

**A B SIMPSON'S DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTISM OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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CONTENTS

1 Introduction	1
2 The Historical Context of the Nineteenth Century	3
3 Influences upon Simpson	11
4 A. B. Simpson and Sanctification	15
5 Simpson's Understanding of Baptism of the Holy Spirit	18
6 Simpson's Terminology	21
7 When Did The Baptism of the Spirit Occur?	22
8 How was The Baptism of the Holy Spirit Received?	27
9 What Were the Effects of the Baptism of the Spirit?	30
10 Simpson's Use of Scripture	37
11 Conclusion	38
Appendix A	41
Bibliography	42

1 Introduction

Albert Benjamin Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), was an influential figure in the evangelicalism of late nineteenth century North America and his teaching contributed to the emerging Pentecostal movement in the early twentieth century¹. The growing interest among Christians during the second half of the nineteenth century in the 'deeper Christian life,'² the baptism of the Holy Spirit, healing and the return of Christ was reflected in his own spiritual life and public ministry.

A. B. Simpson was born in 1843 on Prince Edward Island, Canada, and brought up in the Presbyterian church. He graduated from Knox College, Toronto, Canada, from where he went to minister in the prominent Knox Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ontario. After this he pastored the Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, subsequently moving to the prestigious Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church, New York city. In 1881, finding that the congregation did not share his vision for those who did not know Christ, he left this church on amicable terms to establish an independent work.

Simpson was a man of great energy and enthusiasm, whose influence spread far beyond the C&MA through his sermons, convention ministry, books, hymns, and magazines.³ It was out of two passionate concerns of his, the 'deeper Christian life' and missions, that the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) was formed in 1887. The C&MA came into

¹ Charles Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal movement* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1992), 26-51.

² The expression 'deeper Christian life' (or 'higher Christian life') is used in this paper to describe an enriched experience of sanctification entered into subsequent to conversion. See Gerald McGraw, 'The doctrine of sanctification in the published writings of Albert Benjamin Simpson' (Dissertation (PhD): New York University, 1986), 8.

³ 'He was simultaneously a revivalist preacher, a holiness prophet of the 'sanctified', 'deeper', or 'higher Christian life', a commentator on contemporary world events and religious trends, an educational innovator, an author and editor, a poet and hymn writer, an enthusiast for world missions, a theological synthesizer, and an eschatological speculator.' Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 1.

being through the amalgamation of two related organisations, the Christian Alliance, promoting the higher Christian life, and the Evangelical Missionary Alliance, which was an expression of Simpson's desire to make the gospel known in other cultures.

With the rise to prominence of the work of the Holy Spirit in this century, one doctrine perhaps more than any other has focussed the attention of the church - the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit.' It is here in particular that Simpson can be said to have been a major contributor. He, along with others such as Asa Mahan, Phoebe Palmer, D. L. Moody, W. E. Boardman, Charles Finney, Reuben Torrey and A. J. Gordon, laid a foundation upon which the Pentecostal movement built. But his contribution was not restricted to this, for his strong Christological emphasis and rejection of tongues-speaking as a necessary sign of the baptism of the Spirit, provided an alternative way of understanding Spirit baptism.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was central to Simpson's understanding of the Christian life and it is the purpose of this paper to look at his teaching on this subject.

Simpson shared this interest in Spirit baptism along with many of his evangelical contemporaries and it formed the subject of much of his preaching and writing. He himself had an encounter with the Holy Spirit in 1874 which dramatically changed his own ministry. The historical context to Simpson's teaching on this subject is first of all reviewed in relation to those who influenced him, then brief consideration is given to his understanding of sanctification. Having provided this background, Simpson's teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit is then looked at in some detail with regard to such matters as to when it occurs, how it is received and its effects on the Christian. Next Simpson's interpretation of Scripture, particularly the book of Acts, is considered, leading to an assessment of his contribution to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and sanctification.

2 The Historical Context of the Nineteenth Century

Increasing Interest in the Holy Spirit

Up to the time of the American Civil War Protestant teaching on sanctification was centred on Christ and his work in the Christian. There was not a great deal of specific teaching with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit and the expression, 'baptism of the Holy Spirit', was seldom used except with reference to manifestations associated with revival or to describe those special encounters a believer could experience with the Holy Spirit. It was also used to describe the special power ('unction') needed for preaching or evangelism to accomplish more than could be by mere human means ⁴.

In the 1850s, interest in the Holy Spirit increased, arising out of a concern for the condition of the church and the perceived need for it to be renewed and to recover the vitality that had characterised the New Testament church. This interest in the Spirit was further fuelled by the revival of 1857-58 which led many Christians to look for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church similar to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).⁵

The interest in the work of the Holy Spirit continued after the American Civil War, a period marked by rapid change on several fronts in American society. Gilbertson notes several factors that contributed to this developing interest in the Spirit,⁶ in particular, circumstances which came together to highlight human inadequacy. The Civil War had undermined faith in humanity and revealed in a stark manner its darker side. Increasing wealth, a deadening formalism and arid intellectualism, had brought the churches to a low spiritual state and a consequent need of renewal. The issue of power in ministry became

⁴ Richard Gilbertson, *The baptism of the Holy Spirit: the views of A. B. Simpson and his contemporaries* (Pennsylvania, Christian Publications, 1993), 15

⁵ *ibid.*, 16

⁶ *ibid.*, 17-21

critical as the church sought to respond to the increasing urbanisation of America.⁷

Evangelists looked to God for a special endowment of the Spirit to reach the expanding cities of the United States with all their opportunities and problems.

Conservative churches were beginning to feel overwhelmed in their defence of orthodoxy against the inroads being made in the seminaries and churches by liberal theology from Europe.⁸ From the 1870s on liberal theology made rapid advances. The new theology stressed the immanence of God rather than his transcendence, sought to remove the supernatural elements from Christianity and argued that morality was the essence of the Christian faith. Historical criticism undermined faith in the historical veracity of the Bible and undermined traditional views regarding dating and authorship of the biblical books.⁹

From the 1870s the pact between Christianity and science began to break up, particularly under the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution. Up until this time science had been regarded as the partner of theology, uncovering God's 'laws', confirming the argument for design. But now, largely under the influence of Darwin's theory, science was no longer the protagonist of Scripture but its antagonist. Darwinism challenged the Genesis account of creation and the Fall, and also 'denied God's providential design.'¹⁰ It also influenced the way religion, including Christianity, was understood. Christianity was now considered to have undergone an evolutionary development.¹¹ The kingdom of God was seen in earthly

⁷ At the time of the Civil War just 20% of the American population lived in cities of more than 25,000, by 1900 this had doubled to 40%. Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian controversy: fundamentalists, modernists and moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15.

⁸ 'In almost every major American denomination, sometime between the late 1870s and World War 1, serious disagreements broke out between conservatives and liberals.' The issues debated included the 'authority of Scripture, its scientific accuracy...supernatural elements in Christ's person and work.' George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 102, 103.

⁹ *ibid.*, 25,26.

¹⁰ Longfield, *The Presbyterian controversy*, 12.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 19.

terms of the progress of science and morality.¹² The scientific spirit of the age affected Christian colleges. Colleges which had begun as places of learning and piety became increasingly secularised as religion was moved aside in favour of more scientific disciplines.

Conservative Christians, acutely aware of their limitations in the face of such challenges, began to seek a special enabling from God. Only a great outpouring of the Spirit, it was believed, could turn the overwhelming tide in favour of the evangelical faith.

