immersion in the Holy Spirit that results in power for testimony. Torrey wrote,

The failure to realize this need of constant refillings with the Holy Spirit has led to many a man who at one time was greatly used of God, being utterly laid aside. . . . For each new service that is to be conducted, for each new soul that is to be dealt with, for each new work for Christ that is to be performed, for each new day and each new emergency of Christian life and service, we should seek and obtain a new filling with the Holy Spirit.<sup>156</sup>

Torrey's definition of the baptism with the Holy Spirit contained three or four characteristic features. The baptism with the Holy Spirit consisted of the Spirit's falling upon a believer, filling him with a new apprehension of the person of Christ, taking possession of his faculties, and imparting to him gifts for testimony and service. Torrey's

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<sup>154</sup> Let the reader recall that in Torrey's notes on "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," he equated the experience of Spirit baptism and Spirit filling and spoke of repeated experiences of the baptism with the Spirit. See footnote 147 on p. 136. In Torrey's later writings, he distinguished the two experiences more carefully.

<sup>155</sup> See Paul W. Sawtell to Clara B. Torrey, December 30, 1940, box 1, folder 5, Torrey Collection (Moody) and Clara B. Torrey to Paul W. Sawtell, January 4, 1941, box 1, folder 5, Torrey Collection (Moody). Sawtell claimed in a letter to Mrs. R. A. Torrey that a report was widely circulated to the effect that, before his death, Torrey had repudiated his views on the Holy Spirit. Sawtell did not specify which particular views on the Holy Spirit Torrey allegedly repudiated. He wrote to Mrs. Torrey to ascertain from her if there was any truth to the claims. In response to Sawtell's inquiry, Clara Torrey asserted that her husband never changed his essential views on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In her opinion, her husband maintained consistent teachings on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit throughout his life.

<sup>156</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 116.

definition of the filling of the Spirit typically isolated one element of his Spirit baptism definition. In a comment written on the Pauline command to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18), Torrey wrote, “To ‘be filled with the Spirit’ is to have the Spirit take complete possession of every faculty of mind and heart; it is to have our thoughts, our affections, and our will completely under His control.”<sup>157</sup> Torrey noted that the verb tense utilized in Ephesians 5:18 indicates a continuous process: a believer is to “*be continually getting filled*.”<sup>158</sup> Torrey remarked that continual fillings are necessary because, negatively speaking, a believer is a leaky vessel and because, positively speaking, his capacity for receiving the Spirit’s fullness is continually enlarging.<sup>159</sup> Finally, Torrey noted that being filled with the Spirit is the “secret of power in life, power in prayer, and power in service.”<sup>160</sup> Torrey’s definition of Spirit filling contained the essential elements of his definition of Spirit baptism and included the essential component of power for Christian service.

### *The Characteristics of Spirit Baptism*

Torrey perceived three unique characteristics of the baptism with the Holy Spirit: the baptism with the Spirit is a definite experience, it is an experience subsequent to and distinct from regeneration, and it is an experience that equips the individual for effective Christian service. I examine Torrey’s first two characteristics in this section. I consider his third characteristic later in the chapter.

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<sup>157</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship,” *The King’s Business* 9, no. 8 (August 1918): 721–22. See also R. A. Torrey, *How to Work for Christ: A Compendium of Effective Methods* (London: James Nisbet, 1901), 388–89; R. A. Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family,” *The King’s Business* 7, no. 9 (September 1916): 851.

<sup>158</sup> Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament (August 1918),” 721–22 (emphasis original).

<sup>159</sup> Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament (August 1918),” 721–22.

<sup>160</sup> Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament (August 1918),” 721–22.

Torrey reasoned that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience. One who has experienced Spirit baptism can and should know he has been thus baptized. Torrey observed in his day that a number of people attended meetings aimed to bring attendees into an experiential encounter with the Spirit of God. Apparently, a considerable number of these people left these meetings with no clear assurance that they had been baptized with the Spirit. Torrey believed that the baptism with the Spirit is such a definite experience that a person should be in no doubt as to whether he had received it.

Torrey pointed to the experience of the apostles to prove his contention. Christ commanded his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they had been endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). Torrey asked, “If this endowment with power or baptism with the Holy Ghost were not an experience so definite that one could know whether he had received it or not, how could they tell when those commanded days of tarrying were at an end?”<sup>161</sup> Torrey also pointed to Paul’s question to the Ephesian believers in Acts 19. Upon meeting some disciples in Ephesus, Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (Acts 19:2 ESV). Torrey reasoned, “Paul evidently expected a definite ‘yes’ or a definite ‘no’ for an answer. Unless the experience were definite and of such a character that one could know whether he had received it or not how could these disciples answer Paul’s question?”<sup>162</sup> While Torrey observed an absence of clarity in his day with respect to the reception of Spirit baptism, he detected no such ambiguity in the Scriptures. Torrey concluded that the experience of Spirit baptism must be definite with respect to its reception. The believer may know with certainty he has received the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>161</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 209–10.

<sup>162</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 209–10.

Torrey's second characteristic of Spirit baptism is that it occurs post-regeneration as a separate and distinct work of God's grace.<sup>163</sup> Torrey averred that a believer could experience regeneration and the baptism with the Spirit simultaneously, but in his view, believers typically received the baptism subsequent to their new birth. Torrey argued for the baptism with the Spirit as a subsequent experience to regeneration based on his reading of Scripture and his analysis of the church's spiritual condition.

As Torrey studied the book of Acts, he observed three primary examples of presumably regenerated individuals who experienced the baptism with the Spirit subsequent to their new birth.

He first cited the experience of the apostles. Torrey regarded the apostles as regenerate men prior to their experience of receiving the baptism with the Spirit at Pentecost.<sup>164</sup> Torrey observed that Christ said to these eleven regenerate men, "I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49 ESV). Torrey further noted the words of Acts 1:4–5, "And while staying with them he [Jesus] ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Reasoning in light of Christ's words, Torrey concluded: if the eleven apostles

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<sup>163</sup> Torrey believed that in regeneration, new life is imparted to the one who receives Christ and the person is saved. In the baptism with the Spirit, power is imparted, equipping the believer for service and ministry. See Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 269–71. Although every regenerate man may not possess the baptism with the Spirit, the experience is available to all believers. See Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 210.

<sup>164</sup> Torrey reasoned that Christ's words to the eleven in John 13:10 and 15:3 gave evidence that the apostles (excluding Judas, the one member of the apostolic company who was not regenerate) were already regenerate men. John 13:10 states, "You are clean, but not every one of you." John 15:3 records, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." Torrey understood the descriptor "clean" in these texts to imply that the apostles had been born again. He buttressed his point by an appeal to 1 Peter 1:23, "Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." Torrey believed the Word of God was the instrument the Spirit of God used to effect the new birth. Torrey averred that through the instrumentality of Christ's word, the eleven apostles had been made clean, or had been reborn. See Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 124; Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 102–3.

were born again but not yet endued with the power from on high, then the baptism with the Holy Spirit must be subsequent to regeneration.<sup>165</sup>

Torrey commonly appealed to the experience of the Samaritans in Acts 8:12–16 as his second example. Phillip had preached the gospel to the Samaritans, and some had believed and been baptized. The Samaritans did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem and prayed for them. Torrey believed that at least some of the Samaritans were regenerate, and yet they did not experience the baptism with the Spirit. Torrey wrote, “Baptized believers they were; baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus they had been; regenerate men some of them most assuredly were, and yet not one of them as yet had received or been baptized with the Holy Ghost.”<sup>166</sup> Torrey concluded that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was an “operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from and additional to his regenerating work.”<sup>167</sup>

Torrey pointed to the experience of the disciples in Ephesus and recorded in Acts 19:1–7 as his third example. Torrey argued that the Ephesian disciples had been baptized with a baptism for repentance and they were forgiven and saved but not yet baptized with the Spirit of God.<sup>168</sup>

Torrey concluded from his study of the book of Acts that not every regenerate man has the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The three examples Torrey commonly cited clarified to his satisfaction that one may be a believer—a regenerate person—and yet not

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<sup>165</sup> For an alternative view to Torrey’s perspective, see Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 300–303. Demarest discusses the possibility of Old Testament believers experiencing regeneration. While Demarest refuses to be dogmatic, he believes it is unlikely that Old Testament believers experienced regeneration. The blessing of regeneration occurred subsequent to Easter and Pentecost.

<sup>166</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 102–3.

<sup>167</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 102–3.

<sup>168</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 126–27.

have the baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>169</sup> Torrey also analyzed the condition of the church in his time and concluded that many believers did not possess the Spirit baptism. Torrey wrote,

Unless the baptism with the Spirit today is something radically different from what the baptism with the Spirit was in the early church, indeed unless it is something not at all real, then either a very large proportion of those whom we ordinarily consider believers are not believers, or else one may be a believer and a regenerate man without having been baptized with the Holy Spirit.<sup>170</sup>

Torrey considered the anemic condition of the church in his time and concluded that the cause of the church's powerlessness was her failure to appropriate the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

### *The Spirit Indwelling versus the Spirit Baptizing*

Torrey believed the Spirit of God indwelt every believer in Jesus Christ. In a message titled "Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory," Torrey averred, "When you and I believe in Jesus, His Spirit comes into our hearts bearing witness with our spirit that our sins are all forgiven, and that we are children of God."<sup>171</sup> Torrey believed every born again person is a temple of God's Spirit. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:19, Torrey

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<sup>169</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 210. Torrey pointed to the experience of Cornelius in Acts 10 as evidence that regeneration and Spirit baptism could occur simultaneously. In a "normal order of the church," believers would be baptized with the Spirit at the "very moment that they believed and were born again" (Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 126–27). In Torrey's thinking, the church of his day was not in a "normal order." What accounted for the church not being in a normal order? I believe one reason was a simple lack of instruction and understanding on the part of many Christians. Torrey sought to address the church's understanding vacuum by teaching about the person and work of the Holy Spirit at every opportunity. Torrey's seven steps to receive the baptism with the Spirit also aimed to address the deficiency in the church's understanding of true repentance, faith, and the public confession of Christ. In Torrey's thinking, a true experience of repentance and faith and an open confession of Christ in baptism constituted essential steps to receive the Spirit baptism.

Another possible reason to account for the church's not being in a normal order was the presence of sin and worldliness in the church. Torrey believed that due to sin and worldliness, a believer might lose the "consciousness of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God" (R. A. Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered* [Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1908], 81). One of Torrey's seven steps to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit involved the putting away of all known sin.

<sup>170</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 104.

<sup>171</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 61.

stated, “When one is born again, the Holy Spirit comes to take up his permanent dwelling in the man and . . . the man who is born again thus becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>172</sup> Torrey contended that the Spirit of God does not come and go from a believer, as he did in the case of Saul.<sup>173</sup> Torrey acknowledged that a believer may grieve the Holy Spirit, but he cannot “grieve him away.”<sup>174</sup> The Spirit of God seals the believer for the day of redemption. Torrey believed that while the Spirit may “withdraw into the innermost sanctuary of the believer’s spirit, back of conscious possession . . . he is still there.”<sup>175</sup> The Spirit is given to the child of God as an abiding presence (John 14:17) who dwells in everyone who belongs to Christ (Rom 8:9).<sup>176</sup>

While Torrey believed every child of God was indwelt by the Spirit of God, he understood that in many believers, the Spirit was not allowed to take complete possession. Torrey wrote, “Everyone who has truly received Jesus must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him in some sense; but in many believers, though the Holy Spirit dwells in them, he dwells way back in some hidden sanctuary of their being, back of consciousness.”<sup>177</sup> Torrey prescribed the experience of Spirit baptism or Spirit filling for every child of God who is not conscious of the Spirit’s empowering presence.

When an individual receives the baptism of the Spirit, the Spirit no longer dwells in him “back of consciousness.” Torrey noted five characteristics of the one who receives the Spirit in the biblical sense: he possesses an assurance of the Spirit’s

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<sup>172</sup> Torrey, *Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith*, 103. First Corinthians 6:19 reads, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.”

<sup>173</sup> See 1 Samuel 16:14. Torrey regarded King Saul as an unregenerate man, not a true believer. See Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered*, 81, under “Does the Holy Spirit live in and remain with the believer, or come and go?”

<sup>174</sup> Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered*, 81.

<sup>175</sup> Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered*, 81.

<sup>176</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 249.

<sup>177</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1906), 178–79.

presence, he experiences joy filling his heart, he bears the fruit of the Spirit, his heart is drawn out in prayer, and his witness and service for Christ are empowered.<sup>178</sup>

Torrey believed the Spirit of God indwelt all true believers, though not all believers experienced the baptism with the Spirit. Nevertheless, the baptism with the Spirit is the birthright of every child of God. Torrey wrote, “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is every believer’s privilege and birthright, through the crucified, risen, and ascended Savior. . . . But many members of the true church—i.e., many saved men and women—have not claimed for themselves their birthright.”<sup>179</sup>

*The Spirit Baptism in Light  
of 1 Corinthians 12*

In his “Daily Devotional Studies,” Torrey commented on 1 Corinthians 12:12–13. Verse 13 contains Paul’s familiar words, “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . and were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13 ESV). Concerning this text, Torrey wrote, “In verse 13, Paul speaks as if every member were thus baptized. He says, ‘In one Spirit *were we all* baptized into one body,’ and this is the actual case when the church attains to God’s idea of the church.”<sup>180</sup> Observe the tentativeness in Torrey’s remarks. He did not regard Paul’s statement as a clear indication that all believers are baptized in the Spirit.<sup>181</sup>

Torrey interpreted Paul’s words to mean that every believer is *potentially* baptized with the Spirit. He concluded however, that *experimentally*, “A regenerate man

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<sup>178</sup> Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life*, 178–79.

<sup>179</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 127.

<sup>180</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship,” *The King’s Business* 8, no. 12 (December 1917): 1125–26 (emphasis original).

<sup>181</sup> Torrey did state that in a very important sense, all believers were baptized into the body of Christ. He noted, “The whole church and every member of it was baptized with the Holy Ghost in Him” (Torrey, “Daily Studies in the New Testament,” 1125). In the next paragraph, however, Torrey seems to side-step this declaration and returns to his essential conviction, that the baptism with the Spirit is not the experiential possession of every believer.

may be without a definite experimental baptism with the Spirit.”<sup>182</sup> A believer who does not possess the Spirit baptism may nevertheless claim that gift for himself. Torrey argued this point elsewhere by offering the following comparison:

All men are potentially justified in the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross . . . justification is provided for them and belongs to them, but what potentially belongs to every man, each man must appropriate to himself by faith in Christ; then justification is actually and experimentally his, and just so, while the baptism with the Holy Spirit is potentially the possession of every believer, each individual believer must appropriate it for himself before it is experimentally his.<sup>183</sup>

One key to Torrey’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:13 lies in his understanding of the *potentiality* of the experience. The baptism with the Spirit is available for all believers but must be *experimentally* claimed by them before it is actualized in their experience.

Robert Menzies offers a Pentecostal scholar’s perspective on Torrey’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:13. Commenting on Torrey’s hermeneutic, Menzies observes that Torrey focused “almost exclusively” on Luke and Acts as he formulated his understanding of the baptism with the Spirit.<sup>184</sup> Menzies writes, “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.”<sup>185</sup> According to Menzies, Torrey’s interpretation of Spirit baptism in light of the Lukan perspective governed his understanding of the Pauline teaching.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament (December 1917),” 1125–26.

<sup>183</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 103.

<sup>184</sup> Menzies, “R. A. Torrey’s Enduring Theological Legacy,” 10.

<sup>185</sup> Menzies, “R. A. Torrey’s Enduring Theological Legacy,” 10.

<sup>186</sup> Would Torrey push back on Menzies’s observation? Torrey argued in favor of the physical resurrection of Jesus’s body from the dead. He cited a contemporary of his day, a Professor Rail, who had remarked that Luke’s Gospel emphasized the physical, while Paul laid no stress on the physical in his writings. Torrey commented on Professor Rail’s attempt to pit Luke against Paul: “Professor Rail seems to have forgotten that Luke was the companion of Paul, and that Luke’s Gospel is the distinctively Pauline

## **The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: The Seven Steps**

Torrey identified a seven-step pathway that anyone could follow to receive the baptism with the Spirit. When a believer follows these seven steps, he can be “absolutely sure” that he will “enter into the blessing.”<sup>187</sup> Torrey based his seven-step pathway on Acts 2:38, though he did appeal to other texts as he developed the process.<sup>188</sup>

The first and fundamental step for receiving the baptism with the Spirit involved resting “absolutely on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as the sole ground of our acceptance before God.”<sup>189</sup> Torrey found this step in Peter’s admonition to his hearers on the day of Pentecost: repent (Acts 2:38). Torrey defined repentance as a change of mind about God, about Christ, and about sin. Repentance involved a change of mind primarily about Christ. Torrey wrote, “Change your mind from that attitude of mind that rejected him and crucified him to that attitude of mind that accepts him as Lord and King and Savior.”<sup>190</sup> Torrey wanted to ensure his hearers had experienced conversion to Christ as the essential preliminary step to appropriating the baptism with the Spirit.

Torrey also based his second step on the word “repent.” A believer in Christ must repent or change his mind about sin. Torrey defined repentance from sin as a change of mind “from the attitude . . . that loves and indulges in sin, to that attitude of mind that hates sin.”<sup>191</sup> Repentance from sin involved the renunciation of sin. Torrey wrote, “People pray and pray and pray for the Holy Spirit, but they do not give up sin. . . . But

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Gospel” (R. A. Torrey, *Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God? And Was the Body of Jesus Raised from the Dead?* [New York: George H. Doran, 1922], 64).

<sup>187</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 163.

<sup>188</sup> In the ESV, Acts 2:38 reads, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>189</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 167.

<sup>190</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 117.

<sup>191</sup> Torrey, “How to Receive the Holy Ghost,” 350–52.

you can get the blessing in two seconds if you give up your sin.”<sup>192</sup> Torrey understood the Spirit of God to be a holy Spirit. Before the Holy Spirit fills a person, he must be a holy vessel. He must put away all known sin.

The third step involved an open confession of Christ before the world. The normal pathway toward open confession is baptism, as commanded in Acts 2:38. Torrey wrote, “The Holy Spirit is not given to those who are trying to be disciples in secret, but to those who obey Christ and publicly confess him before the world.”<sup>193</sup> Torrey regarded water baptism as a confession of a believing person’s repentance and acceptance of Christ.<sup>194</sup> Torrey wrote, “It is in the very act of baptism with water that many receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit, because that is where they make an open confession of renunciation of sin and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.”<sup>195</sup>

The fourth step involved absolute surrender of oneself to God. Torrey cited Acts 5:32 to support this step: “And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” God gives his Spirit to those who obey him, Torrey argued. What is the nature of this obedience? Torrey wrote, “The heart of obedience is in the will. The whole essence of obedience is surrender of the will to God. This is one of the most fundamental things in receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the unconditional surrender of the will to God.”<sup>196</sup> To timid souls who might hesitate to put themselves into God’s hands, Torrey wrote, “Absolute surrender to God is simply putting yourself into the hands of infinite love.”<sup>197</sup> Torrey illustrated in a prayer

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<sup>192</sup> Torrey, “How to Receive the Holy Ghost,” 350–52.