Theological factors contributed to this growing interest in the Holy Spirit. A different way of viewing salvation history came into prominence. Until this time it had been common to divide such history into the old and new covenants with Christ's atonement as the dividing line. Now, borrowing from Wesley's associate John Fletcher,¹³ three eras were recognised, the Old Testament, the life of Christ, and the era of the Holy Spirit. In this view of salvation history the Day of Pentecost became one of the defining moments in the history of God's people, ushering in a new era, that of the Holy Spirit. The age of the Spirit was seen as a continuation of Christ's work on earth through the Spirit. One development of this was the idea that miracles and the gifts of the Spirit had not ceased with the apostles but were to be a part of the church's present life and witness. Consequently God could still be expected to confirm the gospel through signs and wonders as he had done in the book of Acts.

Greater interest began to be paid to the book of Acts especially with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit. Acts came to be seen by many as establishing a normative pattern of church life for all ages and those who taught a second work of grace by the Holy Spirit turned to it for scriptural support. Increasingly the baptism of the Holy Spirit came to be seen in terms, not so much of revival or 'unction' for preaching, but of empowerment for ministry and for holiness of life.

¹² Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887), the famous preacher and patriot, exemplified the new developments in theology. His *Evolution and religion* made him one of the first church leaders to fully accept the theory of evolution as an account of human development. Marsden, *Fundamentalism*, 24

The Development of the Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Two key books in the middle of the nineteenth century helped to foster interest in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Henry C. Fish in his *Primitive piety revived* (1855) asked why Christians could not now be filled with the Holy Spirit as they were in apostolic times especially on the Day of Pentecost. The British Methodist, William Arthur, in *The tongue of fire* sought a 'new Pentecost' for the church. Using Spirit baptism imagery he prayed:

And now, adorable Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, descend upon all the Churches, renew the Pentecost in this our age, and baptize thy people generally - O baptize them again with tongues of fire! Crown this nineteenth century with a revival of 'pure and undefiled religion' greater than that of the last century, greater than that of the first, greater than any 'demonstration of the Spirit' even yet vouchsafed to men!¹⁴

A notable feature of Arthur's work was its exclusive focus on the work of the Holy Spirit.

This indicated a development from the Christocentric view as held in Wesleyan and Oberlin

Perfectionism to a greater interest in the work of the Spirit in sanctification.¹⁵

Important in the development of the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit was the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification with its emphasis on a second distinct instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian in which the inclination to sin was replaced by perfect love.¹⁶ Over the second half of the nineteenth century the entire sanctification doctrine underwent some changes in North America with emphasis shifting to the instantaneous aspect of this work. The teachings of Adam Clark, Asa Mahan of Oberlin College, and Phoebe Palmer, all of whom had had an experience of entire sanctification, helped to spread this new emphasis.¹⁷ This teaching was also popularised through camp meetings. J. W. Harne, speaking at a holiness camp meeting in Vineland, New Jersey, in

¹³ Donald Dayton, *Theological roots of Pentecostalism* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 92

¹⁴ William Arthur, *The tongue of fire* (New York: Harper, 1856) quoted in *ibid.*, 74.

¹⁵ Gilbertson, *The baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 15.

¹⁶ John Wesley, *A plain account of Christian perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1966), 28-32. Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Asbury, 1980), 120.

1867 declared, 'Sanctification is a progressive work while entire sanctification is the work but of a moment...'¹⁸

The revivalist, Charles Finney, who like Mahan and Palmer, had experienced the blessing of 'entire sanctification,' stressed in his preaching on revival the immediacy of this encounter with the Spirit and the role of the human will.¹⁹ In this he could be contrasted with Jonathan Edwards who emphasised that revival was primarily a work of God.²⁰

The expression 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit' became more popular and sanctification came to be seen in terms of a crisis as much as, if not more than, a process.²¹ By the end of the 1890s 'almost every branch of the Holiness and "higher life" movements of the nineteenth century, as well as the revivalism of the period in general, was teaching a variation of some sort or another on the baptism of the Holy Spirit'.²²

Increasingly, teaching on the baptism of the Spirit stressed power for ministry over holiness of life. Dayton suggests that this in part may have been due to a rising desire for empowerment to counter a decline in confidence, in some circles, in the ability of men and women to effectively deal with the growing social complexity of the urbanising United States.²³ Empowering the powerless also became an issue as the holiness movement made inroads into the lower classes of society who saw themselves 'losing prestige to corporate structures (with) little or no status in the emerging urban industrial culture'.²⁴

¹⁷ Dayton, *Theological roots*, 65,68.

¹⁸ Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the faith: the Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), 26.

¹⁹ Dayton, *Theological roots*, 70.

²⁰ Jonathan Edwards, 'Some thoughts concerning the present revival of religion in New England' *The works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1834), 1:366.

²¹ Dayton, *Theological roots*, 70,72

²² *ibid.*, 108

²³ *ibid.*, 77,78.

²⁴ Blumhofer, *Restoring the faith*, 34. See also J W Shepperd, 'Sociology of Pentecostalism,' in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements*, eds Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1988), 797.

Phoebe Palmer in *The promise of the Father* (1859) emphasised power from the Spirit for the Christian to do the will of God along with holiness of life. In an attempt to integrate the two themes of holiness and power, she wrote simply, 'holiness is power'.²⁵ Asa Mahan, now President of Adrian College, in *The baptism of the Holy Ghost* (1870) stated that among the results of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not only a more intimate fellowship with the Father and the Son but power for ministry as well.²⁶

As the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit developed, three variations emerged²⁷. First there was the mainstream holiness movement which still maintained the Wesleyan view of entire sanctification accomplished instantaneously, but increasingly emphasised power for Christian life and ministry alongside of holiness. Indeed, in this stream, power sometimes overshadowed holiness.

By contrast, the 'Three Blessings' teaching taught by Wesleyan-Holiness Pentecostals separated the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was subsequent to the first blessing of regeneration, into two distinct blessings, 'cleansing' from sin or entire sanctification, and empowerment.²⁸ The former blessing of cleansing was a preparation for the latter, the receiving of power.

The third variation, the Revivalist doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit, had some affiliation with Reformed doctrine in that it adopted the Reformed view of sanctification, wherein Christ's work was sufficient for both salvation and sanctification and there was no need for a subsequent work of grace. Reformed revivalists emphasised empowerment over holiness as a result of Spirit baptism. The later Finney was an important representative of this view, as were his successors Moody, Torrey and J. Wilbur Chapman. In his preaching on the

²⁵ Dayton, *Theological roots*, 89,94.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 89.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 91-105.

baptism of the Spirit, Finney stressed the enduement of power as its outcome. Reuben Torrey believed the baptism of the Spirit was for power for service, not cleansing from sin.²⁹ He was convinced that only through the baptism with the Holy Spirit would the evangelisation of the world be accomplished.³⁰

Lying somewhere between the holiness movement and the revivalists, was the Keswick movement. The first Keswick conference in England in 1875 was largely a result of the efforts of Evan Hopkins and E. W. Moore from England,³¹ and Robert Pearsall, Hannah Whitall Smith, and W. E. Boardman from the United States.³² Keswick in the late nineteenth century taught a second blessing, but with reference mainly to power for holy living rather than power for ministry, although the latter was still important.³³ This second blessing doctrine was strongly Christological and was described in terms of the 'fullness of the Spirit' or the 'Spirit-filled life', the Spirit being the means of union with Christ.

Restorationism

These advocates of Spirit baptism were influential promoters of restorationism, a loosely organised movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century which sought to restore the vitality of the New Testament church to the modern church. The closing decades of the nineteenth century saw some restorationists attempting to 'restore the apostolic faith' while others 'anticipated a divine restoration.'³⁴ Restorationism ran counter to the evolutionary optimism of the times, for it maintained that the best had already been realised. It sought a unity centred not so much on doctrine but on Christ. Its very existence was, for

²⁸ H. I. Lederle, *Treasures old and new. Interpretations of 'Spirit-Baptism' in the Charismatic renewal movement*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1988), 16, 17. 'The Fire-Baptized Holiness Church called this third act of grace a baptism of *fire* by which they also just meant the Keswick concept of an enduement with power.'

²⁹ R. A. Torrey, *The baptism with the Holy Spirit* (Minnesota: Bethany House, 1972), 18, 20. 'The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for the purpose of cleansing from sin, but for the purpose of empowering for service.' See also R. A. Torrey, *The person and work of the Holy Spirit* (Pennsylvania, Whitaker House, 1996), 194.

³⁰ Blumhofer, *Restoring the faith*, 31.

³¹ Author unknown, *The message of Keswick and its meaning* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, n.d.), ix

³² Blumhofer, *Restoring the faith*, 33.

³³ *The message of Keswick*, 104f.

many, a sign of the 'end times' and so it was marked by an intense interest in the pre-millennial return of Christ.³⁵ Simpson shared this interest and linked Christ's second coming to missions. Christ's pre-millennial return was, he believed on the basis of Matthew 24:14, tied to the spread of the gospel.

Simpson was a restorationist and saw church history, especially since the Reformation, as characterised by phases in which certain important but neglected features of Scriptural truth were recovered. In the eighteenth century Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, and Fletcher had pointed to the need of the new birth and the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ In the nineteenth century it was the so-called 'deeper Christian life' and the supernatural that had been brought to prominence.

Simpson was strongly committed to the recovery of the message and vitality of the church of the New Testament.³⁷ The church's deadness as he saw it was in no small measure due to its loss of faith in the supernatural. This in turn was a result of the rising influence of rationalism and evolution in society at large and in the church in particular.

Man has become so much in love with man that he is in danger of overlooking God...progress is blinding men to God. The devil is trying to get the supernatural out of the Bible, out of the church, and out of our individual Christian lives, and to reduce religion to a human science, obliterating everything that cannot be explained on a rational principle and from natural causes (Simpson 1967:10).³⁸

Simpson rejected the postmillennialism of his day and expected Christ to return soon-if not in his lifetime, shortly after. The church, he believed, was entering the time of the 'latter rain' prior to Christ's second advent. This would be a period characterised by a special

³⁴ Blumhofer, *Restoring the faith*, 13.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 13

³⁶ Charles Nienkirchen, 'A. B. Simpson: forerunner and critic of the Pentecostal movement', in *The birth of a vision*, eds David F. Hartzfeld and Charles Nienkirchen (Alberta, Can.: Buena Book Services, 1986), 131.

³⁷ Charles Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 53.

³⁸ A. B. Simpson, *Present truth or the supernatural* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1967), 10. In 1906 he wrote, 'While Herbert Spencer labored to apply the doctrine of evolution to all the facts of nature and human life, the theologians have carried it to the higher realm of religion and tried to explain the Bible and the entire Christian life as well as the progress of Christianity in the world and the future destiny of the earth itself on the principle of natural development. The tendency of all this is to leave God out, to do away with the directly

outpouring of the Holy Spirit with accompanying manifestations such as miracles, prophecies, tongues and the conversion of many, similar to the first Pentecost.³⁹

3 Influences upon Simpson

It is hard to distinguish those who made a direct influence upon Simpson as he did not carefully document those influences.⁴⁰ He was raised in a strict Presbyterian home according to Puritan traditions. Simpson in later life recalled, 'we were brought up according to the strictest Puritan formulas.'⁴¹ Sundays were austere, made up of church, family readings from some book of the faith such as Baxter's *Saints' rest* or Doddridge's *Rise and progress of religion in the soul*, and the Shorter Catechism.⁴² Although most of the readings would go over the head of the young Simpson, all was not lost. Looking back on his religious upbringing as a child he acknowledged, 'The religious knowledge, which was crammed into my mind even without my understanding it, furnished me with forms of doctrine and statements of truth which afterwards became illuminated by the Holy Spirit and realized in my own experience.'⁴³ It is not unreasonable to assume that Puritan authors continued to play an important part in the young Simpson's theological formation. Marshall's *Gospel mystery of sanctification*, which was instrumental in Simpson's conversion as teenager, was an extended treatise on sanctification through union with Christ by means of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴ Stoesz argues that Simpson's 'heavy underlinings and marginal comments in his copies of Thomas Goodwin's works, a Puritan writer and theologian, suggest that Simpson's view of a

supernatural and to reduce Christianity practically to Rationalism. 'The crisis of the deeper life', *Living truths*, September, 1906, 521.

³⁹ Nienkirchen, 'A. B. Simpson: forerunner', 131, 132. Charles Nienkirchen, 'Albert Benjamin Simpson' in *Dictionary of Pentecostal*, 186,187.

⁴⁰ Nienkirchen, private correspondence, 30 April, 1996. See also Samuel J. Stoesz, *Sanctification: an Alliance distinctive* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1992), 44.

⁴¹ A. E. Thompson, *A..B. Simpson: his life and work* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1960), 9.

⁴² *ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 11.

crisis of the deeper life found its roots there.⁴⁵ Thus the theological ground was being prepared out of which would later grow Simpson's views on sanctification.

Perhaps the most influential writer in Simpson's life with regard to sanctification was a fellow Presbyterian, W. E. Boardman.⁴⁶ It was through the reading of Boardman's *The higher Christian life*,⁴⁷ that Simpson was experientially introduced to the Spirit-filled life through a crisis experience of sanctification. Furthermore, Simpson's thinking on the baptism of the Spirit drew a lot from Boardman's teaching on the 'higher Christian life.'⁴⁸

Boardman was born on 11 October 1810 in Smithfield, New York, and was converted as a young man. While in the small mining town of Potosi, Wisconsin, he had an experience of sanctification brought on by serious financial losses and the fortuitous discovery of the *Memoirs of James Brainerd Taylor* containing Taylor's testimony of his own special encounter with God.⁴⁹ This was for Boardman an experience of Christ as his all-sufficiency

for holiness and for ministry, similar to what would in time become the Keswick message.⁵⁰

In his early years he pastored churches, engaged in missionary work for the American Sunday School Union and worked with the secretariat of the U. S. Christian Commission, a social relief agency assisting soldiers of the North and South in the American Civil War. In later years he was involved in promoting the higher Christian life through a convention ministry which included trips to England where he settled in 1875. He died eleven years later in 1886.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Walter Marshall, *The gospel-mystery of sanctification* (London: Oliphants, 1954), 136. Marshall's book was first published in 1692.

⁴⁵ Stoesz, *Sanctification*, 12. Lederle gives Thomas Goodwin as a leading example of what he terms 'Reformed Sealers'. These were those people of the Reformed tradition who saw the sealing of the Spirit as an 'experience of the assurance of salvation', an experience distinct from conversion. Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones was a modern day example of this viewpoint. Lederle, *Treasures*, 5-7.