<sup>193</sup> Torrey, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life*, 179–80. See also Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 216–22. Torrey allowed that Spirit baptism might occur before water baptism, as in the case of Cornelius in Acts 10. He regarded this as an exceptional case.

<sup>194</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 120.

<sup>195</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 172.

<sup>196</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 174.

<sup>197</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 176.

the spirit of absolute surrender to infinite love: “O God, I yield, I give myself up utterly to thee. I place myself unreservedly at thy disposal. I hold nothing back and I hold back from nothing that thou biddest.”<sup>198</sup> When a person approaches God in a spirit of absolute surrender, the Holy Spirit falls upon him.

The fifth step for receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit involved thirst. Torrey based this step on John 7:37–39a, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit.” Concerning this thirst, Torrey wrote, “When we come to the place that we realize our utter need of the baptism with the Holy Spirit if we are going to do effective service for God, and long for it at any cost, then it will be ours, but not until then.”<sup>199</sup> In Torrey’s thinking, the one who would be baptized with the Holy Spirit must have an intense desire for this blessing. Furthermore, the desire for the Spirit baptism must arise from pure motivation: the honor of God in our lives.<sup>200</sup>

Torrey’s sixth step for receiving the Spirit baptism involved prayer. He appealed to Luke 11:13 to support his claim: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” Regarding prayer for the Holy Spirit, Torrey wrote, “When men meet God face to face, alone, with a definite cry for a definite blessing, having met the conditions, and believing the testimony of God’s word about it, ‘while they pray the Holy Ghost comes upon them.’”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power in Christian Life and Service* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 103–4.

<sup>199</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 182–83.

<sup>200</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: How to Obtain Him in Personal Experience* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, n.d.), 14–25.

<sup>201</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: How to Obtain Him in Personal Experience*, 14–25. Torrey alludes to Acts 4:31–37, when the Spirit of God filled the disciples while they were praying.

Torrey's final step for receiving the baptism with the Spirit involved faith. The one who seeks the Spirit baptism should not look to his feelings or to any particular sensation or experience. Torrey reasoned that when a person prays for baptism with the Spirit, he asks for something according to God's will (Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38–39; Eph 5:18). A person may be confident, therefore, based on the testimony of God's Word, that he has received the petition for which he asks God (1 John 5:14–15).<sup>202</sup>

I have comprehensively presented R. A. Torrey's doctrine of Spirit baptism. I now consider the impact the baptism with the Holy Spirit exerted on his practice of evangelism. Torrey's pneumatology climaxed in a crescendo of evangelistic zeal.

### **The Holy Spirit and the Practice of Evangelism**

Torrey averred that the purpose of baptism with the Holy Spirit is to empower testimony and service.<sup>203</sup> "Testimony and service" functioned as code words for Torrey to denote evangelism, either public proclamation or personal witness. For example, Torrey asserted that the Spirit baptism "always imparts boldness in testimony and service."<sup>204</sup> Torrey recognized fear as one obstacle to testimony and service. The person who obtains the Spirit baptism overcomes timidity in his testimony to Christ. Torrey wrote, "Perhaps some one who reads this book has a great desire to speak to others and win them to Christ, but an insuperable timidity stands in the way. If you will only get the baptism of the Holy Spirit, all that will be overcome."<sup>205</sup> Torrey connected testimony and service to the desire to speak to others about Christ. He prescribed Spirit baptism as the antidote to timidity in personal evangelism.

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<sup>202</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 61–63.

<sup>203</sup> Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, 128.

<sup>204</sup> Torrey, *How to Bring Men to Christ*, 168.

<sup>205</sup> Torrey, *How to Bring Men to Christ*, 168. Torrey noted elsewhere, "The natural timidity of many a man today vanishes when he is filled with the Holy Spirit, and with great boldness and liberty, with utter fearlessness of consequences, he gives his testimony for Jesus Christ" (Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 109–11).

Torrey formulated his conviction, that Spirit baptism is for the purpose of evangelism, as he pondered Scripture. He observed Christ's promise to the disciples in Luke 24:49, that they would soon be clothed with power from on high. He noted Christ's promise to the disciples, that they would be baptized with the Spirit not many days afterward (Acts 1:5), and as a result of the Spirit's power, they would be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). He recognized the fulfillment of Christ's words on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). He perceived the result of their Spirit-empowered testimony in the conversion of three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). He considered the boldness of the early church as they testified to the resurrection of Christ and noted the connection with the Spirit's empowerment (Acts 4:31–33). He observed the recently converted Saul, filled with the Spirit, who immediately testified to Jesus as God's Son (Acts 9:17–20). He pondered 1 Corinthians 12 and deduced that the result of Spirit baptism is gifts for service. Torrey concluded, "The baptism with the Holy Spirit is always connected with, and primarily for the purpose of testimony and service."<sup>206</sup> The Spirit's coming empowered the disciples to look outward to the lost.

Torrey averred that God blessed his people with the Spirit in order that they might be a blessing to other people. Torrey commented on Christ's promise of the coming Spirit in John 7:37–39: "In this passage, the Spirit is seen as the source of rivers of life flowing forth to bless others."<sup>207</sup> In a booklet titled *Shepherd Psalm*, Torrey expounded the treasures of Psalm 23 and emphasized the others-centered nature of the Spirit's presence. In his comments on the phrase, "You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Ps 23:5 ESV), Torrey asserted that the anointing spoken of in the psalm

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<sup>206</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 104–5.

<sup>207</sup> R. A. Torrey, "Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Mediation and Family Worship," *The King's Business* 7, no. 5 (May 1916): 475.

refers to the Holy Spirit.<sup>208</sup> Torrey argued that when the Spirit of God anoints a person, his “cup overflows.” Torrey wrote, “When you sit down at Jehovah’s table and He breaks the alabaster box over you and the oil flows over your head and suffuses your whole person, your cup will run over, it will run over and run out to others to bless them.”<sup>209</sup> The blessing of the Holy Spirit is not primarily to make a person happy or even holy but to empower him to reach out and be a blessing to other people. The “blessing” that Torrey consistently envisioned culminated in gospel proclamation.

Torrey contended that the blessing of the Spirit manifests itself in love for lost people. Love motivated Torrey as he followed his Master in evangelistic faithfulness. In July 1903, freshly returned from his worldwide evangelistic tour, Torrey addressed the audience at the Northfield Conference. He spoke about “The Spirit of Christ.”<sup>210</sup> Torrey emphasized seven truths about the Spirit of Christ, but his sixth remark effectively illustrates the argument that I wish to make in this section: the Spirit of God manifests his presence in a believer’s life as a Spirit of love for the perishing. I reproduce the salient features of Torrey’s comments here:

Christ Himself tells us distinctly in Luke [19:10] that His whole life was dominated by love for the perishing, that He came into this world for one purpose; for one purpose He lived, suffered, prayed, wrought and died; He came to seek and to save the lost. The early Christians as soon as they received the Spirit were seized with this same passion for perishing men and women. Not only the apostles but the Spirit-filled rank and file of the Church went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts [8:4]), counting no sacrifice too great if, by means of that sacrifice, they might save some. If we in real fact and not in mere fancy receive the Spirit of Christ, we, too, shall be laid hold of by a passion for souls. The world and its ambitions will not entangle us, but the one absorbing ambition of our lives will be to save lost men and women. Have you such love for the lost? Are you on the alert for opportunities to speak the word or perform the act that shall be used of God to lead some one to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? Is it this you live for? Are you willing to die for

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<sup>208</sup> Torrey cited biblical texts, particularly Acts 10:38, Hebrews 1:9, and 1 John 2:20, to support his interpretation, that the anointing refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>209</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Shepherd Psalm* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1915), 24–26.

<sup>210</sup> R. A. Torrey, “The Spirit of Christ,” in *Northfield Echoes: Northfield Conference Addresses for 1903*, vol. 10, ed. Delavan L. Pierson (East Northfield, MA: Northfield Bookstore, 1903), 387–91.

this? . . . Any blessing that does not fill us with a new love for perishing souls is spurious.<sup>211</sup>

Torrey argued that the blessing of the Spirit produces a passion for souls. This Spirit-wrought love for the lost motivated Torrey to share the gospel of Christ with them.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that certain nineteenth-century religious influences shaped Torrey's understanding of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Torrey did not arrive at his understanding of Spirit baptism in a theological vacuum. Forces at work in nineteenth-century American evangelicalism influenced his perception of the Holy Spirit. I have set forth the prominent elements of Torrey's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Torrey regarded the Holy Spirit as a person of divine eminence to whom he should yield control of his life. The central feature of Torrey's pneumatology, with respect to the Holy Spirit's work and activity, was the baptism with the Holy Spirit. I have presented Torrey's views about the baptism with the Holy Spirit in a comprehensive manner, illustrating the practical importance this doctrine figured in his practice of evangelism: the Spirit of God empowered testimony to the living Christ.

In the next chapter, I showcase the gospel Torrey proclaimed in some of his select sermons. I demonstrate the importance Torrey assigned to personal evangelism, both in his own practice and in equipping the ordinary believer to bear witness to Christ.

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<sup>211</sup> Torrey, "The Spirit of Christ," 390.

CHAPTER 5  
THE GOSPEL TORREY PROCLAIMED CONSIDERED  
IN SELECT SERMONS AND HIS  
EVANGELISTIC PRACTICE

Reuben A. Torrey ministered in a variety of contexts. He pastored churches, administered Bible institutes, and organized the Montrose Bible Conference. I believe the greatest legacy he bequeathed to the Christian church is his evangelistic ministry. Specifically, Torrey shines most brightly as a personal soul-winner and a trainer of soul-winners.

Will Houghton remembered Torrey's legacy as an evangelist when he delivered the address at Torrey's funeral service on October 31, 1928. Houghton remarked, "The great objective of his life . . . next to that of pleasing His Lord, was bringing men to know the Lord. Oh, how he loved the souls of men—all men! He could talk with the intellectual; he could drop on his knees beside the poor drunkard. . . . He loved men; he loved their souls, and in that indeed, he was like his Lord."<sup>1</sup> Houghton recalled how Torrey sought men for Christ from the pulpit and in person, "man to man."<sup>2</sup> The indwelling Christ constrained Torrey to testify of his Master.

Torrey observed in Scripture the impact personal encounter with the living Christ exerted on believing souls. In his *Studies in the Life and Teachings of Our Lord*, Torrey guided his reader through a study of the four Gospels, utilizing a question-and-answer methodology. Torrey comments on Christ's appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: "Jesus when known so fills the heart that men cannot but hasten to

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<sup>1</sup> Will H. Houghton, "Funeral Service," October 31, 1928, collection 107, box 2, folder 5, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Houghton, "Funeral Service."

tell the good news to others.”<sup>3</sup> Torrey’s personal encounter with the risen Christ compelled him to open his mouth and make known to others the good news.

Torrey’s single-minded ambition to make Christ known is revealed in his response to a questionnaire he completed for his Yale College graduating class record.<sup>4</sup> Class Secretary Charles Robinson Smith solicited various responses from fellow classmates and compiled these responses into an account titled *The Twenty Years’ Record of the Class of 1875 Yale College*.<sup>5</sup> *The Record* furnished a biographical update of each alumnus since graduation. One question posed to alumni apparently inquired into the graduate’s hobbies. Torrey responded to this question:

I have but one hobby: to get men to know and believe in and love the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I owe all the wondrous joy I know and anything there is good in me; and to believe the promises and obey the precepts of the Bible—the book I once doubted utterly, but now know to be the Word of God, and to give up trying to be or do anything in their own strength, and to let the Holy Spirit come in with all His fulness to do it all.<sup>6</sup>

Torrey unashamedly testified about who he was, what he stood for, and whom he served. Considering the Ivy League nature of Torrey’s alma mater, his testimony likely appeared uncouth to his cultured colleagues.

Some forty-nine years after Torrey’s graduation from Yale College, he stood before the graduating class of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. In an address to the graduates, he reminded them of the promises of God for the Bible student and soul-winner. He challenged them, “There was never in all this world’s history such a crying demand for men and women who know God, who know Jesus Christ, who know the Holy Spirit, who know their Bibles and how to use them in winning souls for Christ, as in

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<sup>3</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Studies in the Life and Teachings of Our Lord* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1907), 330.

<sup>4</sup> The reader will recall that Torrey earned his Bachelor of Arts from Yale in 1875.

<sup>5</sup> Charles R. Smith, *The Twenty Years’ Record of the Class of 1875 Yale College* (New York: Sackett and Wilhelms, 1895), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *The Twenty Years’ Record*, 120.

the day in which you and I live.”<sup>7</sup> Torrey had dedicated his life to knowing Christ and making him known. He also prepared the next generation to do the same.

In this chapter, I feature “Torrey the evangel.” An evangel proclaims a joyful message. I examine the good news Torrey proclaimed in some of his select sermons. My primary interest in Torrey is not as a crusade evangelist but as a personal soul-winner. For this reason, I place greater emphasis on Torrey’s practice of personal evangelism. I then survey his leadership in training others to testify of Christ and the salient teachings he offered in his personal evangelism training.

### **The Gospel Torrey Proclaimed**

In my survey of Torrey’s gospel message, I categorize his evangelistic sermon content under four headings: the gospel is a message about God, about sin, and about Christ, and the gospel is a summons to faith and repentance.<sup>8</sup> Torrey emphasized these four themes in his gospel proclamation.

### **The Gospel Is a Message about God**

Torrey asserted that it is “transcendently important . . . to *know God*.”<sup>9</sup> God has revealed himself to men in the Bible and in the person of his Son. Only by studying God as he has revealed himself in Scripture and in Christ, may any person come to know God “truly and accurately and fully.”<sup>10</sup> Torrey made an inferential connection between knowing God and the practice of evangelism by citing John 17:3: “And this is eternal life,

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<sup>7</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study: How to Properly Study and Interpret the Bible* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1921), 92.

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to J. I. Packer for this outline. J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 57–73. Packer presented this structure as he endeavored to answer the question, “What is the evangelistic message?”

<sup>9</sup> R. A. Torrey, introduction to *The God of the Bible* (New York: George H. Doran, 1923), vii (emphasis original).

<sup>10</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, vii. Torrey did not believe God could be known exhaustively. God may be “fully” known in the sense that everything God has chosen to reveal about himself in Scripture and in Christ may be perceived, appreciated, and received by faith through the illumination of God’s Spirit.

that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”<sup>11</sup> As a Christian evangelist, Torrey aimed to bring his hearers into the experience of eternal life. The very essence of eternal life is knowing God and his Son.

Torrey also associated the true knowledge of God with the practice of evangelism when he asked, “How is repentance effected?”<sup>12</sup> Torrey answers, “The sight of God causes repentance. Nothing is so calculated to impress sinful man with a hatred of sin, and an abhorrence of self as a sinner, as a real view of God. If then we wish to bring men to repentance, let us bring them face to face with God. This can be effected by showing them God as revealed in his Word.”<sup>13</sup> Torrey’s text, *The God of the Bible*, contains many of the sermons he preached that aimed to show men who God is, as revealed in Scripture.

In a sermon titled “The Christian Conception of God,” Torrey elaborated on what he termed God’s “intellectual and moral attributes.”<sup>14</sup> These attributes included God’s nature as the God who is light and God’s omnipotence, omniscience, holiness, love, omnipresence, and his eternity.<sup>15</sup> Torrey’s sermon contained fifty-five scriptural citations, most of which consisted of direct quotations. Torrey exercised the role of a teaching evangelist who aimed to instruct his audience with biblical teaching concerning God’s essential nature.

Torrey’s sermon, “The Christian Conception of God,” terminated in doxology. Torrey summarizes his exposition concerning the nature of God: “What a wondrous God we have! How we ought to meditate on His Person! With what awe, and, at the same

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<sup>11</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, vii.

<sup>12</sup> R. A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches: A Thorough and Comprehensive Study of What the Bible Has to Say Concerning the Great Doctrines of Which It Treats* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1898), 361.

<sup>13</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 361.

<sup>14</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1954), 241.

<sup>15</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 241–51.

time, with what delight we should come into His presence and bow before him in adoring contemplation of the wonder and beauty and majesty and glory of His being!”<sup>16</sup> In Torrey’s thinking, an apprehension of God’s nature ought to lead to repentance and ultimately worship.

Torrey believed the holiness of God constituted the “fundamental truth of the Bible.”<sup>17</sup> God’s holiness reinforced the evangelical doctrines of Christ’s blood atonement and justification by faith.<sup>18</sup> Torrey observed in Scripture that God’s holiness “manifests itself in an intense hatred of sin.”<sup>19</sup> Conversely, God delights in righteousness and holiness.<sup>20</sup> God himself never does wickedness or iniquity. God’s holiness requires him to separate the sinner from himself. The separation of the sinner from God’s holy presence necessitates an atonement for sin by the shedding of blood “if there is to be any approach to God on the part of the sinner.”<sup>21</sup> The holiness of God, therefore, demanded the atonement rendered by Christ on the cross.<sup>22</sup>

Torrey balanced his teaching about God’s holiness by emphasizing God’s love for lost people. Torrey regarded the Bible as a love story, “the story of the infinite love of an infinitely Holy God for a fallen and morally worthless race of sinners, of which you and I are members.”<sup>23</sup> God manifested his love by making the greatest sacrifice possible. Torrey believed men need look no further than the cross and the One who hung upon it, if

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<sup>16</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 253–54.

<sup>17</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 248–49.

<sup>18</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 248–49.

<sup>19</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, 150–51. Torrey titled this sermon, “God is Holy.”

<sup>20</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, 150–51.

<sup>21</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, 152–53.

<sup>22</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, 152–53.

<sup>23</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, 168. Torrey titled this sermon, “God is Love.”

they desire to see the unfathomable love of God.<sup>24</sup> Torrey the evangel proclaimed a message of good news. The good news of the Bible is anchored in the character of God, the God who is love.

### **The Gospel Is a Message about Sin**

Torrey emphasized in his preaching the sinfulness of the human race. One inference he made from God's holiness is that the "*pure light of God's Holiness*" reveals the blackness of man's sinfulness.<sup>25</sup> In a message titled "A Good Man Who Went to Hell and a Bad Man Who Went to Heaven," Torrey emphasized the necessity of seeing oneself as a sinner before God. The sermon is based on Jesus's account of the Pharisee and tax collector who ventured to the temple to pray, recorded in Luke 18:9–14. The Pharisee is the self-perceived "good man" who actually went to hell. Why did he go to hell? Torrey answers, "*This man went to hell because he did not acknowledge himself to be a sinner. There is not one word or hint of confession of sin in all his prayer. There is no pardon of sin possible without confession that we are sinners.*"<sup>26</sup> In Torrey's sermon, the tax collector is the self-perceived "bad man" who went to heaven. In the case of the tax collector, he was completely correct in recognizing himself as a sinner before a holy God. What did he do to go to heaven? In the first place, he owned up before God that he was a sinner. Torrey writes, "There is not a man or woman on earth who will ever get to Heaven unless they own up to what God says in this Book, namely, that 'we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.'"<sup>27</sup> Torrey believed Jesus Christ could save sinners, even the worst of sinners, "but He cannot save anyone but sinners, and sinners

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<sup>24</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, 181–82.