⁴⁶ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 7. Stoesz, *Sanctification*, 35.

⁴⁷ W. E. Boardman, *The higher Christian life* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1858).

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁹ Stoesz, *Sanctification*, 36-39.

⁵⁰ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 144, n55.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 144-7.

The higher Christian life was published in 1858 and became very influential, not the least in Simpson's life. It was a religious best seller with over 200,000 copies produced and it established Boardman as a leading proponent of the higher Christian life movement.⁵²

Boardman's work strongly influenced the British Keswick movement.⁵³

Simpson took up Boardman's distinction between regeneration and Spirit-baptism, with sanctification being regarded as a definite experience subsequent to regeneration, a 'second conversion' as Boardman himself put it in his 1871 edition of *The higher Christian life* (pp. 105,6).⁵⁴ For Boardman, and later Simpson, sanctification was both a crisis and a process and there was the possibility of many fillings after one had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ Simpson, like Boardman, had a strong Christological emphasis in his teaching on sanctification although he developed the idea of the indwelling Christ more than Boardman.⁵⁶

Hermeneutically, Simpson followed Boardman in appealing to 'the life of Christ, the book of Acts, and the Old Testament historical metaphors as biblical support for the doctrine of Spirit baptism or "second conversion" subsequent to initial regeneration'.⁵⁷ Both had a restorationist view of church history and a consequent rejection of the cessationist view that spiritual gifts had died with the apostles. Both were critical of the prevailing naturalism and sought a revival of the supernatural in the Christian life.⁵⁸

Simpson thus wrote and ministered in a time of great interest in the work of the Holy Spirit, especially the baptism of the Spirit. With Boardman and other leading evangelicals of his day, Simpson regarded the baptism of the Spirit as a distinct crisis experience in the life of

⁵² *ibid.*, 144,145.

⁵³ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 8. Stoesz, *Sanctification*, 41.

⁵⁴ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 159. Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 9.

⁵⁵ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 161. Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 9

⁵⁶ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 159

⁵⁷ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 8,9.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 8

the Christian subsequent to regeneration. He believed spiritual gifts were still available for the church and his eschatology led him to expect the soon return of Christ which would be preceded by the 'latter rain' of the Spirit and accompanying miracles and dramatic manifestations of the Spirit.

Mysticism

The quest for holiness among evangelicals of the late nineteenth century led many to turn to the writings of mystics.⁵⁹ Simpson was among these. He was particularly influenced by the works of Madame Guyon (1648-1717) and Francis Fenelon (1651-1715). Especially attractive to him was the Quietistic insistence on being still to hear the voice of God. Simpson was deeply stirred through the reading of *A guide to true peace or the excellency of inward and spiritual prayer*, a collection of the writings of Guyon, Fenelon and Molinos, put together by the Quakers, William Backhouse and James Janson.⁶⁰

While not accepting all that Quietism taught, he none-the-less regarded his encounter with Quietist contemplative spirituality 'as one of the turning points of (his) life'. It made possible for him what he called 'the Sabbath rest of the soul' one of the 'sweetest blessings' known to the believer.⁶¹ This mystical influence would encourage Simpson to see the baptism of the Spirit in strongly Christological terms, that is, as mystical union with Christ.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 9

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 10

⁶¹ Simpson quoted in Nienkirchen, *ibid.*, 11.

Where does Simpson fit in?

Locating Simpson in one of the prevailing streams of thought of his time regarding the Spirit is difficult. He can not be regarded as Wesleyan as he rejected eradicationism, but is he Reformed revivalist or Keswick? Some such as Hunter (1983: 189) have associated Simpson with R. A. Torrey and C. I. Schofield,⁶² while Blumhofer has placed him with those of a Reformed persuasion such as A. J. Gordon, D. L. Moody and A. T. Pierson.⁶³ Lederle,⁶⁴ and Wheelock and Menzies have associated him with Asa Mahan and W. E. Boardman and a 'Keswick-type concept of Christocentric sanctification'.⁶⁵ Nienkirchen believes that because of the eclectic nature of Simpson's views on the issue of Spirit baptism it is 'virtually useless' to try and classify him.⁶⁶ It is the author's view that while it is indeed difficult to classify Simpson, he is probably closer to the early Keswick teaching than any other, particularly in the Christological emphasis he brought to the matter of sanctification and Spirit-baptism, and the balance he sought to strike between holiness and power.

4 A. B. Simpson and Sanctification

Its Importance for His Thought

Sanctification, for Simpson, was one of the foundational doctrines of the Christian life. From 1874 onwards, after he had had that special encounter with the Holy Spirit, sanctification became one of the major themes of his preaching and writing ministry. It was

⁶² Harold D. Hunter, *Spirit baptism: a Pentecostal alternative* (Maryland: University of America Press, 1983), 189.

⁶³ Edith Blumhofer, 'The overcoming life: a study in the Reformed Evangelical contribution to Pentecostalism.' (Dissertation (PhD) Harvard University, 1977), quoted in Gilbertson, *The baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 42.

⁶⁴ Lederle, *Treasures old and new*, 14.

⁶⁵ Nienkirchen, 'A. B. Simpson: forerunner', 137. Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 59. See Donald R. Wheelock, 'Spirit baptism in American Pentecostal thought' (Dissertation (PhD), Emory University, 1983), 51f., esp. 56, and, William Menzies, 'The non-Wesleyan origins of the Pentecostal movement', ed. Vinson Synan, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic origins* (New Jersey: Logos, 1975), 87f..

⁶⁶ Nienkirchen, 'A. B. Simpson: forerunner', 137. Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 59.

also central to his understanding of the Church's missionary task.⁶⁷ There could be no effective Christian life apart from sanctification properly understood. And this understanding involved seeing sanctification, first of all, as a decisive event before it was a process. For Simpson, sanctification as an event was as important as conversion.

The Need for Sanctification

For Simpson the need for sanctification lay both in the nature of God and in the condition of men and women. God was a holy God and his people were to reflect this by being holy (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16) as a sign of their covenant relationship. But the corruption of sin left the condition of men and women far from holy. Consequently for man and woman, there was a compelling reason to turn from that which alienated them from God. Only through sanctification could Christians overcome the inner conflict that sin produced (cf. Galatians 5:17) and live effective and productive lives.⁶⁸ There was also an

eschatological requirement for sanctification. Simpson was sympathetic to the partial rapture doctrine which held that only sanctified Christians would be raptured at the first resurrection and thus escape the tribulation.⁶⁹ Thus if Christians were to avoid the trials of the tribulation and be a part of the first resurrection, it was imperative that they be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Simpson's Understanding of Sanctification

Sanctification had a moral and a mystical aspect. From the moral viewpoint sanctification meant, negatively, a deliberate separation by the Christian from sinful behaviour and indeed from the inclinations of the selfish self, and from those associations and

⁶⁷ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 226.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 601.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 601.

situations that would encourage sin. It was to be a separation not only from sins, but from sin as a principle of life.⁷⁰

More positively, sanctification meant dedication to God and his will. The sanctified Christian was to be characterised by a life of obedience to God, by seeking to please him in every way. Simpson expressed this in such idealised terms as submitting to the 'absolute ownership' of God, which was to be a 'voluntary surrender or self-offering'.⁷¹

But Simpson was also concerned that sanctification not be seen as merely the sort of self-improvement so common to nineteenth century progressivism. Sanctification was much more than a change in behaviour, there was a mystical element to it as well. It was a work of God and its focus was Christ. Although Simpson's understanding of sanctification was Trinitarian in that all members of the Trinity were at work, there was a strong Christological emphasis. 'Sanctification ... is the indwelling of God and such a union with Jesus Christ as brings His life and righteousness into our life as the power of sanctification and holy obedience.'⁷²

While Simpson could speak of sanctification as God indwelling the believer, union with Christ and as the Spirit empowering the Christian, his main emphasis was Christocentric. In this his teaching was similar to that of his contemporary, A J. Gordon, and to the Keswick movement.⁷³ It was Christ, through His Spirit, breaking the power of indwelling sin, imparting power for a life of holiness and ministry. Thus, for Simpson, 'Christ himself must be the substance and supply of our new spiritual life and fill us with His own Spirit and holiness'.⁷⁴ Simpson regarded the issue of personal holiness in terms of the Christ-life and encouraged Christians to look behind their experiences to their source, that is

⁷⁰ A. B. Simpson, *Wholly Sanctified*, (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1982), 16.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 19,20.