<sup>25</sup> Torrey, *The God of the Bible*, 157–59 (emphasis original).

<sup>26</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), 31 (emphasis original).

<sup>27</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost*, 36.

who confess fully and frankly that they are sinners.”<sup>28</sup> Torrey did not flinch from declaring the sinfulness of the human race when he declared the gospel message.

The reader will recall that Torrey grew up in a privileged family. He hailed from a cultured home where civility and social refinement mattered. Torrey took special aim in his gospel preaching at those who considered themselves socially and morally advanced. In a sermon titled “There Is a Heaven and Whosoever Wishes to Can Spend Eternity There,” he laid siege to the cultured class. Torrey writes, “Come, my genial, upright, polished, perfect gentleman, you must get down and take your place as a sinner if Jesus Christ is to take any interest in you and save you.”<sup>29</sup> Torrey then appeals to his female audience, “Come, my fine lady, with fair and attractive life and beautiful character and generous culture and winsome personality and an honoured place in society, you, too, have got to get down in your right place before God as a sinner if Christ Jesus is to save you.”<sup>30</sup> In Torrey’s gospel proclamation, Christ came to save sinners and only sinners. The reality of man’s sinfulness sets the stage for the proclamation of God’s only remedy for sin, Christ Jesus.

### **The Gospel Is a Message about Jesus Christ**

The person and work of Christ constituted the heart of Torrey’s gospel proclamation. Regarding the person of Christ, Torrey observed in Scripture Christ’s deity and humanity. Torrey argued for the full divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ along the same lines as he contended for the deity of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>28</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost*, 15. Torrey based this sermon on 1 Timothy 1:15, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”

<sup>30</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost*, 15.

### *The Deity of Christ*

Scripture ascribes all the distinctively divine attributes to the Lord Jesus Christ: omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, and eternity.<sup>31</sup> Sixteen distinctively divine names are applied to Christ hundreds of times throughout Scripture.<sup>32</sup> All the distinctively divine offices are predicated on the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>33</sup> Statements in the Old Testament that name Jehovah God as their subject are cited in the New Testament and name Christ as their subject. The name and person of Christ are coupled in the New Testament with God the Father in such a manner that an “intelligent and reverent mind” could never couple any “finite being with those of the Deity.”<sup>34</sup> Finally, the New Testament teaches that Christ should be worshipped in the same way God the Father is worshipped.<sup>35</sup> The significance of Christ’s deity was immense in Torrey’s understanding. He writes, “Whoever then refuses to accept Jesus Christ as His Divine Saviour and Lord, is guilty of the enormous sin, the appalling sin, of rejecting God.”<sup>36</sup> Torrey the evangel made much of the deity of Christ in his gospel proclamation.

### *The Humanity of Christ*

Torrey observed in Scripture the real humanity of Jesus Christ. In Torrey’s thinking, to deny the real humanity of Christ is equally wrong as a denial of his deity.<sup>37</sup> Torrey rejoiced in the human nature of Christ. He writes, “I rejoice . . . that I have a Christ and a Saviour, Who, in the fullest and most real sense, is my Brother, a Fellow

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<sup>31</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 70.

<sup>33</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible* (New York: George H. Doran, 1924), 35–36. Torrey made this assertion in a sermon titled “The Christ of the Bible: Is the Christ of the Bible God?”

<sup>34</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 35–36.

<sup>35</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 35–36.

<sup>36</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 35–36.

<sup>37</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 57. Torrey asserted Christ’s real humanity in a sermon titled “The Christ of the Bible: Was Christ Jesus in Every Respect a Real Man, or Did He Only Seem to Be a Man?”

Man, a Real Man, Who lived His life here upon earth . . . subject to the same temptations that I am, yet absolutely ‘apart from sin.’”<sup>38</sup> Torrey believed in Christ’s authentic, sinless human nature. Christ lived as a man among men, yet he did not sin. Christ’s sinless, genuine human nature and his full deity constituted him an altogether suitable substitute to die in the sinner’s place.

### *The Death of Christ*

The death of Christ was fundamentally significant in Torrey’s thinking and preaching. In a sermon titled “The Christ of the Bible: His Death, How and Why He Died, and the Results of His Death,” Torrey noted that the death of Christ is mentioned more than 175 times in the New Testament.<sup>39</sup> Christ assumed humanity for the purpose of dying in the sinner’s place. Torrey claims, “The second Person of the Trinity, the Eternal Son of God, became a Man, took upon Himself flesh and blood for the specific purpose of dying. . . . The incarnation was for the specific purpose that the Christ might die.”<sup>40</sup> Torrey observed in Paul’s teaching that the death of Christ is one of two fundamental truths: “*These two central and all governing facts are first, that the Christ died and was buried, and second that He arose again.*”<sup>41</sup> Torrey observed the sheer number of scriptural references to Christ’s death, the correlation between Christ’s incarnation and death, and the significance of the crucifixion in Pauline teaching, and concluded that the death of Christ occupied an important position in biblical theology.

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<sup>38</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 74.

<sup>39</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 82. Bruce Demarest, a contemporary theologian of no mean reputation states, “Christ’s death on the cross is not a peripheral issue or a secondary theme; it is the central, indeed crucial doctrine of the faith.” Demarest claims, “There are 175 direct references to [Christ’s] death in the NT.” See Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 166–67, Demarest appended an endnote to support his claim. See Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 495n81. I checked his source and found that Demarest cited Torrey’s *What the Bible Teaches*, 144.

<sup>40</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 83.

<sup>41</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 85–86 (emphasis original).

Torrey observed in Scripture the vicarious nature of Jesus's death. Christ died because of the sins of others. Concerning the death of Jesus Christ, Torrey writes, "*A righteous Person Who deserved to live [died] in the place of unrighteous persons who deserved to die.*"<sup>42</sup> Jesus is the sinner's substitute. Torrey further observed in Scripture that Christ died to ransom sinners. Torrey notes, "*The Bible clearly and positively declares that Christ gave His life (or died) as a ransom; that is, His Death was the price paid to redeem others from death.*"<sup>43</sup> Jesus is the redeemer of sinners. Torrey discerned from Scripture that Christ himself is the propitiation for sin. He avers, "*Jesus Christ died as a propitiation for our sins, God set Him forth to be a propitiation by His blood; that is to say, that He, through the shedding of His blood, or Death, is that by which the wrath of God against us as sinners is appeased.*"<sup>44</sup> Jesus is the sinner's atoning sacrifice.

Torrey observed that the death of Jesus provided a propitiation for the whole world: "By the Death of Christ, a basis is provided upon which God can righteously deal in mercy *with all mankind, with every member of the human race.* All of God's dealings in mercy with any man are on the ground of Jesus Christ's Death."<sup>45</sup> To explain his belief, Torrey appealed to 1 John 2:1–2, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." Torrey then notes,

You will note that it does not say that Jesus Christ is the propitiation *for the sins of the whole world.* He is "a propitiation for *our sins,*" that is, for the believer's sins; but, while not a propitiation for the unbeliever's sins, He is a propitiation "*for the*

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<sup>42</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 95–96 (emphasis original).

<sup>43</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 98 (emphasis original).

<sup>44</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 102 (emphasis original).

<sup>45</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 105 (emphasis original).

*whole world.” The propitiation avails for all; it brings a real blessing to all, but it fully avails only for believers in Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup>*

In Torrey’s view, Christ’s death is sufficient for all but effectual only for those who believe in him for salvation. Torrey also noted 1 Timothy 4:10, “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.” Torrey comments on this text,

While the propitiation made by Jesus Christ on the cross secures salvation in the fullest sense only for those who accept Him Who made the propitiation, it secures the possibility of salvation, and it secures also merciful dealing, for all, even while they are rejecting the propitiation. If however, men persist in rejecting the propitiation it will ultimately bring the greater condemnation upon their heads.<sup>47</sup>

In Torrey’s sermon on the death of Christ, he claimed to have collated twenty-five results of Jesus’s death in relation to the believer.<sup>48</sup> Torrey avers that Christ’s death “cleanses the conscience of the believer from dead works to serve the living God.”<sup>49</sup> Torrey appealed to Hebrews 9:14 to substantiate his claim: “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Torrey then comments, “There are many to-day who call themselves Christians, who have not permitted the blood of Christ to cleanse their conscience from ‘dead works.’ They are constantly under the burden of *doing something* to atone for sin and to commend them to God. But we have nothing to do: it is all already done.”<sup>50</sup> In this sermon, Torrey defined “dead works” as self-efforts, penances, saying prayers, or performing some kind of righteous action to commend oneself to God.<sup>51</sup> The believer in Christ’s atoning blood sees his sins “settled

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<sup>46</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 107 (emphasis original).

<sup>47</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 107–8.

<sup>48</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 123. Torrey lists ten of these results in this sermon.

<sup>49</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 119 (emphasis original).

<sup>50</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 120 (emphasis original). A believer must preach the gospel to himself.

<sup>51</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 120.

forever by the Death of Christ.”<sup>52</sup> As a result of believing God’s testimony about the effectual merit of Christ’s death, the believer is cleansed from guilt and dead works.<sup>53</sup>

Torrey’s emphasis on Christ’s death cleansing the believer’s conscience from dead works is significant for practicing evangelism. The Christian does not bear witness to Christ to earn God’s favor. No merit accrues for the believer as a consequence of his evangelistic efforts. Because Christ’s blood cleanses believers from dead works, they are “filled with love to God and they ‘*serve the living God,*’ not in fear of punishment, but in the freedom of love born of a faith in the cleansing and perfecting blood. They serve God not in order to atone for sin, but out of a great gratitude that all their sins are already perfectly atoned for.”<sup>54</sup> Love for God and gratitude for his mercies in Christ constitute two essential motivations for evangelistic endeavor.<sup>55</sup> Torrey’s words undergird an essential element of my thesis, that faithful evangelism is the overflow of love to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>56</sup>

### *The Resurrection of Christ*

In a sermon titled “The Christ of the Bible: The Resurrection of the Christ from the Dead,” Torrey underscored the significance of Christ’s resurrection. Observing the apostolic preaching, he notes, “[The apostles] *made the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead the most prominent point in all their testimony and the very center of all their teaching and preaching.*”<sup>57</sup> Torrey followed the apostolic model by regularly preaching the resurrection.

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<sup>52</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 120.

<sup>53</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 120.

<sup>54</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 120 (emphasis original).

<sup>55</sup> Torrey would affirm that love for the lost and desire for God’s glory constitute yet other essential motivations in the practice of evangelism.

<sup>56</sup> See chap. 1, sec. “Thesis” (p. 5).

<sup>57</sup> Torrey, *The Christ of the Bible*, 132 (emphasis original).

In a sermon titled “Death Defeated and Defied,” Torrey preached the gospel to himself in the wake of his youngest daughter’s death. He cited 2 Timothy 1:10, which states in part, “Our Savior Christ Jesus . . . abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Torrey exults in Christ’s triumph over death: “Death is in itself, a dreadful thing; but Jesus Christ by His death and by His resurrection has abolished it, made it inoperative. It no longer exists for the believer in Jesus Christ. It is most emphatically one of the ‘has beens’ for the believer in Jesus Christ.”<sup>58</sup> In the resurrection, Christ swallowed up death by his triumph over it. Jesus Christ, the “Mighty Son of God,” has “conquered, abolished and destroyed” death for the believer.<sup>59</sup> Torrey not only proclaimed Christ’s resurrection, but he also found solace in it during his own grief.

### **The Gospel Is a Summons to Faith and Repentance**

Torrey the evangelist is at his finest when, after proclaiming the truth about God, sin, and the person and work of Christ, he pleads with men and women to close with Christ. Torrey called men and women to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and turn from their sin. In this section, I employ a number of lengthy citations to illustrate the directness with which Torrey summoned his hearers to Christ.

In “A Good Man Who Went to Hell and a Bad Man Who Went to Heaven,” Torrey makes plain the pathway to salvation:

The door of heaven stands open tonight to anyone here who will do what the publican did. . . . Take your place as a sinner before God. . . . Cry to God for mercy. . . . Recognize that there is no mercy to be had except on the ground of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. . . . Believe tonight God’s testimony about that blood,

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<sup>58</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Death Defeated and Defied: A Message of Comfort, Consolation, and Cheer,” Biola Publications 3 (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1923), 12–13.

<sup>59</sup> Torrey, “Death Defeated and Defied,” 26–27. Torrey exhibited some of his finest skills as a Christian apologist when he offered proofs for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. See, for example, R. A. Torrey, *Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God? And Was the Body of Jesus Raised from the Dead?* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922), 63–97.

that by the shedding of Christ's blood, your sins were all atoned for, and trust God to forgive you and save you tonight, because Jesus Christ died in your place. Do that, and you are sure to get to heaven. Who will do it right now?<sup>60</sup>

Observe Torrey's invitation to his hearers to believe God's testimony about Christ and trust in God to save them. God saves sinners based on their faith in Christ's substitutionary death. Note also how Torrey invited his hearers to not delay. He believed sinners could be saved at once by simply placing faith in God's testimony concerning Christ.

Torrey also called his hearers to repentance. In Scripture, repentance involved a change of mind. The nature of this change of mind must be determined by the scriptural context. Repentance typically involved a change of mind concerning who Jesus is and concerning sin.<sup>61</sup> In a message titled "The Great Attraction; The Uplifted Christ," Torrey called his hearers to repentance and faith:

Oh! men and women, look now! See Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross, see Him hanging on that awful cross, see Him wounded for your transgressions, bruised for your iniquities, and the chastisement of your peace laid on Him. Oh, men and women living in sin, men and women rejecting Christ for the world. . . . Won't you yield to that love, won't you give up your sin, give up your worldly pleasure, give up your wilful [*sic*] errors, and accept the Saviour who loves you, and died for you, who was "wounded for your transgressions; bruised for your iniquities" and upon whom the chastisement of your peace was laid? Accept Him right now.<sup>62</sup>

Note how Torrey pointed his hearers to the dying Savior as he called sinners to yield to Christ's love for them. Observe how he wooed his audience to "give up" their sin and worldly pleasures. In this statement the call to repentance is clearly heard. Torrey based his appeal to his hearers to accept Christ and give up their sin on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death.

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<sup>60</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost*, 38–39.

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of Torrey's teaching regarding repentance, the reader should consult Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 352–61. Regarding repentance of sin, Torrey writes, "Repentance of sin is such a sorrow for sin or abhorrence of sin, such a change of mind about it, as leads the sinner to turn away from it with all his heart" (Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 355).

<sup>62</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Gospel for Today* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1922), 53. Torrey cited Isaiah 53:5 in his appeal.

In a sermon titled “Paths to Perdition,” Torrey issued a call to repentance from the specific sin of adultery. Torrey pleads,

Hell will be more full of adulterers and adulteresses than Reno, Nevada. Some of you men here tonight may well tremble. I am not going to point you out, but God knows you. Oh! I appeal to every man and woman here to-night who is taking their first steps in the path of impurity; yes, to you who have gotten further on in that road; yes, to you who are way down that road: Repent, Repent, Repent, and believe on Jesus Christ to-night.<sup>63</sup>

Observe how Torrey joins repentance and faith in this appeal. Observe how in this message, he does not call his hearers to repent of sin in general terms, but very specifically. Observe also how Torrey used the threat of hell to motivate his hearers to flee from the coming wrath.

Regarding Torrey’s summons to faith and repentance, two more elements of his gospel address need to be noted. First, Torrey summoned his audience to believe on Christ *so that they might be born again*. In Torrey’s *ordo salutis*, faith and repentance *preceded* the new birth. In an evangelistic booklet titled “How to Become a Christian,” Torrey asks his readers,

Are you born again? Now, I think a good many of you will say, “No, I am not. Can you tell me just what I must do right now to be born again?” I can. You will find it in John 1:12: “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” We are born again by God’s Holy Spirit, through his Word, the moment we receive Christ. . . . Anyone today that will throw his heart open and let Jesus come in to rule and reign, God will make that one a new creature in a moment.<sup>64</sup>

Observe that Torrey believed the new birth could be experienced instantly, consequent upon receiving Christ. In a message titled “The New Birth as Set Forth in John 3:2–21,” Torrey comments, “As soon as we look at Him on the cross and put our

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<sup>63</sup> Torrey, *How to Be Saved and How to Be Lost*, 156.

<sup>64</sup> Louis T. Talbot, ed., *Traits and Tracts of Torrey: A Fresh Appreciation of a Great Man and Teacher* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1912), 74.

trust in Him as our sin-bearer, that moment we are born again.”<sup>65</sup> Torrey called men and women to believe in Christ so that they might enter into a new life in Christ.

The second element of Torrey’s gospel address that needs to be noted is his emphasis on justification by faith. A person who believes on Christ receives new birth and is justified in God’s sight. Torrey defined justification not as God’s making a sinner righteous but as God’s declaring a sinner to be righteous. Torrey writes, “In Biblical usage, to ‘justify’ means, not to make righteous, but to reckon righteous, declare righteous, or show to be righteous.”<sup>66</sup> Torrey regarded justification as “one of the cardinal doctrines of Evangelical Faith.”<sup>67</sup> Men are not justified by keeping the law of God. The law’s purpose is to “bring us a knowledge of sin, that is, to bring us to the realization of our need of justification by grace.”<sup>68</sup> Justification is based upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ is the “channel through which this free gift is bestowed” but the “one and only ground of justification is the shed blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>69</sup> In Torrey’s view, the sole ground of justification is the shed blood of Christ, while the sole condition of justification is “simple faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>70</sup>

Torrey called upon his hearers to respond to God’s gracious offer of salvation without delay. Those who believe on Christ receive new birth and justification. If a person senses the Holy Spirit is dealing with him about his need to trust Christ, he should do so without delay. In a sermon titled “The Day of Golden Opportunity,” Torrey writes,

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<sup>65</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Voice of God in the Present Hour* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 134–35.

<sup>66</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 226. This quote is from a sermon titled “The Distinctive Doctrine of Protestantism.”

<sup>67</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 225.

<sup>68</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 228.

<sup>69</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 230.

<sup>70</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 231. Torrey believed justification included the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believing sinner. See Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 236.

Men and women, listen! You cannot trifle with God, and you cannot trifle with your own souls, and you cannot trifle with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not only saying in our text, but He is saying in your hearts, “Today! Accept Christ right now.” Will you listen to the mighty, gracious Spirit of God? Will you do as He bids you? Will you listen right now and harden not your heart, but accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour, surrender to Him as your Lord and Master, and begin to confess to Him as such before the world, and be saved, and get right here and now the wonderful blessings that He gives and that He alone can give?<sup>71</sup>

In Torrey’s proclamation of the gospel, the golden day of opportunity is today. Today is the day of salvation and all those who sense God’s tug on their heart should respond by faith in Christ without delay.

I have presented a summary of the basic gospel message Torrey proclaimed. Torrey’s proclamation reflects the marrow of evangelicalism, emphasizing the sinfulness of man, conversion, and new birth. In the next section, I present Torrey as a personal worker, a fisher of men, and a soul-winner.