⁷² A. B. Simpson, 'The ministry of the Spirit', *Living truths*, August (1907): 441.

⁷³ Gilbertson, *The baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 173

⁷⁴ Simpson, *Wholly sanctified*, 21.

Christ.⁷⁵ Even the necessary faith to be sanctified and the act of consecration itself must come ultimately from Christ for only he could make such commitment acceptable.⁷⁶

Simpson rejected the eradicationism of the Wesleyan entire sanctification theology which taught a second work of grace in which the carnal nature was decisively defeated and thereby rendered ineffective.⁷⁷ He also repudiated the suppressionism favoured by J. N. Darby and his followers in North America, who taught that the carnal nature could not be eradicated but had to be suppressed by the Holy Spirit. For Simpson the key to overcoming indwelling sin was through habitation, that is through the grace given by the indwelling Christ, which was similar to the Keswick doctrine of counteraction.⁷⁸ The one who had provided for the Christian's justification was the one who would provide for their sanctification.

5 Simpson's Understanding of Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Simpson's Own Testimony

The year 1874 found Simpson pastoring the Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Although apparently quite successful as a minister, there was, none-the-less, a dissatisfaction with his life and a desire to know more of Christ. He struggled with his intense nature and self-will and with 'peculiar temptations'. He felt that what he said to others about the deeper life in the Spirit did not reflect his own experience. A turning point came upon his reading of Boardman's *The higher Christian life*.

⁷⁵ John Sawin, 'The Fourfold Gospel' in *The birth of a vision*, eds. David Hartzfeld and Charles Nienkirchen (Alberta, Can.: Buena Book Services, 1986), 9.

⁷⁶ Simpson, *Wholly sanctified*, 21,22.

⁷⁷ Wesley, *A plain account*, 25. Samuel J Stoesz, 'The doctrine of sanctification in the thought of A. B. Simpson', in *The birth of a vision*, eds David Hartzfeld and Charles Nienkirchen (Alberta, Can., Buena Book Services, 1986), 114.

⁷⁸ *The message of Keswick*, 44. The doctrine of 'counteraction' held that sin is overcome through the believer abiding in Christ.

Simpson later testified in the *Alliance weekly*,⁷⁹

As (I) pored over that little volume, (I) saw a new light. The Lord Jesus revealed Himself as a living and all-sufficient presence and (I) learned for the first time that Christ had not saved us from future peril and left us to fight the battle of life as best we could, but He who had justified us was waiting to sanctify us. Across the threshold of (my) spirit there passed a Being as real as the Christ who came to John on Patmos, and from that moment a new secret has been the charm, and glory, and strength of (my) life and testimony. And (I) shall never forget how (I) longed to come back to the land of (my) birth and the friends of former years, and tell them that magic, marvelous secret, hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest in the saints, which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory. Henceforth it was not my struggles, (my) character, (my) ethical nature, (my) moral goodness, but... constant dependence upon the living One who has said, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

Simpson would look back on that time in 1874 as one of the key turning points in his spiritual and theological pilgrimage when he experienced his own baptism in the Spirit. How did he understand the meaning of this Spirit baptism? Immersion and union are probably the best answers.

Full Immersion in the Spirit

For Simpson the word 'baptism' in the expression 'the baptism of the Spirit' conveyed the idea of a thoroughgoing immersion into the Spirit's fullness. Commenting on 1 Cor. 12:13 Simpson wrote, 'it is the figure of being submerged in the ocean, and then, when lost in the depths of the sea, opening our mouths and beginning to drink of its depths and fullness.'⁸⁰ All members of the Trinity were involved. The Spirit comes from the Father through the Son who baptises the believer with the Spirit. It is thus Christ who baptises with the Spirit and the Spirit is the baptism.⁸¹ A further aspect of Simpson's Trinitarian understanding of Spirit baptism was that he understood the result of this baptism to be the indwelling of God, union with Christ and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit who becomes the "seal and source of

⁷⁹ A. B. Simpson, 'A personal testimony', *The Alliance weekly*, (Oct. 2, 1915): 11.

⁸⁰ A. B. Simpson, *Walking in the Spirit: the Holy Spirit in Christian experience* (Harrisburg, Pa: Christian Publications, n.d.) 136.

that new life".⁸² There was only one baptism of the Spirit although there may be subsequent encounters with the Spirit renewing the believer.

In an apparent allusion to Paul's reference to baptism in Romans 6, Simpson saw the baptism of the Spirit involving a death to the self-focussed or 'natural' life and an entering into Christ's resurrection life. 'The most important condition of the baptism with the Holy Ghost is that we shall truly die to all our own life, and enter into the meaning of Christ's resurrection'.⁸³

Union With Christ Through His Spirit

Although Simpson saw the baptism of the Holy Spirit bringing the indwelling presence of God into the life of the Christian he tended to stress more the Christological and pneumatological aspects of this baptism. To be baptised by the Holy Spirit was to enter into a vital union with Jesus Christ himself. At regeneration the Spirit worked to bring about new life in the believer while at a point subsequent to this the same Spirit was the means by which Christ became personally present, a living reality in the believer. This was Simpson's own testimony:⁸⁴

Nor can I exactly explain how it is that once he was to me only a Saviour, a Teacher, and a Master, but there was a time when he became to me also a Friend and a Husband, and wakened in my heart longings, responses and delights, which I had not known before.

But this also could be understood from the perspective of the Spirit. The Spirit who was with the believer at conversion became, at this Spirit-baptism, 'fully resident "within the converted heart" and transform(ed) it into "the temple of the Holy Ghost"'.⁸⁵

⁸¹ A. B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit or power from on high* (Harrisburg, Pa: Christian Publications, n.d.), 2:23.

⁸² Simpson, *ibid.*, 23.

⁸³ Simpson, *ibid.*, 23

⁸⁴ A. B. Simpson, *The epistle to the Romans* (Harrisburg, Pa: Christian Publications, n.d.), 156

⁸⁵ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 61.