### **Torrey the Soul-Winner**

In this section, I first consider Torrey’s motivation for personal evangelism. His motivation for one-to-one work substantiates three components of my thesis: faithful evangelism is the overflow of love to the Lord Jesus Christ and is nurtured by the experience of the Spirit’s fullness, coupled with Scripture intake. I then present seven vignettes of Torrey at work as an evangelist.

#### **Torrey’s Motivation for Personal Evangelism**

Love for Christ and lost souls motivated Torrey toward faithful gospel proclamation. In his *Daily Meditations*, Torrey underscored the centrality of love in Christian ministry through the example of Paul. He writes, “It was the love of Christ that

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<sup>71</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 209. Torrey’s sermon text was Hebrews 3:7, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear his voice.’”

constrained Paul to his untiring effort to bring men to a knowledge of Christ.”<sup>72</sup> The love of Christ constrained not only Paul, Torrey adds, “The great men and women of Christian history have been the men and women who had a great love for Christ, whose hearts were aglow with love to the glorious Son of God.”<sup>73</sup> Love for Christ is the central motivation in all soul-winning endeavors.

I believe Torrey’s *magnum opus* is his volume titled *How to Work for Christ*. Torrey lists love as a condition of success in personal work. He writes, “Nothing wins like love. . . . It leads to untiring effort for the salvation of others [and] love attracts others to us.”<sup>74</sup> Torrey then asks the question, “How can we get love?”<sup>75</sup> Torrey advised his readers to dwell upon Christ’s love for them. He writes, “We shall never appreciate Christ’s love to us until we see it against the black background of our own sin. It is the one who is forgiven much who loves much (Luke 7:47).”<sup>76</sup> Reflection upon Christ’s gracious dealings with us stimulates our love, which furnishes motivation for evangelism.

Continuing to answer the question, “How can we get love?,” Torrey then advised his readers to look to the Spirit of God. He writes, “If we are to have love to Christ and love to men, the Holy Ghost must impart it. The first fruit of the Spirit is love. . . . If we will look to the Holy Spirit to do His whole work in our hearts, he will . . . fill them with love to Christ and . . . our fellow-men.”<sup>77</sup> Love for Christ is the fruit of the Spirit’s gracious work.

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<sup>72</sup> R. A. Torrey, *R. A. Torrey’s Daily Meditations: A Thought, a Meditation, and a Related Scripture Passage, for Every Day in the Year*, ed. A. Chester Mann (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), 121.

<sup>73</sup> Torrey, *Daily Meditations*, 121.

<sup>74</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Work for Christ: A Compendium of Effective Methods* (London: James Nisbet, 1901), 22.

<sup>75</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 23.

<sup>76</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 23.

<sup>77</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 23.

Love for Christ is also birthed by meditation on God's Word. Torrey claims that we may realize a love for lost souls by "*Dwelling* upon the actual condition of men outside of Christ, *as revealed in the Word of God*, . . . If you *reflect* upon the hell that awaits lost souls you will soon have . . . a passion for their salvation."<sup>78</sup> Finally, Torrey adds that we may realize a love for the lost by "*Observing* Jesus Christ and *dwelling* upon his conduct toward the lost."<sup>79</sup> Note well Torrey's words that point to the practice of meditation: dwelling upon, reflecting upon, and observing. The Word of God furnishes the "grist for the mill" of scriptural meditation. Scriptural meditation stimulates love for Christ and lost people, which furnishes motivation for evangelism.

### **Torrey the Evangel: Some Vignettes**

Before considering seven illustrations of Torrey as a personal worker, I must emphasize the influence D. L. Moody exerted on Torrey during the period of his early spiritual formation as a soul-winner. Moody conducted evangelistic services during Torrey's senior year at Yale Divinity School. Initially condescending in his assessment of Moody, Torrey soon discovered something compelling in the Northfield commoner. Torrey and some fellow students went to Moody and said, "Mr. Moody, we wish you would tell us how to win souls to Christ."<sup>80</sup> Moody offered the students a few passages of Scripture and then said, "You go at it. The best way to learn is to go at it. How to do it is to do it."<sup>81</sup> Torrey's training in personal evangelism had begun.

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<sup>78</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1908), 89 (emphasis added).

<sup>79</sup> Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered*, 89 (emphasis added).

<sup>80</sup> Frank Grenville Beardsley, *Heralds of Salvation: Biographical Sketches of Outstanding Soul Winners* (New York: American Tract Society, 1939), 180.

<sup>81</sup> Beardsley, *Heralds of Salvation*, 180. Regarding Moody's influence, Torrey stated, "He was a revelation to me, changing my entire conception of the Christian ministry, shaping my whole future" (Richard Ellsworth Day, *Bush Aglow: The Life Story of Dwight Lyman Moody, Commoner of Northfield* [Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1936], 296).

Moody's influence is visible in the philosophy of ministry Torrey embraced in his pastoral ministry. Torrey writes,

In one of my pastorates, I had a friend who lived across the street from me who was an agnostic. Though he was an agnostic and I a Christian minister we were intimate friends, for I believe that a Christian . . . should rub up against all classes of men. . . . Our Master was not too good to associate with all kinds and conditions of men, even the most depraved and outcast. . . . I read in my Bible that Christians are the salt of the earth. How on earth can we expect the salt to exert its preservative influence upon the meat if we put the salt in one barrel and the meat in another? So I have always cultivated the friendship, . . . of all kinds of "heretics" and unbelievers.<sup>82</sup>

Torrey formed relationships with all kinds of men in an effort to win them to Christ. In a more contemporary adaptation of Torrey's salt and meat-barrel analogy, Torrey aimed to get "out of the salt shaker and into the world."<sup>83</sup> Torrey learned the gospel as he entered the lives of hurting people. He saw and understood Christ in a new light after he learned to enter into the lives of broken humanity. Torrey writes,

I never knew Jesus as I know Him today, until I knew what it was to go down among the poor and outcast, and kneel right beside a dirty drunkard, and put my arm about his neck, and whisper to him that Jesus died for him and that Jesus came to save him and could save him, and then hear him with breaking heart lift his voice to God in prayer, and then see him rise a new man in Christ Jesus.<sup>84</sup>

Torrey learned to minister to the needy from his mentor, D. L. Moody.<sup>85</sup> He practiced personal evangelism as a way of life. The following vignettes illustrate Torrey at work as an evangelist.

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<sup>82</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Talks to Men about the Bible and the Christ of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 123–24.

<sup>83</sup> I borrow this terminology from Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*, IVP Signature Collection (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979).

<sup>84</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 264–65.

<sup>85</sup> For a description of Moody's early ministry in "the Sands" of Chicago during the 1860s, see Lyle W. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 64–73.

### *The Family Circle*

After Torrey became a Christian, he attempted to reach Albert, his eldest brother. At one point, Torrey even spent an entire night in prayer for Albert's soul. Torrey had written a letter to his brother encouraging him to receive Christ. Albert rebuffed all the efforts of his younger brother. Torrey continued to pray for Albert for over fifteen years.

During Torrey's first winter in Chicago, the Lord seemed to impress upon him, "You need not pray any longer. I have heard your prayer. Now just wait and watch."<sup>86</sup> In the course of time, Albert moved to Chicago. One evening, Albert accepted an invitation to dine in the Torrey home. Albert was stricken that night with sickness and ultimately spent two weeks bedridden in the Torrey home. Torrey's biographer, Roger Martin, narrates what unfolded: "Torrey did not speak to [Albert] directly about his soul, but the Christian atmosphere greatly impressed him. The [Torrey] children spoke so fluently and naturally of spiritual things and of their love for Christ."<sup>87</sup> When Albert recovered and the day came for him to return home, Torrey accompanied his eldest brother. As the two walked along, Albert informed his brother, "Archie, I am thinking of going into temperance work. How do you begin?"<sup>88</sup> Torrey replied to Albert, "The only way that I know to begin temperance work is by first of all becoming a Christian."<sup>89</sup> As the conversation unfolded, Albert eventually asked Reuben how to become a Christian. The two walked to the offices of the Moody Bible Institute (MBI) and there, within the confines of MBI, Torrey explained the way of life to his eldest brother, who gladly

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<sup>86</sup> Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), 106–7.

<sup>87</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 106–7.

<sup>88</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 106–7.

<sup>89</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 106–7.

received Christ. In time, Albert himself attended MBI and became a lay preacher in a Presbyterian church.<sup>90</sup>

Torrey's other brother, Swift, married into a Roman Catholic family. For years, Torrey prayed for Swift but witnessed no visible change in his attitude.<sup>91</sup> As time passed, Swift's wife died, leaving him a widower and the father of an only child. When Swift became ill with tuberculosis, Torrey traveled to Brooklyn to be at his brother's bedside. Torrey entreated Swift to receive Christ. Swift extended his hand to his brother only to withdraw it and turn toward the wall. He replied, "Go away, Archie, I do not want to hear about it."<sup>92</sup> Torrey retreated to another room to plead with God for his brother's soul. In time, a knock came at the door, and the nurse informed Torrey that his brother beckoned him to come. This time, Swift extended his hand to Reuben and stated, "Archie, I can hold out no longer. Pray for me that I may know your Christ."<sup>93</sup> Torrey then led his brother into a glad acceptance of the Savior.<sup>94</sup>

Like Andrew who found his brother Peter and led him to the Messiah, Reuben Torrey brought his brothers to the same Christ. Torrey proclaimed the gospel beginning with the innermost circle of his own family, often the most difficult sphere in which to share the good news.

### *Strangers and Infidels*

In a message titled "How God Guides," Torrey related an incident from his own life. One day he walked down Clark Street in Chicago, passing hundreds of people, when he finally reached the corner of Adams, a place he described as "a very busy

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<sup>90</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 106–7.

<sup>91</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 66–67.

<sup>92</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 66–67.

<sup>93</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 66–67.

<sup>94</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 66–67.

corner.”<sup>95</sup> As Torrey passed hundreds of people, he observed one particular man, a perfect stranger. Torrey sensed the Spirit of God saying to him, “Speak to that man.”<sup>96</sup> Torrey relates how he stepped into a doorway to ask God for clarification. Instantly, he was convinced of God’s leadership to speak to this man. Torrey caught up with the man, placed a hand upon his shoulder, and asked, “Are you a Christian?”<sup>97</sup> The man then replied to Torrey, “That is a strange thing to ask a perfect stranger on the street.”<sup>98</sup> Torrey replied, “I know it is, and I do not ask every man that I meet on the street that question, but I believe God told me to ask you.”<sup>99</sup> The man stopped and hung his head. He said, “This is very strange. I am a graduate of Amherst College, but I am a perfect wreck through drink here in Chicago, and only yesterday my cousin, who is a minister in this city, was speaking to me about my soul, and for you, a perfect stranger, to put this question to me here on this busy street!”<sup>100</sup> Torrey did not succeed in leading the man into a definite acceptance of Christ then and there on the busy street. Shortly thereafter, however, the man did receive Christ as his Savior.

A female student who attended MBI found a man lying ill, dying of tuberculosis in the poor quarter of Chicago. She attempted to speak to him about his soul, but he crossly informed her that he was an infidel. For about a month, the student returned to the dying man’s home, performing various acts of kindness and service. One Sunday, she asked Torrey if he would come visit the dying man. Torrey agreed to go. The

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<sup>95</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 142–43.

<sup>96</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 142–43.

<sup>97</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 142–43.

<sup>98</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 142–43.

<sup>99</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 142–43.

<sup>100</sup> Torrey, *The Treasury of R. A. Torrey*, 142–43. Torrey advised his readers to be cautious about perceived promptings from God. He counseled his readers to test every prompting by God’s Word and seek clarification from God through prayer before acting on any perceived prompting.

student accompanied Torrey to the home on Milton Avenue, introduced Torrey to the infidel, then excused herself. Torrey continues the narrative,

I sat down by his bed and asked if I could read from the Bible to him. He replied that I could. I read him a part of the fifth chapter of Romans, dwelling upon the places that told of God's love for the sinner. I read him the place where it told how Jesus Christ bore all our sins in His own body on the cross. Then I asked if I could pray. I knelt by his bed. I felt his time was short. I asked God to open his eyes to see that he was a lost sinner . . . that Jesus had borne all his sins . . . and to show him that he could find pardon and salvation then and there by simply trusting in Jesus.<sup>101</sup>

When Torrey concluded his prayer, he quietly sang the words to the hymn, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"<sup>102</sup> The dying man broke in on the last verse and sang with Torrey. Torrey concludes, "When we had finished, I looked up and said, 'Did you really come?' He said, 'I did.' I talked with him a little while and found that he really was trusting in the Saviour. That night he passed away to be with Him."<sup>103</sup>

Torrey remained available to God to witness to strangers and infidels. Circumstances and situations changed, but Torrey's message remained the same.

### *Be Ready in Season and out of Season*

In December 1901, Torrey and his wife departed on a worldwide evangelistic tour that consisted of visits to Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, India, and the British Isles. The Australian campaign included a series of evangelistic meetings in Tasmania. Enroute by ship to the Isle of Tasmania, the party encountered turbulent seas. While most of the party weathered the storm below deck, Torrey could be found above deck dealing with the ship captain about his soul. The self-righteous captain blurted out

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<sup>101</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Anecdotes and Illustrations* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1907), 9–10.

<sup>102</sup> Charlotte Elliot, "Just as I Am," in *The Christian Life Hymnal*, ed. Eric Wyse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 293.

<sup>103</sup> Torrey, *Anecdotes and Illustrations*, 9–10.

to Torrey, “The golden rule is good enough for me.”<sup>104</sup> Torrey questioned the captain, “Have you kept it?”<sup>105</sup> This question stung the captain’s conscience. Torrey continued with the captain, “Your morality is no passport to heaven.”<sup>106</sup> In time, the captain yielded his life to Christ.

After the evangelistic campaigns in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, the evangelistic team traveled to India. On board the steamer traveling to India, Torrey met a leader of the Hindu faith who was “living in open sin.”<sup>107</sup> The leader endeavored to defend his religious beliefs to Torrey, who simply replied, “By their fruits, ye shall know them.”<sup>108</sup> Roger Martin describes the conversation and the ensuing results: “The Hindu was so struck by the unexpected answer that he later sought out Torrey, asking him how to become a Christian. The Hindu leader was the first fruits of the Indian harvest.”<sup>109</sup> Torrey remained ever alert for opportunities to bear witness of his Savior.

These brief vignettes illustrate Torrey’s willingness to share the gospel with anyone he met. Similar kinds of conversations are sprinkled throughout his writings. The names, places, and circumstances changed, but Torrey remained alert for the opportunity to speak of his Savior.

In 1926, Torrey lived in Asheville, North Carolina. In January, he and Clara traveled to Brooklyn, New York, for a series of evangelistic services. On Sunday, January 10, Torrey entered these unusual words in his diary: “I am having a strange trouble with my voice. I spoke normally for a few minutes & then my voice almost

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<sup>104</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 149–50.

<sup>105</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 149–50.

<sup>106</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 149–50

<sup>107</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 157.

<sup>108</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 157. Torrey referenced Matthew 7:16 in the KJV.

<sup>109</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 157.

fails.”<sup>110</sup> Torrey’s condition must have concerned him. His diary entries reveal that he persevered and remained faithful, not only in public preaching but in personal witness. On January 24, he recorded these words, “Went into a restaurant, got to talking to a stranger & led him to Christ.”<sup>111</sup> Torrey the evangel used his faltering voice to point people to his Savior.

### **Torrey the Trainer of Soul-Winners**

Torrey equipped ordinary men and women for practical Christian service. This emphasis on practical Christian ministry is nowhere more evident than in his determination to train personal soul-winners. Torrey’s leadership in personal evangelism training is salutary. He labored faithfully to prepare the body of Christ to engage a lost world with the gospel message.

In this section, I demonstrate Torrey’s leadership in the training of personal workers. Torrey trained Christians in personal evangelism through the printed page, the sermon, his pastoral ministry, and his labors at MBI. I also feature a selection of Torrey’s personal evangelism teachings. The reader will observe the four-fold strand of Torrey’s spirituality throughout his teachings. The disciplines of prayer, Scripture intake, personal witnessing, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit not only invigorated his practice of personal evangelism but punctuated his evangelism training.

### **The Printed Page**

Torrey capitalized on a literate Christian readership and ubiquitous Christian publishing. For the sake of Christ’s kingdom, Torrey leveraged the common Christian’s propensity to educate himself through reading. He authored at least four books designed

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<sup>110</sup> R. A. Torrey, diary entry, January 10, 1926, collection 107, box 3, folder 3, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

<sup>111</sup> Torrey, diary entry, January 24, 1926, collection 107, box 3, folder 3, Torrey Ephemera (Wheaton).

to equip Christians to be personal soul-winners. He also utilized other print media to stimulate Christians toward evangelistic faithfulness.

In 1893, Torrey penned his first text addressing the theme, *How to Bring Men to Christ*. In the preface to this text, Torrey writes, “Never before in the history of the Church were there so many who desire to win others to Christ. . . . This little book aims to tell them. . . . It is hoped that from a careful study of these pages, any earnest Christian can learn how to do efficient work in bringing others to the Savior.”<sup>112</sup> Much of the material in *How to Bring Men to Christ* is expanded and repackaged to some degree in the first part of Torrey’s third volume, *How to Work for Christ*.

In between *How to Bring Men to Christ* and *How to Work for Christ*, Torrey assembled a small volume designed to place Scripture citations at the fingertips of the personal soul-winner. *A Vest Pocket Companion for Christian Workers* was published in 1895 and contained a collation of various Scripture texts, topically arranged under headings such as “The Best Texts for the Careless, Indifferent and All Who Do Not Feel Deeply Their Need of Christ,” “The Best Texts for Those Who Wish to Know How to Be Saved,” and “The Best Texts for Those Who Have Difficulties.”

Under the heading that enumerated texts for people who have various difficulties with the Christian faith, Torrey listed cases such as “I Am Too Great a Sinner,” “My Heart Is Too Hard,” and “I Must Become Better Before I Become a Christian.” Torrey did not merely cite Scripture references but furnished the complete text of Scripture. Designed to be carried in a Christian’s coat pocket or handbag, *A Vest Pocket Companion* placed biblical texts within the grasp of the personal worker. The volume illustrates the importance Torrey ascribed to utilizing Scripture when dealing with men about salvation.

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<sup>112</sup> R. A. Torrey, preface to *How to Bring Men to Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1893), 3–4.

I have previously cited Torrey's third text, *How to Work for Christ: A Compendium of Effective Methods*. In this text, published in 1901, Torrey carefully guides the reader through the subtle intricacies of dealing with men's souls.

One example from *How to Work for Christ* illustrates Torrey's pedagogical style. In section 1, Torrey counseled the would-be soul-winner about "How to Deal with Professed Skeptics and Infidels." He acknowledged that there are various classes of skeptics, and it is "not wise to use the same methods in dealing with all."<sup>113</sup> A large class of skeptics, Torrey writes, are not genuine skeptics, but what he termed "mere triflers."<sup>114</sup> These mere triflers use their professed skepticism "as an excuse for sin, and a salve for their own consciences."<sup>115</sup> How is a personal worker to deal with the skeptic who is a mere trifler? Through long experience in dealing with trifling skeptics, Torrey anticipated what the skeptic might say: "Very likely the skeptic will say, 'The Gospel and the whole Bible is all foolishness to me.'<sup>116</sup> To this claim, the personal worker should reply, "Yes, that is exactly what God says."<sup>117</sup> The skeptic's curiosity will be piqued and he will be open to hearing the truth. Torrey then counsels,

Have him read 1 Cor. 1:18. Then you can say, "You said that the Gospel was foolishness to you, and God Himself says that 'the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness,' and it is foolishness to you because you are perishing; 'but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.'" Oftentimes it will be well to leave the man without another word of comment. Be careful not to laugh at him, and not to produce the impression that you are joking; but leave him with the thought that he is indeed perishing.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 120.

<sup>114</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 120.

<sup>115</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 120.

<sup>116</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 120.

<sup>117</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 120.

<sup>118</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 120.

Observe the detailed manner in which Torrey guided the would be soul-winner to deal with a trifling skeptic. Torrey always suggested helpful Scriptures to use when dealing with various individuals. He counseled the personal worker to allow the person with whom he dealt to read the words of Scripture for himself. Torrey offered questions and comments a person might utilize when dealing with an individual about his or her soul.

The golden thread woven throughout *How to Work for Christ* is the winning of the lost to the Savior. Additionally, Torrey gives prominence to his four pillars of spirituality throughout the text. In *How to Work for Christ*, the practice of evangelism, the work of the Holy Spirit, the discipline of prayer, and feeding on the Word are front and center in Torrey's discussion.

Torrey's fourth text is titled *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*. This volume serves as something of an apologetic for practicing personal evangelism. About this text, Torrey writes,

This book is written primarily for the purpose of stirring up others to this joyous work of soul-winning, not merely that many may be thus saved, but that they themselves may enter into a joy that they have never known before—the joy which our Lord Jesus gives to all those who enter into fellowship with Himself in the work of saving the lost.<sup>119</sup>

Torrey wrote *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning* in 1915 in order to appeal to the Christian's desire for joy in fellowship with Christ. He aimed to motivate Christians for soul-winning endeavor not by guilt, but by the experience of joy. This joy is to be experienced by those who join Christ in his work of seeking and saving the lost.

Torrey not only wrote books, but he also contributed regularly to a Christian journal titled *The King's Business*. In September 1918, he penned an editorial in *The*

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4. <sup>119</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning* (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1915),

*King's Business* titled, "After Vacation What?"<sup>120</sup> In his editorial he encouraged Christian ministers to devote time to careful planning for what they aim to accomplish in the coming months. Torrey advised his clergy readers to set aside a morning or afternoon to "prayerfully plan your season's campaign."<sup>121</sup> What specifically should a pastor plan to accomplish? Torrey writes, "Among other things plan for some systematic Bible teaching in your church or mission."<sup>122</sup> Torrey's counsel does not end here. He continues, "Plan for a class for the training of personal workers. Plan for a very definite soul-winning campaign in your community. Plan for the most systematic and most effective visitation of your parish that you have ever had. Plan for getting your people to give for the home and for Foreign Mission work as they have never given before."<sup>123</sup> Observe Torrey's very methodical approach to the soul-winning endeavor. He counseled pastors to be prayerful, disciplined, and intentional in their approach to soul-winning training and outreach.

Torrey effectively utilized the printed page to stimulate and equip Christians for personal evangelism. He also preached so as to equip the church for her evangelistic task. Nowhere was his preaching more intended to encourage personal evangelism than when he conducted his worldwide evangelistic tour.

### **The Sermon**

During his worldwide crusades, between 1902 and 1905, Torrey typically preached evangelistic messages designed to reach lost people at his evening gatherings. He devoted afternoon sessions to equipping and motivating Christians toward evangelistic faithfulness. Three examples of Torrey sermons aimed to motivate Christians

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<sup>120</sup> R. A. Torrey, "Editorial: After Vacation What?," *The King's Business* 9, no. 9 (September 1918): 737.

<sup>121</sup> Torrey, "After Vacation What?," 737.

<sup>122</sup> Torrey, "After Vacation What?," 737.

<sup>123</sup> Torrey, "After Vacation What?," 737.

toward evangelistic endeavor are contained in *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*.<sup>124</sup> These messages are titled “He That Winneth Souls Is Wise,” “The Most Effective Method of Soul-Winning,” and “Simple Methods by Which Any One Can Win Others to Christ.” Torrey labored in preaching to instruct his Christian audiences concerning their main business in life, the winning of souls. He provided practical instruction to equip his listeners for the soul-winning task. For example, in “Simple Methods by Which Any One Can Win Others to Christ,” Torrey encouraged Christians to “lay siege” to the lost by using letters.<sup>125</sup> He writes,

There are many whom we cannot reach by a conversation whom we can reach by letters. A letter is sometimes more effective than direct personal conversation. A letter can be read at leisure and apart by one’s self, and it can be read again and again. Eternity alone will reveal how many thousands have been won to Christ by the medium of letters from earnest Christians.<sup>126</sup>

The use of letters is but one practical example of the way Torrey employed the sermon to instruct his audiences to be evangelistically active. The sermon served as an important medium to equip and deploy Christians for personal evangelism.

In “A Record of the Torrey-Alexander Tour Round the World,” Torrey underscored the importance of personal soul-winning and the emphasis he placed on motivating Christians for personal work.<sup>127</sup> Torrey writes, “We have iterated and re-iterated that men would not be converted through our preaching so much as through the work of individual Christians. We have hammered away on the one duty of personal work by men, women, and children who are right with God; and just as soon as we have

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<sup>124</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905).

<sup>125</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 100.

<sup>126</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 100.

<sup>127</sup> R. A. Torrey, “A Record of the Torrey-Alexander Tour Round the World and the Convention of Christian Workers in Chicago, June 1903,” *Showers of Blessing*, June 27, 1903, box 2, folder 4, Torrey Collection (Moody), 4. Torrey worked in his evangelistic crusades with Charles M. Alexander, who led musical worship during the meetings.

got them to doing personal work, we had a revival.”<sup>128</sup> Torrey “hammered away” at the duty of personal work through his preaching. He “iterated and re-iterated” the importance of soul-winning through the public lectern.

Torrey also employed the medium of public oration to instruct the clergy. In an address delivered to Christian ministers in New Zealand, Torrey outlined the purposes and responsibilities of the Christian ministry. He defined three purposes of the ministry: to save souls, to feed the church, and to equip the saints for the work of ministry.<sup>129</sup> To the clergy, Torrey declares, “It is the business of the pastor to train the church for the work of ministering. In other words, in God’s conception of the Church every member of the Church is to be a minister of the Gospel, and the purpose of the leadership . . . is that the members of the Church should be trained for Christian service.”<sup>130</sup> The application Torrey emphasized in this address to pastors focused on ministerial responsibility to train congregants for personal evangelism.

### **The Pastoral Ministry**

Torrey pastored the Chicago Avenue Church from 1894 until 1906.<sup>131</sup> Roger Martin described how Torrey partitioned the church into sections and assigned a superintendent and several personal workers to each section.<sup>132</sup> Torrey designed that any visitor to the church would not be far from a personal worker. Concerning this organizational structure, Martin writes, “If a visitor left, a personal worker followed him and spoke to him either in the foyer or outside the church. Every visitor was spoken to

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<sup>128</sup> Torrey, “A Record of the Torrey-Alexander Tour,” 4.

<sup>129</sup> R. A. Torrey, “The Christian Ministry: Its Purposes and Responsibilities,” *New Zealand’s Glorious Revival*, August–September 1902. Moodyana Collection, Crowell Learning Resource Center, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 54–56.

<sup>130</sup> Torrey, “The Christian Ministry,” 54–56.

<sup>131</sup> Beardsley, *Heralds of Salvation*, 183.

<sup>132</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 111.

about his soul, and if not a Christian, invited to the inquiry meeting after the regular service.”<sup>133</sup> Torrey also employed “fishing deacons” who combed the Chicago streets and public places on Sunday afternoons in search of the lost. Of these “fishing deacons,” Martin writes, “Many an unlikely person was converted to Christ through this channel.”<sup>134</sup>

In the above referenced address to New Zealand pastors, Torrey described some of his other methods when he pastored local churches. He writes, “In each one [in each local church], I started a training class, and I trained the membership of my church to do personal work and to lead souls to Christ. I did not depend on my preaching to get men saved.”<sup>135</sup> Torrey describes for those pastors the results of having a trained membership during his first pastorate: “After I got a body of members trained to work in my first church I had a mission [a revival/evangelistic meeting]. I did not call anybody from outside but conducted the mission myself, and my trained members went to work with the result that the whole town was transformed.”<sup>136</sup> Torrey modeled the priority of equipping grassroots church members to do personal evangelism.

Torrey pastored the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles between 1915 and 1924.<sup>137</sup> According to Kermit Staggers, Torrey preached to audiences that numbered two thousand strong.<sup>138</sup> By the end of 1917, the membership of the Church of the Open Door numbered only five hundred.<sup>139</sup> How is one to account for the disparity between

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<sup>133</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 111.

<sup>134</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 111.

<sup>135</sup> Torrey, “The Christian Ministry,” 54–56.

<sup>136</sup> Torrey, “The Christian Ministry,” 54–56.

<sup>137</sup> Beardsley, *Heralds of Salvation*, 187.

<sup>138</sup> Kermit L. Staggers, “Reuben A. Torrey: American Fundamentalist, 1856–1928” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986), 216–17.

<sup>139</sup> Staggers, “Reuben A. Torrey: American Fundamentalist,” 216–17.

attenders and members? Stagers offers a veiled and partial answer when he cites a letter to the members of the Church of the Open Door written by T. C. Horton. Horton wrote,

No other church in the United States, to the best of my knowledge, has ever achieved the results in definite, soul-saving work which have been achieved by the Church of the Open Door. . . . Had we sought to build up the church membership on the same basis as that upon which most other churches operate, we could easily have had 5000 members.<sup>140</sup>

What exactly did the Church of the Open Door do to create the discrepancy between church members and church attenders? The leadership set the membership bar high. Stagers writes, “[The] stubborn stress on soul-winning, understandable, of course, from Torrey’s point of view, nonetheless kept the church membership relatively low; many people were not willing to share their religious faith with other people.”<sup>141</sup> Torrey led the churches he served to engage the lost by practicing personal evangelism.

### **Moody Bible Institute**

Torrey’s greatest contribution to MBI was his stress on practical Christian service. Bernard DeRemer writes, “To Dr. Torrey must go the credit [at MBI] for laying the groundwork for the curriculum, especially in the Practical Christian Work program.”<sup>142</sup> Torrey submitted a report to D. L. Moody after the MBI students completed their first full year of practical Christian service. The report indicated an enrollment of 173 men and 80 women. The men conducted a total of 2,688 church and mission meetings, dealt with 9,405 inquirers, led to faith in Christ a total of 2,143 individuals, and conducted 7,243 visits. The women, not to be outdone, conducted a total of 258 mission, cottage, and mother’s meetings, conducted another 434 children’s meetings, dealt with 2,376 inquirers, led a total of 586 individuals to faith in Christ, and made a staggering

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<sup>140</sup> T. C. Horton, “To the Members of the Church of the Open Door,” n.p., 1924, quoted in Stagers, “Reuben A. Torrey: American Fundamentalist,” 216–17.

<sup>141</sup> Stagers, “Reuben A. Torrey: American Fundamentalist,” 216–17.

<sup>142</sup> Bernard R. DeRemer, *Moody Bible Institute: A Pictorial History* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), 32.

15,523 visits.<sup>143</sup> The work of training lay men and women for practical Christian service belonged to the Bible institutes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moody furnished the vision. Torrey implemented that vision.

In an editorial that appeared in the *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, not long after Torrey passed away, James Gray [presumably] wrote,

Dr. Torrey was not only an evangelist and a Bible teacher, however, but a personal soul-winner, and to him almost more than to D. L. Moody does the Moody Institute still owe its reputation for turning out men and women stimulated and equipped to deal face to face and heart to heart with human souls about salvation. Mr. Moody furnished enthusiasm for that work, but *Dr. Torrey taught us how to do it.*<sup>144</sup>

### **The Content of Torrey's Evangelism Training**

In this section, I present Torrey's definition of personal work and the importance he attached to one-to-one witnessing. I feature some essential characteristics of the personal worker that Torrey emphasized. I consider the foundational motivations for evangelism that Torrey underscored. I offer some of Torrey's core suggestions for engaging in personal work, and I present Torrey's advice for new converts. These elements constitute the basic content of Torrey's evangelism training. I have made the editorial decision to categorize Torrey's evangelism training using these descriptive subheadings.

#### *Definition and Importance*

Torrey typically referred to personal evangelism, or individual soul-winning effort, as personal work. He defined personal work as "hand-to-hand dealing with

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<sup>143</sup> DeRemer, *Moody Bible Institute*, 32.

<sup>144</sup> [James Gray?], "In Memory of Rev. Reuben Archer Torrey, D. D.," *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, December 1928, box 1, folder 1, Torrey Collection (Moody), 153 (emphasis added).

individual men, women, and children.”<sup>145</sup> Torrey believed personal work contained the greatest potential to evangelize the world, even greater potential than public oration. Torrey writes, “This [personal work] is the most effective method of winning lost souls. . . . I believe in preaching. It is a great privilege to preach the gospel, but this world can be reached and evangelized far more quickly and thoroughly by personal work than by public preaching.”<sup>146</sup> Torrey believed personal evangelism efforts possessed the potential to reach a lost world; understandably, he emphasized training personal workers.

Torrey believed the one-to-one method of personal evangelism was the most effective method of winning others to Christ. He argued that all Christians can engage in personal work, whereas all may not be able to sing, preach, or even teach a Sunday School class. Torrey believed Christians could perform personal work in places closed to preaching. For example, the police station, fire station, public house, and the saloon could be entered by a personal worker with an open eye to the opportunities to do personal witnessing.<sup>147</sup> Torrey averred that personal witnessing could be practiced at any and all times. He claimed to have spoken to individuals about their souls at all hours of the day and night.<sup>148</sup> Public oration, by contrast, did not present the ease of implementation that personal work afforded.

Torrey contended that personal work reached all classes of people. People who would not enter the door of a church could be reached by one-to-one personal effort.<sup>149</sup> Because personal work aimed at a specific individual with a definite purpose, it “hits the

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<sup>145</sup> R. A. Torrey, ed., *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival, with Suggestive Outlines* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1901), 145. The article in which this quote appeared is titled “Personal Work.”

<sup>146</sup> Torrey, *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival*, 145.

<sup>147</sup> Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 31.

<sup>148</sup> Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 33.

<sup>149</sup> Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 37.

mark” and is most effective in leading that individual to Christ.<sup>150</sup> Torrey claimed to have seen people sit unmoved under the strongest preaching. In contrast, the personal evangelistic efforts of ordinary people succeeded in winning the lost “where the best preaching of the mightiest preacher in the world has failed.”<sup>151</sup> In personal work, Torrey averred, the witness studies the individual case and administers “that portion of God’s healing Word which is particularly needed.”<sup>152</sup> Torrey believed by matter of deep conviction that personal witnessing produced the most abundant results. He claims, “The world will never be won by preaching, but millions could be won for Christ every year if only those who are now Christians would all undertake One by One work.”<sup>153</sup>

#### *Traits and Characteristics*<sup>154</sup>

First, one who would engage in personal evangelism must have a “clear knowledge of Christ as a personal Savior.”<sup>155</sup> One cannot lead others to the Savior he does not know.

Second, a personal worker must possess a “clear and firm conviction that any man who has not accepted Christ is lost.”<sup>156</sup> The conviction that men are lost drove Christ to seek and save them. Likewise, a conviction that men outside Christ are lost compelled Paul toward earnest efforts to reach them. How does a personal witness develop the conviction that men outside Christ are lost? Torrey prescribed study and meditation on the Word of God. Torrey writes, “If one would have a deep conviction that men are lost,

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<sup>150</sup> Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 42–43.

<sup>151</sup> Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 44.

<sup>152</sup> Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 46.

<sup>153</sup> Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 48.

<sup>154</sup> I have compiled these traits and characteristics from various sources rather than slavishly follow one of Torrey’s lists in a single text.

<sup>155</sup> Torrey, *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival*, 151.

<sup>156</sup> Torrey, *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival*, 151.

he should dwell upon this truth as set forth in the Word of God.”<sup>157</sup> After the personal evangelist has meditated on the lostness of men as taught in the Word of God, he should “ask God by His Holy Spirit to give this Word truth and power in his heart and life.”<sup>158</sup> The intake of God’s Word and the blessing of God’s Spirit are integral in developing the character needed to practice personal evangelism. Note well that Torrey prescribed scriptural meditation and an appeal to the Spirit’s gracious influence *in order to* stimulate love for Christ *as well as to* develop the conviction that men outside Christ are lost.

Third, a personal witness must be convinced of the truth of endless punishment in hell for the finally impenitent. Torrey writes, “If you really believe the doctrine of endless, conscious torment of the impenitent, and the doctrine really gets hold of you, you will work as you never worked before for the salvation of the lost. If you in any wise abate the doctrine, it will abate your zeal.”<sup>159</sup> A personal worker must be characterized by a conviction that hell is real and awaits those outside Christ.

Fourth, a Christian witness must be characterized by gentleness, patience, and kindness when dealing with the lost. Torrey writes, “Every Christian worker should learn and never forget the immeasurable superiority of gentle and patient persuasiveness to contentious and dictatorial argumentativeness.”<sup>160</sup> A pugnacious attitude repels people, in Torrey’s viewpoint, whereas a gentle attitude attracts. When counseling the personal worker who deals with skeptical people, Torrey advises, “Don’t argue, don’t get angry, be very gentle but very solemn, and very much in prayer, depending upon the Holy Spirit to give you words to say and to carry them home.”<sup>161</sup> Observe that personal workers must

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<sup>157</sup> Torrey, *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival*, 151–52.

<sup>158</sup> Torrey, *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival*, 152.

<sup>159</sup> Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches*, 313–14.

<sup>160</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Editorial: Persuasiveness vs. Pugnaciousness,” *The King’s Business* 8, no. 4 (April 1917): 292.

<sup>161</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 43.

be persons of prayer who live in dependence on God's Spirit. Gentleness and patience are fruit the Spirit produces and are nowhere more essential than in personal evangelism.

Torrey instructed the Christian witness to "use every act of kindness that God gives us an opportunity to perform for others as an opening for reaching the soul of the one for whom we perform it."<sup>162</sup> While Torrey emphasized the necessity of the spoken word in personal witness, he also affirmed the importance of kindhearted actions.