There was of course no dichotomy between the Christological and the pneumatological. This is the same Spirit who indwelt Christ and through whom his works were done. He is not only known as the Holy Spirit but the Spirit of Christ and is 'called Christ Himself. He comes to reveal Christ and to bring His personal presence into our heart and life...the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us is practically the indwelling of Christ...'⁸⁶

6 Simpson's Terminology

Although the expression 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit' does not occur in Scripture it was the one most frequently used by Simpson. When wishing to be more precise he would use 'baptism with' or 'baptism in' to emphasise that Christ baptises and it is the Spirit into which the believer is baptised.⁸⁷ He seemed to regard 1 Cor. 12:13 as referring to the crisis of Spirit baptism subsequent to conversion. One implication of this was that the church was made up only of those who were 'sanctified', that is, had known a baptism of the Spirit. But it was not a position that Simpson held consistently and in some of his writings he includes the 'unsanctified' in the church.⁸⁸

Expressions that Simpson regarded as synonymous with 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit' were, 'sealing', 'anointing', 'second blessing', 'receiving the Holy Spirit', 'the indwelling of Christ', 'crisis sanctification', and 'fullness of the Spirit'.⁸⁹

McGraw has argued that Simpson distinguished the 'fullness of the Spirit' from the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' and considered it to represent a higher spiritual plane to be reached after Spirit baptism.⁹⁰ This is partly true for Simpson in many of his writings did not treat them as synonymous. Spirit fullness meant, according to Simpson in one of his books,

⁸⁶ A. B. Simpson, *Epistle to the Romans*, 168,169.

⁸⁷ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 287,288.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 291.

⁸⁹ A. B. Simpson, *The highest Christian life* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1966), 29. A. B. Simpson, *Second Corinthians: the principles and life of the apostolic testimony* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian

'to be wholly filled with and possessed by the Holy Ghost and utterly lost in the life and fullness of Jesus'.⁹¹ Simpson saw Ephesians 5:18 as commanding 'a climactic measure of the Holy Spirit's work beyond the baptism. Although salvation is good, sanctification is better and "to have Christ in all his fullness" is best'.⁹²

This was not to be seen as a third blessing or crisis but rather an intensification of the experience of Spirit baptism. Nor need it be experienced at a particular point in time; it could occur over several fillings. 'We may be filled again and again, and as our capacity is enlarged our blessings will grow without measure'.⁹³ However it needs to be noted that Simpson did at times use the expression 'filled with the Spirit' as equivalent to the 'baptism of the Spirit'.⁹⁴

Simpson's terminology was in general agreement with that of his contemporaries like Moody, Torrey and the Keswick movement, with their teaching of 'one baptism and many fillings'.⁹⁵ Another contemporary, A. J. Gordon, however, while teaching a subsequent work of the Spirit, an 'anointing' for power followed by many fillings, believed that there was only one baptism of the Spirit, namely at Pentecost (Acts 2).⁹⁶

7 When Did The Baptism of the Spirit Occur?

In all his published works Simpson consistently held to the view that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a 'necessary experience' in the life of the Christian distinct from conversion and subsequent to it.⁹⁷ He distinguished between the knowledge of the Spirit at conversion and the experience of the Holy Spirit's baptism. In the former the Spirit 'witnesses

Publications, n.d.),24. Nienkirchen, 'A. B. Simpson', 137. Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 59. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:67, 90. A. B. Simpson, *A larger Christian life* (US: Horizon House, 1979), 46,51,52.

⁹⁰ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 308-312.

⁹¹ Simpson, *A larger Christian life*, 39.

⁹² McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 310.

⁹³ A. B. Simpson, 'Salvation, sanctification and filling', *Christian and Missionary Alliance* (16 August, 1899):24, quoted in McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*.

⁹⁴ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:67, 90. Simpson, *A larger Christian life*, 46,51,52.

⁹⁵ Torrey, *The baptism*, 67f. *The message of Keswick*, 84f.

⁹⁶ Gilbertson, *The baptism of the Holy Spirit*, 175.

⁹⁷ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 59.

to our acceptance and forgiveness', but in the latter he 'comes to accept our perfect offering of ourselves to Him, and to possess us fully for Himself, bringing us into personal union with Jesus, and keeping us henceforth in obedience and victory.'⁹⁸

In teaching a two-stage pattern of Christian experience, Simpson, along with the Wesleyans, Keswick and later Pentecostals, was putting himself outside the unified view of the Christian life which had been the dominant view for most of the church's history.⁹⁹ The unified view, also known as Augustinian holiness, denied that there were two distinct works of grace and taught that the baptism of the Holy Spirit referred to conversion/regeneration.¹⁰⁰ This was the position that continued to be held by a major portion of the church into the twentieth century, including by one of its leading theologians, Karl Barth.¹⁰¹

Simpson saw in John 14:17 these two stages in the Christian life, firstly the Spirit's working with us, and secondly, his coming to abide within the believer.¹⁰² 'But you know him (the Spirit of truth), for he lives with you and will be in you.' (14:17b). It was a crisis as important as conversion and the greatest issue that the Christian had to deal with once converted.¹⁰³ Simpson warned of the danger of so minimising the distinction between a merely converted Christian and a truly sanctified one that the importance for the believer of this 'crisis' event was lost.¹⁰⁴ He rejected any doctrine of progressive or gradual sanctification that allowed no place for this crisis of Spirit baptism and was even critical of the well known Keswick speaker, F. B. Meyer, for downplaying the need of a post-conversion baptism of the Spirit.¹⁰⁵ He argued,

⁹⁸ A. B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit or power from on high* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, n.d.) 1:69.

⁹⁹ Lederle, *Treasures*, 2-5.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 2. See also, J. I. Packer, *Keep in step with the Spirit* (Leicester, UK.: Inter-Varsity, 1988), 122f.

¹⁰¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Trans. G Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), IV.2: 501f.

¹⁰² A. B. Simpson, *Days of heaven on earth* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1945), 186.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 243.

¹⁰⁴ A. B. Simpson, Editorial, *Living truths* (Feb. 1906): 65.

¹⁰⁵ A. B. Simpson, 'The crisis of the deeper life', *Living truths* (Sept. 1906): 521. Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 63.

The doctrine of evolution has so infused the religious thought of our time that such a thing as a definite religious experience is quite passing out of sight in many quarters... the doctrine of a second work of grace, a spiritual crisis after conversion followed by entire consecration and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is also becoming obsolete even in evangelical circles.¹⁰⁶

There need not, however, be a long interval between conversion and the baptism of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit was for all Christians, including the youngest, and 'ideally sanctification ought to follow regeneration as rapidly as possible'.¹⁰⁷ Indeed Simpson counselled, 'no convert should be left until he has definitely received the Holy Spirit and been sealed unto the day of redemption by the indwelling power and presence of God.'¹⁰⁸ This was the New Testament pattern. Simpson saw in Acts 2:38 evidence that in the infant church its 'youngest members were taught to receive the Holy Ghost the moment they accepted Jesus.'¹⁰⁹ Ephesians 1:13 was further evidence for Simpson that the New Testament experience was to receive the baptism of the Spirit immediately after conversion, and in fact he believed that the security of one's conversion was, in no small measure, dependant upon being baptised by the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁰

However, Simpson agreed with Torrey that in actual practice for many Christians there was a long interval between when they became Christians and when they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹¹¹ They had not, Simpson believed, entered into all that their water baptism meant. For such this baptism was 'only an acknowledgment of salvation, and a confession of Christ for the forgiveness of sins...It was only at a later period (that) they (came) to receive that Holy Ghost as their Deliverer from indwelling sin.'¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ A. B. Simpson, Editorial, *Living truths* (March, 1913): 339.

¹⁰⁷ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 466.

¹⁰⁸ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 1:68.

¹⁰⁹ A. B. Simpson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, n.d.), 49.