Fifth, the personal worker must be characterized by a willingness to identify with the hurting. Torrey related the impact personal identification exerted in the life of a man he knew who had been a drunkard and a thief. Many attempts to reach the man had failed. Some years later, Torrey met this man after he concluded a preaching service in Chicago. The man approached Torrey after the service to inform Torrey that he was now, finally, a saved man. The man told Torrey, "I have never forgotten the day you knelt beside me and put your arm around me and talked to me and prayed for me. . . . Even in the prison cell, time and again I have felt your arm around me, and Mr. Torrey, that is what led me, at last, to really accept Christ and be saved."<sup>163</sup> God's Spirit used personal identification to draw a needy man to Christ. Torrey practiced personal identification with redemptive effect.

Torrey often communicated truth via personal anecdotes. The following anecdote illustrates the sixth characteristic, that the personal worker must depend on the Spirit of God in witnessing endeavors. Torrey related that at the close of an inquiry meeting in the Chicago Avenue Church, one of the church's most fruitful personal workers approached him with the request that he attempt to lead a certain man to Christ. This worker had already spent two hours with the individual with no success. Torrey

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<sup>162</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Real Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 59–60. This quote comes from a message Torrey preached titled "The Real Christ: His Love for Souls."

<sup>163</sup> Torrey, *The Real Christ*, 84–85. This incident appeared in a sermon titled "The Real Christ: His Compassion."

related that in about ten minutes, the man came under deep conviction and was “on his knees crying to God for mercy.”<sup>164</sup> When the man left the inquiry room, the worker remarked that she had used the very same Scriptures with the man which Torrey used and, “though I had worked with him for two hours with no result, in ten minutes with the same passages of Scripture, he was brought under conviction of sin and accepted Christ.”<sup>165</sup> How could this be possible? Torrey answers, “For once that worker had forgotten something that she seldom forgot, namely, that the Holy Spirit must do the work. She had been trying to convince the man of sin. She had used the right passages; she had reasoned wisely; she had made out a clear case, but she had not looked to the only One who could do the work.”<sup>166</sup> Torrey confided his sense of helplessness when he learned that this expert soul-winner had worked with the man for two hours. He writes, “If this expert worker has dealt with him for two hours with no result, what is the use of my dealing with him? And in a sense of utter helplessness I cast myself upon the Holy Spirit to do the work and he did it.”<sup>167</sup> Torrey understood that the Spirit of God brings sinners to Christ. An attitude of utter dependence on God’s Spirit, therefore, must characterize the personal worker.

### *Motivation and Rationale*

In a sermon titled “He That Winneth Souls Is Wise,” Torrey argued that every Christian should make soul-winning the main business of his life.<sup>168</sup> What rationale undergirds the practice of evangelism? First, a Christian should devote himself or herself to soul-winning because Jesus has commanded believers to make disciples. Obedience to

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<sup>164</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures and in Personal Experience* (London: James Nisbet, 1910), 69.

<sup>165</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, 69.

<sup>166</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, 69.

<sup>167</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, 69.

<sup>168</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 84.

the Master furnishes one motivation for personal evangelism.<sup>169</sup> Second, a Christ-follower should make soul-winning the business of his life because this is the very work Christ came to perform. Christ defined his purpose, Torrey observed, in Luke 19:10: “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Torrey reflects on this statement of Christ, “There was just one thing he lived for, one thing he suffered for, one thing he died for, that was to save the lost. Is that your purpose? Is that what you live for?”<sup>170</sup> Third, a Christian disciple should practice evangelism because in that work, he enjoys fellowship with his Master. Torrey observed this principle in Matthew 28:20: “Behold, I am with you always.” Torrey comments, “In other words, Jesus says, ‘You go my way, and I will go yours. You go out with me in fellowship, in work, and I will go out with you in personal fellowship.’”<sup>171</sup> Personal communion with Christ awaits the obedient disciple who follows his Master in winning souls and making disciples. Fourth, soul-winning should be the main business of a believer’s life because in that work, he enjoys the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power.<sup>172</sup> Torrey declares, “When you are willing to go out and plead with men and women and children to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, then and only then can you have the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>173</sup> The Holy Spirit is given to empower Christian testimony.

In the fifth place, soul-winning should be the Christian’s main focus in life because it produces “beneficent results.”<sup>174</sup> The person who wins souls will save a soul

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<sup>169</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 84–85. See also Torrey, *The Wondrous Joy of Soul Winning*, 6–10. Observe that Torrey associated soul-winning with making disciples.

<sup>170</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 85. See also R. A. Torrey, “Editorial: Was Jesus a Soul-Winner?,” *The King’s Business* 7, no. 3 (March 1916): 197–98.

<sup>171</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 86.

<sup>172</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 86.

<sup>173</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 86. By the “gift of the Holy Ghost,” Torrey means the fullness or baptism with the Spirit, not the indwelling presence of the Spirit. Every believer in Christ is indwelt by the Spirit, but Torrey would argue that the Spirit comes in his filling power to those who obey their Master in personal evangelism.

<sup>174</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 86.

from death. Saving souls from death is the most beneficent work, the most worthwhile work, in Torrey's thinking.<sup>175</sup> Sixth, soul-winning is the work that brings the most abundant reward. Torrey cited Daniel 12:3, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." Torrey writes, "There is only one way to shine up there [in heaven], and that is by saving the lost, by bringing them to a saving knowledge of Christ."<sup>176</sup> Torrey aimed to motivate Christians to share the gospel with the promises of joy, fellowship, and reward. In Torrey's thinking, not merely obedience to Christ's command and example, but the promise of personal communion with Christ and his Spirit offers the rationale and motivation for personal evangelism.

### *Counsel and Guidance*

Torrey did not provide a script or monologue for the personal worker to memorize and recite to a lost person. Such a practice circumvented dependence on God's Spirit and ignored the unique needs of each individual. In a personal witnessing encounter, Torrey advocated using even one verse of Scripture and staying with that Scripture during the gospel conversation. He recommended that personal workers use their open Bible and encourage the lost person to read the Word of God for him or herself. Torrey believed that immersion in the Scriptures furnished the knowledge needed in personal witness. Torrey commended dependence on the Spirit of God in the presence of each individual. Only the Spirit can teach the soul-winner what to say and what Scriptures to share with each particular individual. An evangelist is a doctor of souls, and only by listening to the individual and the Spirit of God can the doctor know which medicine to prescribe.

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<sup>175</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 87–89. Torrey alluded to James 5:20, which says, "Let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

<sup>176</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service*, 89.

Torrey did offer “hints” for personal workers.<sup>177</sup> I share some but not all of his hints in the following paragraphs. I do not relate these select hints in the specific order in which Torrey categorized them.

Most importantly, Torrey recommended complete reliance on the Spirit and the Word. Torrey writes, “Let your reliance be wholly in the Spirit of God and in the Word of God. Have no confidence in yourself. . . . But while there should be no self-confidence, there should be boldness, boldness that comes from believing in the power of the Holy Ghost, and in the power of the Word of God.”<sup>178</sup> Observe in Torrey’s emphasis on the Spirit and the Word two of the strands of his four-fold spirituality. In this case, the indwelling Spirit and the Word furnish the *boldness* needed in personal evangelism. Torrey returned to the centrality of the Spirit and the Word over and over in his evangelism training.

Torrey suggested that the soul-winner allow the person with whom he works to read the text of Scripture for himself. Torrey writes, “It is remarkable how much deeper an impression the Word of God oftentimes makes when it is actually seen with the eyes than it does when it is merely heard with the ears.”<sup>179</sup> Torrey also advocated using a single verse of Scripture and allowing the Spirit of God to burn that text into the individual’s memory. Torrey referenced an incident from Ichabod Spencer’s *A Pastor’s Sketches*. Spencer kept citing a particular Bible verse to a young man who had many difficulties. Torrey summarizes Spencer’s method and the effect it had on the young man:

Dr. Spencer kept continually quoting the passage, “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” The young man tried to get Dr. Spencer off onto something else, but over and over again he kept saying the words, “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” The young man returned the next day rejoicing in the Lord and thanking Dr. Spencer that he had “hammered” him with that text. The

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<sup>177</sup> See Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 178–86, for a complete list of Torrey’s hints.

<sup>178</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 179–80.

<sup>179</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 180.

words kept ringing in his ears during the night, and he could not rest until he had settled the matter by accepting Christ.<sup>180</sup>

The Word of God had power in the hands of God's Spirit to lead sinners to Christ. Torrey trained personal soul-winners to use the Word of God in witnessing encounters.

Torrey advised soul-winners to be courteous when dealing with a lost soul. He writes, "Your words may be very searching, while your manner is very gentle and winning, indeed the more gentle and winning your manner is, the deeper yours words will go, for they will not stir up the opposition of those with whom you are dealing."<sup>181</sup> In Torrey's evangelism instruction, he underscored the importance of a gentle manner.

Torrey advised the personal worker to be in no hurry. He cited haste as a grave fault in his day: "We are too anxious for immediate results and so we do superficial work."<sup>182</sup> Finally, Torrey advised the personal worker to give the person who has accepted Christ "definite instructions as to how to succeed in the Christian life."<sup>183</sup> Torrey believed that the work of follow-up with one who has accepted Christ is "as important as the work of leading them to Christ."<sup>184</sup> In Torrey's view, no one could do follow-up work with a new disciple as effectively as the person who led him or her to faith in Christ.<sup>185</sup> In the following sub-section, I examine Torrey's advice for new converts as the concluding element in his personal evangelism training.

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<sup>180</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 180–81. Torrey cited the KJV.

<sup>181</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 181.

<sup>182</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 184.

<sup>183</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 185.

<sup>184</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 185–86.

<sup>185</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 185–86.

### *Follow-Up and Discipleship*

In the International Sunday School Lessons for 1916, Torrey commented on Paul's missionary methods as recorded in Acts 14:8–20. He noted that Paul returned to the cities that had treated him so “outrageously” during his initial visit.<sup>186</sup> Paul confirmed the souls of the new believers, exhorted them to “continue in the faith,” and urged them in the truth that “we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God.”<sup>187</sup> Torrey then underscores his lesson in these words: “Let us learn from this [Paul's missionary methods] that it is not enough to bring men to Christ, we must strengthen and build up young converts. This is one of the principal points of failure in much of our modern evangelistic work. It is not enough that men start in the faith, they must ‘continue’ in the faith.”<sup>188</sup> Torrey believed in evangelism that leads to discipleship. Evangelistic effort might result in converts, but the new converts must be built up in Christ and continue in the faith. Torrey aimed in his personal evangelism training to equip soul-winners to deal effectively with new converts.

As previously noted, in Torrey's text, *How to Work for Christ*, he offered practical instruction to Christian workers with respect to specific types of individuals they might encounter. When a personal worker deals with a seeker who really desires to be saved, Torrey specified seven steps to follow. I draw from a variety of Torrey sources in what follows. In some instances, Torrey advises the personal worker how to deal with a new convert. In other instances, Torrey directly advises the new convert.

The first step is to show the person Jesus as a sin-bearer.<sup>189</sup> Torrey writes, “The first thing to show one who realizes his need of a Saviour is that Jesus has borne his sins

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<sup>186</sup> R. A. Torrey, “International S. S. Lessons,” *The King's Business* 7, no. 5 (May 1916): 452–56 (under “Lesson VIII: The Cripple of Lystra”).

<sup>187</sup> Torrey, “International S. S. Lessons,” 455. Torrey alluded to the RSV.

<sup>188</sup> Torrey, “International S. S. Lessons,” 455 (emphasis original).

<sup>189</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 39.

in His own body on the cross.”<sup>190</sup> Torrey elaborated on this point in detail. He noted that he dealt with very few persons with whom he did not point them sooner or later to Isaiah 53:6: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Jesus on the cross saves from the guilt of sin.

The second step is to show the person Jesus as a risen Savior who is able to save completely. Torrey writes, “Dwell upon this thought, that *Jesus ever liveth*, that He is not only a Saviour who once died and made atonement for sin, but that He is a Savior who lives to-day and is able to keep from sin’s power.”<sup>191</sup> Torrey believed the risen Christ provided power for victory over sin. He pointed people to the risen Lord to save them from sin and make them holy. In a small tract Torrey penned for new converts, he offers the following counsel:

If you are fighting with some temptation that seems stronger than you can bear, remember that Jesus rose again and that He is now living to intercede for you, and that he has all power in heaven and on earth. Your temptation may be fierce, and the enemy strong, but Jesus is stronger and all-sufficient. He can give victory over any temptation, appetite, or sin. It is your privilege to have victory every day and every hour if you will keep “looking unto Jesus.” Ask Him and trust Him, too, to give you His power, and you on your part give the Holy Spirit entire control of your life. This is the secret of a Christlike character.<sup>192</sup>

Observe that Torrey instructed pre-Christians and new believers to look away from themselves to Christ. Jesus, risen from the dead, saves from sin’s power.

Torrey’s third step is to show the seeker Jesus as Lord. Christ must be received as Savior and Lord. Torrey points the personal worker to specific Scriptures to use to demonstrate for the individual Christ’s lordship. The fourth step is to show the pre-

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<sup>190</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 39.

<sup>191</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 41–44 (emphasis original).

<sup>192</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Torrey’s Advice to a New Convert* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.),

Christian “how to make Jesus their own.”<sup>193</sup> Torrey did not advocate leading the individual to repeat a sinner’s prayer. Instead, he counseled the soul-winner to use the promises of the Word of God and follow up with questions designed to lead the person to place his or her faith in Christ.<sup>194</sup>

The fifth step is to demonstrate for the person the need of confessing Christ with the mouth. Torrey aimed to make openly confessed disciples of Christ. The young convert should be pointed to the Word of God to demonstrate the importance of verbally confessing Christ.<sup>195</sup> The sixth step is to lead the new believer into an assurance of salvation.<sup>196</sup> Assurance of salvation is produced in part by resting on the sure promises of God’s Word. Torrey believed John’s first epistle contained great promise for imparting assurance of salvation. Torrey writes, “There is no book in the whole Bible that is more profitable for Christians to study, and especially for young Christians, than the First Epistle of John. . . . Not only is it important that we have eternal life, but it is of the highest importance that *we know* that we have it.”<sup>197</sup> Torrey believed a “sure knowledge” of eternal life comes through a study of 1 John.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 44–45.

<sup>194</sup> Torrey suggested a number of Scripture promises and follow-up questions a soul-winner might use when dealing with an inquirer. He suggested using John 1:12: “To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (ESV). After the inquirer has read the promise, Torrey suggested the soul-winner ask the individual “to whom it is Jesus gave power to become the sons of God.” The person would likely respond, “As many as received Him.” Torrey suggested the soul-winner would then ask,

“Received Him as what?” Then make it clear from what you have already said under the preceding points, that it is to receive Him as sin-bearer, to receive Him as a risen Saviour, to receive Him as our Lord and Master. “Will you just take Him as your sin-bearer now, as your risen Saviour, as your Lord and Master? Will you take Him to be whatever He offers Himself to you to be?” “I will.” “Then what does this verse show you that you have a right to call yourself?” “A son of God.” “Are you a son of God?” Oftentimes the inquirer will hesitate but go over it again and again until it is as clear as day to him. (Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 44–45)

<sup>195</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 45–46.

<sup>196</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 46.

<sup>197</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Outline Studies on 1 John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 11 (emphasis original). See also Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 109–14, to appraise Torrey’s teaching on assurance of salvation.

<sup>198</sup> Torrey, *Outline Studies on 1 John*, 11.

Torrey's seventh step is to give practical direction to the new believer about how to live the Christian life.<sup>199</sup> Torrey writes concerning the responsibility of discipling new converts, "It is not enough that a person be led to accept Christ, that is only the beginning of the Christian life, and if one is not shown how to lead the Christian life which he has thus begun, his life is likely to be largely one of failure."<sup>200</sup>

Torrey then offered seven directives for the new believer. First, the new disciple must make a "*constant practice of confessing Christ before men.*"<sup>201</sup> Recall that when the soul-winner dealt with the pre-Christian, he emphasized the necessity of openly confessing Christ. This lesson is underscored again after the person has received Christ. Torrey encourages the new believer, "You have started to-night, now keep it up. Show whose side you are on at your own church or chapel, in your office, everywhere."<sup>202</sup>

Second, the new Christian must "*study the Word of God regularly and hide it in [his] heart.*"<sup>203</sup> Regarding the intake of Scripture, Torrey advises the new convert,

Keep studying your Bible at least fifteen minutes every day. Begin with John and read it through once; then twice, and so on until you have read it through five times. Then Luke the same way; then Acts five times; 1 Thessalonians five times; 1 John five times; Ephesians five times; Romans five times. Then begin at Matthew and read right through the New Testament, and by the time you have done that you will know how to study for yourself. Always before you read your Bible ask God to open your eyes and to teach you what you read, and that the Holy Spirit may open the passage to you.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 47–49.

<sup>200</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 47.

<sup>201</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 47 (emphasis original).

<sup>202</sup> George T. B. Davis, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of a World-Wide Revival: A Record and Study of the Work and Personality of the Evangelists R. A. Torrey, D. D., and Charles M. Alexander*. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 201–2.

<sup>203</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 47 (emphasis original).

<sup>204</sup> Torrey, "A Record of the Torrey-Alexander Tour," 12.

Torrey aimed to ground new converts in the Scriptures. Scripture intake, so vital to Torrey's own spirituality, must be inculcated into the new believer's daily practice.

Torrey's third directive is "*Pray without ceasing.*"<sup>205</sup> Concerning the practice of prayer, Torrey advises, "Take plenty of time to pray. Every time you are tempted, pray. Every time you are in trouble, pray. Every morning when you get up, pray. Talk to God before you talk to man. Every night when you go to bed, pray, and so finish up the day with God. Every time you feel like it, pray; and every time you don't feel like it, pray."<sup>206</sup>

Torrey's fourth and fifth directives are "*surrender your will absolutely to God. . . . Obey Him in all things*" and "*be a constant and generous giver.*"<sup>207</sup> Recall from chapter 4 that Torrey's encouragement to surrender absolutely to God is an essential step to receiving the Spirit's fullness.<sup>208</sup> Additionally, he inculcated in new disciples liberal and persistent stewardship of wealth. Torrey's sixth directive is faithful participation in a Bible-preaching church. Torrey writes, "Find some church, chapel, mission, or assembly, and join it. And be faithful to it. Let me tell you what church to join. Go to a church where they preach the Bible; keep away from the church where they tear the Bible to pieces."<sup>209</sup>

Finally, Torrey encouraged new disciples to "*go to work for Christ and keep working for Christ.*"<sup>210</sup> In his publication, "How to Grow in Grace," Torrey added the following counsel: "The soul-winning Christian is the best growing Christian. Go to work

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<sup>205</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 48 (emphasis original).

<sup>206</sup> Davis, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of a World-Wide Revival*, 201–2.

<sup>207</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 48 (emphasis original).

<sup>208</sup> See chap. 4, sec. "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: The Seven Steps" (p. 147).

<sup>209</sup> Davis, *Torrey and Alexander: The Story of a World-Wide Revival*, 201–2.

<sup>210</sup> Torrey, *How to Work for Christ*, 48–49 (emphasis original).

to win souls. Speak to at least one person daily. Mr. Moody made it a rule in his Christian life to never let a day go by without speaking to at least one person about his soul, and oh how he grew.”<sup>211</sup> Observe in Torrey’s advice to new converts three of his four-fold strand of spirituality: a new believer must practice prayer, allow Christ’s Words to dwell richly within, and make a habit of witnessing to others about the Savior. Torrey encouraged new believers to practice more than these spiritual disciplines, but never less.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have presented Torrey the evangel. I featured the gospel message he proclaimed. I exhibited Torrey as a personal soul-winner. I highlighted some of Torrey’s core personal evangelism teachings. Throughout the chapter, I have highlighted the four-fold strand of Torrey’s spirituality as he practiced personal evangelism.

In the concluding section, I summarize the thesis. I demonstrate the manner in which each chapter corroborates the thesis. I critique some of Torrey’s viewpoints, suggest the scope of future research, and offer some timeless lessons Torrey provides for practicing spirituality, missions, and evangelism.

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<sup>211</sup> R. A. Torrey, “How to Grow in Grace,” Biola Publications 4 (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1917), 19.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Reuben A. Torrey modeled a missional spirituality, a spirituality that compelled believers to make Christ known across the street and around the world. He embodied the values of a missionary-minded pastor. While this thesis has focused on Torrey's evangelism practice, one must bear in mind that for Torrey, the practice of evangelism constituted the essential piece of the missionary task.<sup>1</sup> During Torrey's pastorate of the Church of the Open Door, the church regarded every member as a soul-winner and a missionary.<sup>2</sup> Torrey's missional spirituality exhibited itself in his pastoral leadership, in both local and cross-cultural evangelism.

Torrey exhibited his missional spirituality in an address titled "The Seven Great Promises of God for the Bible Student and Soul-Winner," delivered in 1921 to the graduating class of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. Torrey reminded the graduates of

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<sup>1</sup> Torrey's comments on the classic Great Commission text, Matthew 28:16–20, demonstrate the association in his thinking between the Great Commission task and the practice of evangelism. Torrey notes the extent of the commission as being to "all nations," and then he notes the character of the commission as being to "make disciples," "baptize," and "teach" (see R. A. Torrey, "Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship," *The King's Business* 6, no. 5 [May 1915]: 445). Torrey argues that the only person who may claim the promise of the Great Commission—Christ's presence—is the one who goes forth "making disciples, winning souls" (445). Torrey appositionally restates "making disciples" with the descriptor "winning souls." Torrey drives the point home when he states, "When we go Christ's way [fulfilling the Great Commission], He goes ours: when we go forth with Him in soul winning, He goes forth with us in personal fellowship" (445). In Torrey's thinking, making disciples of all nations is juxtaposed with soul-winning endeavor.

<sup>2</sup> A full-page church advertisement appeared in the April 1923 edition of *The King's Business* asserting that the Gospel of John is the soul-winner's Gospel and claiming that the Church of the Open Door was effectively using John's Gospel in its various outreach efforts. The advertisement further claimed that "every believer is a foreign missionary" (see "The Soul-Winner's Gospel" and "Every Believer a Foreign Missionary" in T. C. Horton, ed., *The King's Business* 15, no. 4 [April 1923]: 437 [emphasis original]). While the author of the advertisement is unnamed, Torrey served as the church's pastor when the advertisement appeared. The advertisement goes on to state, "If our Lord was the *first foreign missionary* sent by the Father from Heaven to a lost world, it therefore follows, logically, that *every saved sinner is also a foreign missionary*" ("Every Believer a Foreign Missionary," 437 [emphasis original]). While Torrey may not have authored the advertisement, the claim that every believer is a missionary must have passed his approval.

the Great Commission promise, “the promise of the personal presence of our Lord Jesus himself with us all the time, ‘until the consummation of the age.’”<sup>3</sup> Torrey reminded the graduates that the Holy Spirit forms within the believer an indwelling Christ.<sup>4</sup> Christ’s personal presence, realized through the indwelling Spirit of God, sustains and cheers those *who follow him in making disciples*.

Torrey anticipated that some graduates would follow Christ to the ends of the earth, while others would serve Christ closer to home. He reminded them, “If you go out into all the world making disciples, going as far as your line may extend, be it eighteen miles or eighteen thousand miles, he will go with you.”<sup>5</sup> Christ’s comforting presence belongs to those who follow him in fishing for men.

In this concluding chapter, I summarize the integration of Torrey’s missional spirituality and his practice of evangelism—an evangelism that begins at home but extends to the ends of the earth. I then critique three aspects of Torrey’s thought. I next suggest four abiding lessons emerging from Torrey’s life and ministry, especially lessons that relate to the practice of cross-cultural evangelism. Finally, I anticipate future Torrey research by offering three suggestions.

### **Summarizing the Research**

In chapter 1, I presented two research questions that have guided my investigation of Torrey. The first question is, “What are the core elements of Torrey’s spirituality?” I asserted that Torrey’s spirituality was characterized by baptism with the

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<sup>3</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study: How to Properly Study and Interpret the Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1921), 89. Torrey alluded to Christ’s promise in Matthew 28:20, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

<sup>4</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 90.

<sup>5</sup> Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, 90. Torrey emphasized this point when he added, “If you do not listen sharply for His call, and go as far as He bids you go, He will not go with you. If we go His way, He will go ours; but if we do not go His way, He will not go ours. If God says Africa, and your foolish heart says Southern California, he will not go with you: and amid the dearest friends, on earth, you will be supremely lonely” (91). Torrey did not believe God calls all Christians to foreign fields. If he does call to overseas service, we dare not ignore his call and stay home.

Holy Spirit, Scripture intake, prevailing prayer, and personal evangelism. I also asked, “What influence did Torrey’s spirituality exert on his evangelistic practice?” I demonstrated that in Torrey’s thinking, the wellspring of evangelism was love for the Lord Jesus Christ. In turn, Torrey nurtured his love for Christ by practicing spiritual disciplines and experiencing the Spirit’s fullness.<sup>6</sup> I demonstrated through Torrey’s words that the indwelling Spirit of God begets love for the Savior. Love for Christ then stimulates the believer to pray, study God’s Word, and make Christ known. Torrey’s words illustrate an interconnection between scriptural meditation, prayer, the Spirit’s ministry, and gospel proclamation.

In chapter 2, I presented a select biographical sketch of Torrey’s life. I recounted his conversion experience. Torrey’s new birth experience ushered him into life in Christ. This new life in Christ constituted the foundation of his Christian spirituality. I narrated Torrey’s journey through doubt’s shadow into the sunshine of settled faith in God’s authoritative Word. I traced the contours of Torrey’s spirituality. Early in his pilgrimage, Torrey learned the language of prayer. He nourished his faith on Scripture’s promises. He formed the discipline of personal evangelism as a vital element of his nascent Christian spirituality.

Torrey’s decision to accept an inauspicious ministry in Minneapolis over a comfortable calling in Brooklyn calibrated his life trajectory toward sacrifice rather than indulgence. His confidence in God’s faithfulness flourished in frontier Minneapolis. Torrey also entered into the vitality of the Spirit-empowered life during his Minneapolis sojourn.

I also portrayed Torrey as a man beset with flaws. His character defects revealed him to be a man in the midst of his own sanctification. Ultimately, Torrey’s faith remained firm during the months of declining health that eventuated in his death.

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<sup>6</sup> See chap. 1, sec. “Thesis” (p. 5).

In chapter 3, I presented Torrey's twin disciplines of Scripture intake and prayer. Torrey immersed himself in Scripture through reading, study, memorization, and meditation on God's truth. Torrey's engagement with God's Words culminated in the habit of meditation. I demonstrated how Torrey's immersion in Scripture birthed faith that resulted in prevailing prayer. I exhibited the relationship in Torrey's spirituality between the Holy Spirit's ministry and Scripture intake. The Spirit illumined Torrey's understanding of Scripture and empowered his Christian life. He thus modeled a spirituality of Word and Spirit. I also displayed in Torrey's words the interconnection between Scripture intake and evangelism. For Torrey, the Word ingested and digested compelled Christian witness.

Chapter 3 also featured Torrey as a praying Christian. Torrey commended solitary prayer in the early morning. He encouraged perseverance in the face of God's apparent silence. Torrey practiced what he called "praying through," the resolve to tenaciously persist in prayer in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. The ultimate desire for God's glory motivated Torrey to pray steadfastly. I demonstrated in Torrey's teaching the relationship between prayer, Scripture intake, and the Spirit's ministry. Faith is crucial in effective prayer and finds its warrant in God's promises. The prayer of faith, so prominent in Torrey's teaching, depends on intimate familiarity with God's Word.

I showed from Torrey's writings how the Holy Spirit teaches the believer how to pray. He warms the believer's heart when it is cold, inclining him to cry out to God. Not only does the Spirit inspire prayer, but in Torrey's teaching, prayer is the conduit through which the Spirit's fullness is received. I also verified the relationship between prayer and evangelism in Torrey's spirituality. Prayer is the means of grace that channels love into the believer's life—love for God and man. Love then becomes the wellspring of evangelism. Finally, Torrey focused prayer toward redemptive ends by praying for specific persons to come to faith and encouraging Christians to persevere in prayer for specific lost people until they were converted.

In chapter 4, I featured the prominence of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Torrey's theology and experience. I began my survey of Torrey's pneumatology by considering the nineteenth-century roots of his understanding of Spirit baptism. I demonstrated that Torrey did not develop his views of Spirit baptism in a vacuum. He stood in a succession of holiness teachers who understood Spirit baptism as a distinct work of grace, subsequent to regeneration, that empowered believers for effective witness. Torrey distinguished himself from holiness preachers by his insistence that Spirit baptism did not actuate sanctification. I suggested that the two nineteenth-century figures who most significantly influenced Torrey's pneumatology and practice of Christian ministry were Charles Finney and D. L. Moody.

I also surveyed Torrey's teaching concerning the personality and deity of God's Spirit. These twin doctrines held significant importance for Torrey, both in his understanding of Christian worship and his practice of spirituality. I set forth Torrey's views on baptism with the Spirit. The experience of Spirit baptism possessed vital significance in Torrey's understanding of Christian life and ministry.

In Torrey's view, one serious defect in Christian ministry involved the proclamation of an orthodox gospel devoid of the Spirit's power. The pure Word of God must be proclaimed, to be sure. If Christian proclamation is to prove effectual, the gospel must be proclaimed "not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess 1:5). This persuasion compelled Torrey to insist on the fundamental experience of Spirit baptism.

In Torrey's consideration, not only gospel ministers but rank-and-file Christians also must be immersed in the Spirit's fullness in order to realize evangelistic success. Furthermore, the experience of the Spirit's fullness produced love for God and lost souls. Love furnishes the necessary motivation and impetus for gospel proclamation.

In chapter 5, I outlined the gospel message Torrey proclaimed. I exhibited that Torrey's gospel message expressed the very marrow of evangelicalism. I portrayed

Torrey at work, not so much as a public orator but as a personal soul-winner. I argued that Torrey's legacy consists of his faithfulness in personal work. I also exhibited some of Torrey's central teachings with respect to personal evangelism. Torrey embraced the role of a teaching and equipping evangelist. He faithfully bore witness of his Master, and he trained ordinary Christians to be fishers of men.

I have portrayed Torrey as his own words reveal him. Therefore, the conclusion of the foregoing research is that Torrey's habit of personal evangelism was motivated by love for Christ, undergirded through prevailing prayer, empowered by the Spirit's fullness, and compelled by his contemplation of God's Word.

### **Critiquing Torrey**

In this section, I critique Torrey's thinking with respect to three of his teachings. I comment on Torrey's utilization of the book of Acts to establish his doctrine of subsequence. I then consider Torrey's characterization of Spirit baptism as a kind of "silver bullet" in the practice of evangelism. Finally, I reflect on Torrey's seven steps to receive baptism with the Spirit.

#### **The Book of Acts: Transitional or Not?**

Torrey based his doctrine of Spirit baptism largely on Lukan texts. I believe Torrey failed to account for the transitional nature of the book of Acts. I believe the specific experiences associated with the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the Ephesians in Acts 19 were not intended by Luke to establish a normative pattern for the Spirit's reception. The Samaritan and Ephesian experiences were unusual and out of the ordinary. The archetypal experiences of the Spirit's reception in the book of Acts are the experience of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the experience of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10).

Consider the experience of the Samaritans in Acts 8. Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans and some of them believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12).

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the gospel, they sent Peter and John to them (Acts 8:14). F. F. Bruce comments on the apostolic visit to Samaria, “In the earlier years of the Christian mission, the apostles appear to have regarded it as their duty to exercise a general supervision over the progress of the gospel wherever it might be carried. Peter and John were the two who were sent to Samaria.”<sup>7</sup> Bruce’s words underscore the transitional nature in the early period of the Christian church, when it was deemed advisable to send apostles to verify the gospel’s progress (see also Acts 11:22). Bruce observes that, unlike the believers on the day of Pentecost, the Samaritans had not received the Holy Spirit when they believed.<sup>8</sup> Peter and John prayed for the believers and laid their hands upon them; the Samaritans consequently received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15–17). Bruce offers the following suggestion to account for the delay in the Spirit’s reception:

In the present instance, some special evidence may have been necessary to assure these Samaritans, so accustomed to being despised as outsiders by the people of Jerusalem, that they were fully incorporated into the new community of the people of God. Not until they had been acknowledged and welcomed by the leaders of the Jerusalem church did they experience the signs which confirmed and attested their membership of the Spirit-possessed company.<sup>9</sup>

Wayne Grudem essentially concurs with Bruce’s assessment: “A better understanding of this event [Acts 8] would be that God, in his providence, sovereignly waited to give the new covenant empowering of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans directly through the hands of the apostles.”<sup>10</sup> Grudem noted the “historical animosity” that existed between Jews and Samaritans.<sup>11</sup> Due to the historical tensions between these

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<sup>7</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 180.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*, 181.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*, 182–83.

<sup>10</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 954.

<sup>11</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 954.

communities, the Jerusalem church leadership needed to observe for themselves that the Samaritans were not “second-class citizens but full members of the church.”<sup>12</sup>

The book of Acts records the expansion of the gospel from the mother church in Jerusalem, into Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth. The Lukan narrative documents a unique and transitional period in salvation history—the transition from the old to the new covenant.<sup>13</sup> One should not be surprised to find atypical experiences during this transitional period.

The experience of the Ephesian disciples in Acts 19 further underscores the transitional nature of the book of Acts. Paul arrived in Ephesus after he visited the churches of South Galatia. He found there a dozen men whose experience of Christianity was defective. Bruce contends that Luke regarded the Ephesian disciples as genuine Christians, a point that Torrey also argued.<sup>14</sup> Paul asked the Ephesian disciples if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They professed ignorance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2). Paul learned upon inquiry that the disciples had received only John’s baptism, a “pre-Pentecostal baptism as proclaimed and administered by John the Baptist—a baptism of expectation rather than fulfilment, as Christian baptism now was.”<sup>15</sup> The men were then baptized into Jesus’s name (Acts 19:5). G. W. H. Lampe points out that Paul’s arrival in Ephesus marked “another decisive moment in the missionary history.”<sup>16</sup> Bruce notes that Ephesus marked a new center of the Gentile mission. Ephesus would be rivaled in significance as a center of Gentile outreach only by

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<sup>12</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 954.

<sup>13</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 954.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*, 385. See also R. A. Torrey, “Daily Devotional Studies in the New Testament for Individual Meditation and Family Worship,” *The King’s Business* 8, no. 3 (March 1917): 269–70.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*, 386.

<sup>16</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (London: S.P.C.K., 1967), 76, as quoted in Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*, 387.

Syrian Antioch. Bruce remarks, “These twelve disciples were to be the nucleus of the Ephesian church. By this exceptional procedure, then, they were associated in the apostolic and missionary task of the Christian church.”<sup>17</sup> The experience of the Ephesian disciples is exceptional and unique.<sup>18</sup> The unusual situation recorded in Acts 19 does not render the Ephesian experience as a normative pattern.<sup>19</sup>

Luke’s narration of the Spirit’s reception subsequent to conversion in Acts 8 and Acts 19, is incidental to his primary purpose. Luke did not intend for his readers to conclude that the Spirit is to be received by all people for all times subsequent to conversion. Luke’s purpose is to illustrate the expansion of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The atypical manner in which the Spirit was received in these accounts highlights the dynamic development of the early church as the gospel spread into Gentile territory.

The experience of the first believers on the day of Pentecost illustrates the normal pattern by which the Spirit is to be received. Similarly, the experience of Cornelius and his household demonstrates the typical pattern, a point which Torrey acknowledged, if only the church were in a “normal condition.”<sup>20</sup> Torrey did not consider the transitional nature of salvation history as recorded in the book of Acts. For this reason, he regarded the experiences of the apostles, Samaritans, and the Ephesian disciples as normative Christian experience with respect to the Spirit’s reception.

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*, 387.

<sup>18</sup> Grudem argues that the Ephesian disciples had likely not heard of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection: “Therefore, these ‘disciples’ in Ephesus did not have new covenant understanding or new covenant faith. . . . They were ‘disciples’ only in the sense of followers of John the Baptist who were still waiting for the Messiah” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 955).

<sup>19</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 955.

<sup>20</sup> Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 102–3.

## Spirit Baptism: A Silver Bullet?

Torrey considered the experience of Spirit baptism a vital Christian experience. God has made available to all believers the possibility of Spirit baptism. For this reason, Christians must appropriate for themselves baptism with the Holy Spirit. Torrey connected the experience of immersion with the Spirit and gospel proclamation. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is given to empower testimony and witness to Christ. So convinced was Torrey that baptism with the Spirit would ensure success in evangelism that he writes,

If I may be baptized with the Holy Spirit, I must be. If I am [baptized] with the Holy Spirit, then will souls be saved through my instrumentality who are not so saved if I am not so baptized. If then I am not willing to pay the price of this baptism, and therefore am not so baptized, I am responsible before God for all the souls that might have been saved but were not saved through me because I was not baptized with the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

Torrey links the experience of Spirit baptism to evangelistic success. He thus makes Spirit baptism a kind of “silver bullet” that guarantees evangelistic fruitfulness. Torrey does not seem to account for the sovereignty of God in the salvation of individuals. Nor does Torrey account for the free will of man in his assertion. People may accept or reject the gracious gospel offer. If people choose to reject the gospel offer, *they* choose death over life and are held accountable by God for their unbelief.

Torrey’s words seem to shift responsibility for gospel rejection from the person who hears the gospel to the person who proclaims the gospel. In Torrey’s thinking, the person with whom I share the gospel might accept Christ only if I am baptized with the Spirit. Torrey’s words place guilt upon every Christian evangel who fails to lead another person to Christ, inviting a morbid introspection: *Perhaps my friend rejected Christ because I am not filled enough with the Spirit.* Torrey is attempting to underscore the importance and necessity of Spirit baptism for gospel proclamation. In his zeal to

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<sup>21</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 215. See also Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures*, 115.

motivate Christians to seek Spirit baptism, he goes too far when he asserts that salvation will result when a Spirit-empowered witness shares the gospel. He further errs when he ascribes culpability to the Christian witness who fails to secure the conversion of his hearer, presumably because the witness is not Spirit-filled.