¹¹⁰ Simpson, *The highest*, 30.

¹¹¹ R. A. Torrey, *What the Bible teaches* (New York: Revell, 1933), 271

¹¹² Simpson, *Romans*, 137.

Along with Torrey and Gordon, Simpson believed that Christ provided us with a model regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹¹³ He was first born of the Spirit at his incarnation and some thirty years later he was baptised by the same Holy Spirit at the river Jordan at the beginning of his public ministry.

This was something transcendentally more than the incarnation of Christ. Up to this time there had been one personality, henceforth there were two; for the Holy Spirit was added to the Christ, and in the strength of this indwelling Spirit, henceforth He wrought His works, and spake His words, and accomplished His ministry on earth.¹¹⁴

Lest he be accused of some form of Nestorianism Simpson added that these two are one.¹¹⁵

Simpson saw in Acts 10:38 an indication of a 'distinct crisis' in Christ's life when, after yielding himself to the Father's will, he was empowered for his public ministry through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁶

So for Christ's followers there must not only be the new birth by the Holy Spirit but there must also be a subsequent baptising work by the Spirit of God such that the Spirit indwells the believer and they, like Christ, receive a 'new personality' to empower them for obedience and unite them to the all-sufficient Christ.¹¹⁷

The early disciples also provided an example for Christians to follow. Prior to the Day of Pentecost they were saved, they had, in 'some measure', already received the Spirit, although Simpson does not elaborate on this 'some measure'.¹¹⁸ It was, however, only at Pentecost that they were baptised by the Spirit and the Holy Spirit became for them an indwelling reality, and they were empowered for holiness and for service.

¹¹³ Torrey, *The person*, 217. Gilbertson, *The baptism*, 174.

¹¹⁴ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:14,15.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁶ A. B. Simpson, *When the Comforter came* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1911), Ninth day.

¹¹⁷ A. B. Simpson, 'The baptism in the Holy Spirit,' *Living truths* (Dec. 1905): 711.

¹¹⁸ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:90.

Simpson found references in Paul's teaching to Spirit baptism as a distinct experience subsequent to conversion. In commenting on Ephesians 1:13, and taking 'sealing' to be synonymous with Spirit baptism, he noted that this verse revealed the timing of sanctification. First there was the yielding, then the believing, and then, through an act of faith and commitment, the Spirit was received. Ephesians 5:18 implied that there was a difference between having the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit.¹¹⁹ Here we can note in passing that Simpson was equating 'filling' with the 'baptism of the Spirit.'

As already noted, Simpson was wary of the notion of progressive sanctification. 2 Timothy 1:6,7 for him militated against the idea that sanctification was, initially at least, progressive.¹²⁰ He drew attention to the aorist verb form of *edoken* in v.7. He saw in this tense of the verb an indication that what was being spoken of here was not a progressive experience but something done at a definite time in the past. As the aorist tense is indefinite with regard to the nature of an action, the tense of the verb does not support this interpretation, though the context would.

A weakness in Simpson's understanding of the work of the Spirit concerned the Spirit's relationship to the believer at regeneration. In stating that it was when the Christian was baptised by the Spirit that they received the Spirit as an indwelling presence, he implicitly raised the issue of just what was the nature of the Spirit's relationship to a person at conversion. Here Simpson was somewhat vague. He believed that regeneration was definitely a work of the Spirit and at one point stated that the Spirit was 'with' the new believer.¹²¹ At another time, when referring to Christ's disciples prior to Pentecost, he wrote that they 'had, in some measure, received the Spirit previously' and referred to John 20:22

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, 2:90.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, 2:129.

¹²¹ Simpson, *A larger Christian life*, 138. 'The Spirit *with us* describes the condition of the converted, but yet unsanctified soul. The Spirit *in us* describes the experience of the consecrated and Spirit-baptized Christian.' A. B. Simpson, 'What is meant by the latter rain', *The Christian and Missionary Alliance* (October 19, 1907): 38.

which, he said, 'must have meant something' with regard to receiving the Spirit but he does not say what.¹²² Simpson, while quite definite regarding the Spirit's relationship to the Christian at Spirit baptism, remained imprecise with regard to the Spirit and the regenerated Christian. In this he could be compared to his more orthodox contemporary, Torrey, who rejected the holiness premise of two normative works of grace, and taught that the Spirit's work of sanctification began in the Christian at conversion and continued on as he or she walked in the Spirit.¹²³ Likewise Keswick teaching was much clearer regarding the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer from conversion.¹²⁴

8 How was The Baptism of the Holy Spirit Received?

The Work of the Spirit

The baptism of the Spirit in Simpson's understanding was first of all a work of the Holy Spirit of God. It was the Spirit's work to prepare the believer to enter into this baptism.

This involved awakening the Christian to the need of Spirit baptism, and a strengthening of the believer to receive this new dimension of the Spirit. Both this awakening and strengthening were accomplished through various trials and experiences which served to awaken spiritual desire, remove confidence in one's self, turn the mind heavenward and settle 'us down into God where we can let all go but Him and can step out in naked faith to trust and obey Him'.¹²⁵

The Spirit as well was involved in making known both God's provision for Spirit baptism through Christ's atoning death and his willingness to dwell within the believer. Then he led the believer on to a full surrender of his or her life to himself and to a complete separation from evil. That having been done, he then accepted this dedication and made the

¹²² Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 90.

¹²³ Torrey, *What the Bible teaches*, 252.

¹²⁴ *The message of Keswick*, 81,82.

¹²⁵ Simpson, *The highest Christian life*, 64.

commitment real by putting the self-life to death and, by entering into the believer, united them to Jesus Christ.¹²⁶

The Responsibility of the Believer

The believer was not merely a passive vessel in all of this. Like Torrey, Simpson believed he or she had an active part to play in receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There first of all had to be a knowledge of the fact of this Spirit baptism, that it was available for all Christians and not reserved for the few. Then there had to be a hungering, a strong desire for this deeper work of the Spirit in one's life. There had to be a repentance or turning away from sin and the self-focussed life, including any tendency for self-reliance. What Simpson called 'openness' was also important. This involved being free from prejudices, preconceptions, doubt, unbelief, fear, self-consciousness, all of which could hinder the Spirit's work.

Waiting was also important. Here he found the example of the disciples in prayer prior to the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14) instructive.¹²⁷ While acknowledging that they were in a unique historical situation in that events were unfolding according to God's timetable, he was nonetheless willing to draw several lessons on the value of waiting for the baptism of the Spirit. These lessons were, of course, drawn more from the experience of those who had experienced Spirit baptism than from the actual text of Acts 1.

Simpson believed that such a time of waiting, accompanied by prayer, would have been vital to mark for the disciples an 'important transition in their life', to teach them not to trust in themselves and to realise their own inadequacies and dependence on God, and to be still so as to be able to 'hear' the voice of God and realise his will for them. Simpson, in fact, saw waiting as 'a process of receiving the Holy Spirit. There is cumulative power in waiting

¹²⁶ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:180

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, 68-74.

prayer to bring the answer and the blessing'.¹²⁸ For similar reasons Christians needed to wait for the baptism of the Spirit, to wait and to persevere in prayer for this second work of grace. As with the disciples, such waiting would prepare the believer for this blessing. Simpson's belief in the importance of waiting was not shared by Torrey or by the Keswick movement, both of whom believed that waiting or 'tarrying' for the baptism of the Holy Spirit was no longer necessary after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit had been poured out.¹²⁹

All of this was preparatory for the baptism of the Spirit. Faith and a full surrender of one's life were the catalysts of the actual baptism. In his typical idealistic language Simpson said that one had to receive the Spirit and believe, with no doubts, that Christ dwelt in one's life.¹³⁰ The accompaniment of such faith was to be 'a voluntary, unconditional, irrevocable surrender of the entire personality to God'.¹³¹

Could the blessing of Spirit baptism be lost? Possibly. Simpson linked service to maintaining what the Spirit had accomplished. The Holy Spirit was given, Simpson taught, not for the 'selfish enjoyment' of the Christian but for service. A failure to use the blessing of the baptism of the Spirit for service was to run the grave risk of losing what one had received. The service that Simpson had in mind above all else was that of evangelism and missions,

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 74.