### **Spirit Baptism: Seven *Simple* Steps?**

Torrey typically outlined seven simple steps to receive baptism with the Holy Spirit. In *The Spirit of Promise*, Donald Macleod critiques Torrey's seven-step process to receive Spirit baptism.<sup>22</sup> I will not reiterate Macleod's evaluation but will offer a few observations from my own perspective.

Torrey's seven steps seem somewhat mechanical and contrived. An experience so wondrous and personal as receiving the Spirit's fullness should not be reduced to a series of steps. Torrey no doubt was a very logical and sequential thinker. He reasoned and argued with lawyer-like precision. His seven steps surely reveal something of his temperament. Torrey's seven steps are also partly understandable in view of his exposure at Yale to the Baconian method of inductive reasoning and Scottish Common Sense Realism.<sup>23</sup> Cogdill nicely summarizes the effect of Torrey's sequential thinking: "While not discounting the deeply spiritual side of this individual, in his discussion of prayer and

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<sup>22</sup> Donald Macleod, *The Spirit of Promise* (Houston: Christian Focus, 1986). Macleod's critique of Torrey's seven steps also appeared in *Modern Reformation*. See Donald Macleod, "Holy Spirit Baptism: Seven Easy Steps?," *Modern Reformation*, September/October 1992, 7–11, 26–28.

<sup>23</sup> See James Cogdill's comments concerning Torrey's educational background and the effect it exerted on his teaching methodology in James Paul Cogdill, "A Major Stream of American Mass Evangelism: The Ministries of R. A. Torrey, J. W. Chapman and W. E. Biederwolf" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990), 147. See also Adam Wade Greenway, "The Integration of Apologetics and Evangelism in the Ministry of Reuben Archer Torrey" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007). Chapter 3 addresses the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism philosophy in Torrey's educational formation.

the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the experiential side tends to be lost in the ‘how to lists.’”<sup>24</sup> Torrey could have assisted his audience by simplifying his seven steps.<sup>25</sup>

Some of Torrey’s seven steps are confusing. For example, his first step is, “*Accept Jesus as Christ and Lord.*”<sup>26</sup> He further describes step 1 as repentance. He defines repentance as a change of mind about sin, God, and Christ. Torrey writes, “Change your mind about Christ. Change from a Christ-hating and Christ-crucifying attitude of mind to a Christ-accepting attitude of mind.”<sup>27</sup> Why would a person who hated Christ even want to receive Spirit baptism? If Torrey is envisioning a person who is genuinely lost, should receiving Spirit baptism be a motivation for trusting Christ for salvation? The sinner should be pointed to the Savior in order to be reconciled to the Father. The Spirit is then freely conferred on all who believe. When Torrey makes acceptance of Christ a first essential step to receive Spirit baptism, he confuses the free gift of the Spirit with a series of human works man must perform.

A few thoughtful questions illustrate the confusing nature of Torrey’s seven steps. Steps 4 to 7 are absolute surrender to God, intense desire for Spirit baptism, prayer for the Spirit’s fullness, and faith—believe God will bless you with the Spirit when you ask for him.

If a Christian asks God to baptize him with the Spirit, does not his very prayer imply the presence of faith? If a believer has fully surrendered to God in order that the Spirit might fill him, is it necessary to pray? Will God not bless his surrendered child with the Spirit baptism? How are we to know when we have reached absolute surrender? Do we not grow in our experience of surrender to God’s will? If a Christian surrenders

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<sup>24</sup> Cogdill, “A Major Stream,” 150.

<sup>25</sup> For example, in a book Torrey warmly recommended, John MacNeil suggested a three-step process to obtain the fullness of the Spirit. See John MacNeil, *The Spirit-Filled Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896).

<sup>26</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 216 (emphasis original).

<sup>27</sup> Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 216.

fully to Christ, is it necessary to insist that he must also intensely desire the Spirit baptism? Does not a willingness to surrender imply an intense desire? Torrey's seven steps complicate and confuse rather than simplify the experience of receiving the Spirit's fullness.

### **Abiding Lessons**

What can the contemporary church learn from Torrey? In what manner does he, though dead, still speak today? I enumerate four abiding lessons from Torrey that relate specifically to the missionary enterprise.

#### **The Importance of the Spirit-Filled Life**

Torrey believed Christian life is to be lived in the realm of the Spirit of God. The Spirit births the believer into new life in Christ. The Spirit also empowers the believer to live as a Christ-follower. In Torrey's thinking, effective Christian living and witness are conceivable only by the Spirit's enabling presence.

Torrey believed that the Spirit empowered Christian witness both at home and abroad, writing, "Power for witnessing was the essential and universal thing in the Holy Ghost coming upon men. . . . But a true reception of the Holy Spirit by the church means world-wide missions 'unto the uttermost part of the earth.'"<sup>28</sup> The Spirit of God is the Spirit of missions and evangelism. Because Torrey believed the Spirit compelled missionary activity, he made instruction about Spirit baptism a central part of his teaching ministry.

I believe a great deal of contemporary missionary training focuses on strategy and methodology. Missionaries are equipped in apologetics, methods of language learning, cultural acquisition, anthropological understanding, and the historical and

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<sup>28</sup> R. A. Torrey, "International S. S. Lessons," *The King's Business* 7, no. 1 (January 1916): 43–49 (under "Lesson I: The Ascending Lord").

theological foundations of missionary work. A common feature of evangelism training is the memorization of a gospel presentation. The Christian evangel is expected to repeat the memorized monologue to passive persons who listen quietly while the witness downloads his or her “gospel speech.” All these training methods serve a purpose in missionary preparation.

I recommend that cross-cultural witness training be supplemented with careful teaching about the person and work of God’s Spirit. The necessity of living a Spirit-empowered life is not an addendum to Christian life—it is foundational. Missionary retreats and furloughs should be saturated with teaching about the Spirit-filled life. Missionaries and witnesses should be lovingly held accountable for walking in the Spirit.<sup>29</sup>

### **Prayer and Missions**

Torrey believed “*the greatest need of foreign missions . . . is prayer.*”<sup>30</sup> Torrey detailed seven specific prayer requests related to missionary enterprise. First, he instructed believers to pray for more workers. Torrey believed in praying for the right kind of men and women to go to the foreign mission field.<sup>31</sup> Second, Torrey advocated for prayer on behalf of missionaries already serving on the field. Neglecting to pray for missionaries accounted for the comparative failure of many field workers.<sup>32</sup> Third, Torrey taught that Christians should pray for the Spirit’s outpouring on various fields. Rather

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Coleman notes,

Most characteristic of the terms used in reference to the Pentecostal experience is “filled with the Spirit.” Used ten times, in a variety of situations, the figure conveys the idea of a person being pervaded by the Spirit’s power and influence. However understood, this was the norm of Christian experience in the New Testament. *When members of the church were not living in this fullness, they were exhorted to do so.* (Robert Coleman, *The Heart of the Gospel: The Theology behind the Master Plan of Evangelism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011], 135 [emphasis added])

<sup>30</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1924), 63 (emphasis original).

<sup>31</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 65.

than criticize the work of foreign missions, we should pray for God’s Spirit to move with power on the mission field.<sup>33</sup> Fourth and fifth, Torrey encouraged Christians to pray for both indigenous believers and churches.<sup>34</sup> Sixth, Torrey advocated for prayer on behalf of those who administrate the various foreign mission boards at home.<sup>35</sup> Finally, believers should pray for more money to be given to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.<sup>36</sup>

Torrey believed the church could experience revival at home and abroad through prayer—“real prayer, determined prayer, protracted prayer, heart-wringing, crying to God in the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>37</sup> One of the greatest lessons Torrey urges upon the present generation is the call to pray. Nowhere does the church display her hubris more than in her presumption that she can accomplish God’s work by human methods and mechanisms. The individual believer must consecrate him or herself to pray. The church must return to the old-fashioned prayer meeting. Torrey teaches us to pray in great expectation of what God will accomplish. He reminds us, “The power of prayer reaches across the sea and around the earth. We can contribute to the conversion of the heathen and the evangelization of the world by our prayers. . . . The greatest need of foreign mission work is prayer.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Giving and Missions**

Torrey connected stinginess, prayer, and generosity to a missional application. He believed stinginess rendered a man powerless in prayer. He further contended that

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<sup>33</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 65–66.

<sup>34</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 66–67.

<sup>35</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, 68.

<sup>38</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power in Christian Life and Service* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 93–94.

stinginess accounted for record-low mission giving on the part of the church. Torrey wrote,

There is perhaps no greater hindrance to prayer than stinginess. The generous man is the mighty man of prayer. The stingy man is the powerless man of prayer. When one thinks of the selfishness of the professing church today, how the orthodox churches of this land do not average \$1.00 per year per member for foreign missions, it is no wonder that the church has so little power in prayer. If we would get from God, we must give to others.<sup>39</sup>

Torrey warned the church concerning the danger of stinginess. Measured giving robs Christians of prayer power. Tight-fisted giving to God's work hinders the spread of the gospel among places and people who need to hear. Torrey urged the modern church to forsake her obsession with accumulating more and to consecrate herself to give sacrificially so that others might hear the gospel. Torrey made a critical life choice when he elected to follow God to Minneapolis rather than accept the pastorate of an affluent Brooklyn church. His example speaks to contemporary ministers and Christians. Torrey commended generous and sacrificial giving.

### **A Sending Pastor**

Roger Martin, Torrey's biographer, observed the impact of Torrey's leadership at the Church of the Open Door: "Dr. Torrey's leadership of the church implanted a strong emphasis on evangelism, missions, and the spiritual life."<sup>40</sup> Martin observed that 7 of the 86 charter members embarked for the foreign mission field and 4 commenced home mission activity.<sup>41</sup>

I possess a copy of an Open Door church publication titled *The Open Door Reporter*, which dates to late 1923 or early 1924. This issue of *The Reporter*, which apparently served as a medium of communication for the church family, contains a

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<sup>39</sup> R. A. Torrey, *How to Pray* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1900), 26–27.

<sup>40</sup> Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), 237.

<sup>41</sup> Martin, *Apostle of Certainty*, 237.

statistical report. *The Reporter* claimed that the church had 59 missionaries in their membership by late 1923 or early 1924, 22 of whom were supported by the church and another 6 who would later be added with partial support.<sup>42</sup> The statistical report indicated the church was connected in some way to missionaries serving in China, India, Africa, Central and South America, Hawaii, and Palestine.<sup>43</sup> The treasurer's report reflected a proposed budget of \$36,500 to be earmarked for missions for 1924, of which \$25,000 would go to missionary support and \$11,500 would be used for home missionary work.<sup>44</sup> Torrey clearly led the church he served in Great Commission endeavor.

Thirty-one years after Torrey had passed away, the Church of the Open Door would be served by J. Vernon McGee. Thomas Hight contacted the Reverend McGee to solicit information for his 1960 ThD thesis titled, "A Critical Analysis of the Published Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey."<sup>45</sup> Hight learned that the church at that time had a membership in excess of 3,800 and an annual income over \$500,000, of which more than half was earmarked for missions.<sup>46</sup> Hight claimed that at the time of his research, the Church of the Open Door supported 116 "members of its missionary family."<sup>47</sup> While I cannot draw a definitive connection between Torrey's leadership between 1915 and 1924 and Open Door Church's mission giving and participation in 1959, it does seem plausible that Torrey's leadership in some way contributed to the DNA of the church, predisposing

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<sup>42</sup> Church of the Open Door, *The Open Door Reporter*, [1923?], box 4, folder 13, page 16, Torrey Collection (Moody). The reader will recall that Torrey left the Church of the Open Door in 1924.

<sup>43</sup> Church of the Open Door, *The Open Door Reporter*, 16. One of the missionaries listed who received support from the church was Cameron Townsend, founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators.

<sup>44</sup> Church of the Open Door, *The Open Door Reporter*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Hilary Thomas Hight, "A Critical Analysis of the Published Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey" (ThD thesis, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960).

<sup>46</sup> Hight, "Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey," 30. Hight stated that this claim was made in a personal note from then pastor J. Vernon McGee in a letter dated April 6, 1959, 30n78.

<sup>47</sup> *Open Door News: Official Publication of the Church of the Open Door*, 7, quoted in Hight, "Sermons of Reuben Archer Torrey," 31n79.

it to be generous in mission giving and sending. Torrey's own preaching and example tended in the direction of mission giving and participation.

Torrey visited China three times between 1902 and 1921.<sup>48</sup> His initial trip occurred while he served the Chicago Avenue Church, and the final two trips took place while he served the Church of the Open Door. Torrey was no stranger to the foreign field. He utilized these short-term mission trips to preach the gospel to the lost, encourage the missionary force, and strengthen the existing work.

Torrey's missional pastoral leadership illustrates the importance of a pastor leading from the front. Torrey utilized his pastoral office to garner support for foreign mission endeavor in the form of prayer and giving. The churches and Bible institutes he served furnished workers for the harvest. Torrey's pulpit ministry fostered interest and involvement in cross-cultural mission work. Perhaps most significantly, the Torrey's only son and his wife journeyed under the Presbyterian mission board as missionaries to China.

### **Looking Forward**

I suggest three considerations for future research into the life and thought of R. A. Torrey. The first suggestion is theological in nature, and the other two relate to Torrey's ministry. Given the prospect, I would relish the opportunity to investigate Torrey with respect to these topics.

First, I recommend that Torrey's view of sanctification be explored in greater depth. The doctrine of sanctification is interwoven into Christian spirituality. Torrey's vision of the Spirit-filled life compelled him toward gospel proclamation. Another aspect of his spirituality that should be explored is the relationship between the Spirit's ministry and the cultivation of holiness. With respect to sanctification, when Torrey considered the

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<sup>48</sup> R. A. Torrey, "China, the Land of Promise and Peril," *The King's Business* 13, no. 2 (February 1922): 134.

experience of abiding in Christ, did he have in mind the Spirit-filled life? Did Torrey's view of sanctification reflect a Holiness, Keswick, or Augustinian-Dispensational perspective, or perhaps a combination of all three? Another issue that needs to be explored is the relation in Torrey's thinking between sanctification and the possibility of Christian perfection. Torrey denied that Spirit baptism eradicated the sinful nature. In fact, Torrey emphasized the necessity of living a separated life. He simply did not regard Spirit baptism as the means to achieve that holy life. Did the practical effect of Torrey's doctrine of sanctification lead to a form of perfectionism? These questions could be explored in further Torrey research.

The second area of research that needs more attention is the subject of Torrey's worldwide revival tours. I think a careful chronology, travelogue, and description of Torrey's preaching and its effects, in connection with his world tours, would shore up a gap in the Torrey research. Peter Morgan wrote a bachelor's thesis in 1958 that examined four American evangelists in Britain between 1873 and 1905, one of whom was Torrey. I think research needs to be done at the doctoral level focusing on Torrey's Australian, New Zealand, and British Isle tours. Regarding Torrey's worldwide tours, Pentecostal scholar Robert Menzies comments, "He [Torrey] 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."<sup>49</sup> One particular question of interest is the correlation between Torrey's preaching in Wales in 1905 and the Welsh Revival that erupted under the leadership of Evan Roberts. What effect did Torrey's preaching exert on the Welsh people that paved the way for the later outpouring of God's Spirit in the Welsh Revival? I think the student of revivals would find this an interesting topic.

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<sup>49</sup> See Robert P. Menzies, *Christ-Centered: The Evangelical Nature of Pentecostal Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 31. Menzies includes a list of Pentecostal resources that would furnish the researcher with a rudimentary bibliography. See Menzies, *Christ-Centered*, 31n133.

Finally, I think Torrey's mission trips to Japan, China, and India need to be explored. With respect to China in particular, Torrey wrote extensively to his wife while he traveled to the Orient in 1919 and 1921. In addition to Torrey's correspondence, Mrs. Torrey's diaries may contain invaluable insight into her husband's forays into the Far East. Torrey's son, R. A. Torrey Jr., also a missionary to China, accompanied his father during some of his journeys to the Far East. The younger Torrey's diaries and correspondence may prove useful to the student who desires to appreciate early twentieth-century mission work in China.

### Conclusion

Torrey expressed his spirituality in the single hymn he composed. The hymn was titled "Bless Thou Jehovah."<sup>50</sup> Torrey sings,

Oh, my soul bless thou Jehovah, God of love and grace art Thou; Thou alone art wise and holy; At Thy feet, I humbly bow. Thou Thy Son hast freely given, All our sins to bear away; On the cross He made atonement, Then to glory led the way. He for us received the Spirit, Precious gift of love divine; Shed Him forth upon Thy children; Now forever He is mine. Jesus soon again returneth, Evermore with Him I'll be, Like Him thro' the endless ages, Saved for all eternity.

Torrey worshipped the triune God in this hymn. He highlighted the atonement of Christ by which Christ bestowed the Spirit on God's people. Torrey expressed his hope of one day being like Christ, a hope anchored by his faith in Christ's second advent. Torrey's hymn expresses the rich gospel-centered nature of his faith. His words express the heart of his evangelical spirituality, a spirituality that pointed away from himself to Christ the Savior.

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<sup>50</sup> R. A. Torrey, "Bless Thou Jehovah," in *World Renowned Hymns*, ed. R. A. Torrey (Montrose, PA: Montrose Christian Literature Society, 1909), 71. Regarding this hymn, Roger Martin noted, "The music was written by Charles Gabriel, but unfortunately it proved to be a little difficult to sing and did not become well known" (Roger Edward Martin, "The Theology of R. A. Torrey" [PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 1975], 89).

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## ABSTRACT

### THE INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUALITY AND EVANGELISM IN THE MINISTRY OF REUBEN ARCHER TORREY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023  
Chair: Dr. Timothy K. Beougher

Reuben A. Torrey (1856–1928) was a missions-minded pastor and evangelist whose legacy includes a robust spirituality coupled with the practice of evangelism. In this research, I address the integration of spirituality and evangelism in Torrey’s ministry. I demonstrate that the vibrancy of Torrey’s life in Christ was the wellspring of his evangelistic faithfulness. Other dissertations have examined Torrey’s thought through the lens of apologetics or crusade evangelism. I look at his life through the lens of his spirituality and practice of personal evangelism. Chapter 1 outlines the thesis and methodology, summarizes previous research, and reframes Torrey in light of his abiding in Christ. I also detail my interest in the man, state the limitations inherent in the research, and offer a few comments related to the significance of Torrey for the contemporary generation.

Chapter 2 provides a biographical sketch of Torrey, concentrating on his conversion and call to ministry. I outline elements of Torrey’s spiritual formation that shaped him into a man in Christ and a fisher of men. Chapter 3 focuses on the practices of prayer and Bible intake as illustrated in Torrey’s life. I demonstrate how the habits of prayer and scriptural meditation related to his lifestyle of evangelism. Chapter 4 analyzes Torrey’s pneumatology. Special emphasis is given to Torrey’s views on the personality of, deity of, baptism in, and filling with the Holy Spirit. Chapter 5 explores the gospel Torrey proclaimed in select sermons and in his evangelistic practice. I illustrate the

prominence personal soul-winning played in his life and the emphasis he placed on training Christians for the work of personal evangelism. Chapter 6 summarizes the study and suggests practical applications for the practice of missions in light of Torrey's life, practice, and thought.

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