¹²⁹ Torrey, *The baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 61-63. *The message of Keswick*, 94,95.

¹³⁰ Simpson, Editorial, *Living truths* (March, 1906): 131.

¹³¹ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 608.

We can only know and prove the fullness of the Spirit as we step out into the larger purposes and plans of Christ for the world. Perhaps the chief reason why the Holy Spirit has been so limited in His work in the hearts of Christians is the shameful neglect of the unsaved and unevangelized world.¹³²

Torrey believed that the spiritual power gained through the baptism of the Spirit could be lost and listed seven ways, basically having to do with sin, in which this could occur.¹³³ Keswick exponents likewise taught that what had been gained through Spirit baptism could be lost unless the believer continued in a life of daily obedience and abiding in Christ.¹³⁴

9 What Were the Effects of the Baptism of the Spirit?

Both holiness and power for ministry flowed from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We have already seen that over the last half of the nineteenth century there had been a change of emphasis in the teaching on the baptism of the Spirit from holiness to power. Although Simpson saw service as one of the main purposes for the baptism, he endeavoured to keep ~~holiness and power in balance, seeking to show 'that there was a link between conformity to~~ Christ and service for Christ'.¹³⁵ His Christological emphasis was an attempt to focus attention on the one who baptises with the Spirit lest a believer become seduced by the effects of the baptism. This Christological focus was crystallised in one of his most well-known hymns, 'Himself', which begins, 'Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord'.¹³⁶ It was a focus that Simpson shared with A. J. Gordon and with the Keswick movement.¹³⁷

Simpson was keen to stress that one of the main consequences of the baptism of the Spirit was holiness of life. In fact McGraw believes that Simpson saw holiness as more important than power for service, and that power without holiness was not only inconsistent

¹³² Simpson, *Days of heaven on earth*, 368.

¹³³ Torrey, *The baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 71f.

¹³⁴ *The message of Keswick*, 69.

¹³⁵ Gilbertson, *The baptism*, 213.

¹³⁶ see Appendix A.

¹³⁷ Gilbertson, *The baptism*, 173. For Gordon the Spirit did not come simply to empower but, more importantly, to make Christ known in his fullness.

but dangerous.¹³⁸ Torrey by contrast believed that while the baptism with the Holy Spirit would result in holiness, its main purpose was for power for testimony and service.¹³⁹

Simpson objected to this emphasis on power and wrote in an editorial in 1906, 'It is a common and most paralyzing view that the (baptism of the) Holy Spirit is simply an endowment of power for service and has no direct connection with our personal character and holiness... The Holy Spirit comes upon us *primarily* to sanctify us and make the Lord Jesus real to us as power for life and holiness.' To seek 'for special gifts for ministry, while we ourselves are still living without victory and personal holiness is most inconsistent and misleading.'¹⁴⁰

Because of the strong links that Simpson made between the work of the Spirit and of Christ it was natural for him to state that one of effects of Spirit baptism was a manifestation of the character of Christ in the Christian. 'The Holy Ghost never comes to us apart from Jesus. The object of the Holy Ghost (like that of an artist) is to picture Jesus Christ upon the canvas and make him real to us'.¹⁴¹ Thus Simpson expressed this prime outcome of Spirit baptism not simply in terms of moral transformation but rather in moral/mystical terms of conformity to the likeness of Christ who now indwelt the Christian. 'To be filled with the Spirit was to be filled with Christ'.¹⁴² Spirit baptism was not for the perfection of human nature but to bring men and women into union with Jesus.¹⁴³ The Holy Spirit did not just apply the benefits of Christ's atonement to the new Christian but brought the believer into a living relationship with Christ himself.

¹³⁸ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 564.

¹³⁹ Torrey, *The baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 18; *The person and work*, 'The purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is *not primarily* to make believers individually holy...the primary purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is efficiency in testimony and service. It has more to do with gifts for service than with graces of character,' 197, 198 (my emphasis).

¹⁴⁰ Simpson, Editorial, *Living truths* (March, 1906): 130,(my emphasis).

¹⁴¹ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit* 2:93.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, 94.

¹⁴³ Simpson, *Walking in the Spirit*, 51.

Moral transformation was the necessary corollary of the indwelling Christ. Using Pauline language, Simpson spoke of the Christian becoming 'dead to sin',¹⁴⁴ being 'delivered from the power of sin',¹⁴⁵ and 'the death of the sinful self'.¹⁴⁶ The 'old man' or sinful nature had been dealt a death blow and was no longer the governing principle of the Christian's life. He came close to eradicationism in one of his earlier writings when he wrote, 'to receive the Spirit of holiness and thus be delivered from the power of sin (is) the imparting to us of a new life which is in itself essentially pure and cannot sin.'¹⁴⁷

Faith was the key. This new moral situation in which Christians found themselves was to be maintained by faith, by 'reckoning', to use Paul's language of Romans 6. 'We become what we count ourselves'.¹⁴⁸ If the old sinful nature was found to be reasserting itself, the Christian was, by faith, to consider himself or herself dead to sin and alive to righteousness. In language similar to that used in Keswick higher life formulations, he stated, 'It is in the reckoning that the secret of our strength will always be found'.¹⁴⁹

If holiness of life was one of the prime consequences of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, power for service was not far behind it. The Spirit with which the Christian was baptised was the same Spirit that had empowered Christ for his public ministry of preaching, teaching, healing and miracles. Indeed as has been noted above, without a life of active service the believer ran the grave risk of forfeiting the blessings the Spirit had bestowed.¹⁵⁰ The supreme need of the church, according to Simpson, was a baptism of the same Spirit that

¹⁴⁴ Simpson, *The epistle to the Romans*, 134.

¹⁴⁵ Simpson, *Walking in the Spirit*, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Simpson, *A larger Christian life*, 43.

¹⁴⁷ Simpson, *Walking in the Spirit*, 11.

¹⁴⁸ Simpson, *The epistle to the Romans*, 140.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 139.

¹⁵⁰ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 577.

had empowered Jesus Christ. 'He has left to us the same power which He possessed...This is the supreme need of the church today'.¹⁵¹

From the baptism of the Spirit came the power to minister in the way the apostles did, to evangelise, to endure suffering, to perform miracles, to heal the sick, to lead Christ's church, to manifest supernatural gifts.¹⁵² Just as they were not permitted to engage in ministry in their own strength but had first to receive the baptism of the Spirit, so Christians need this same baptism before they can serve effectively.

Although Simpson believed that the baptism of the Spirit would lead to signs, wonders, healings and other manifestations of the miraculous, he was careful to stress that these were not the 'primary ends' but rather pointed to something greater, something more important, namely 'the reality and power of the name of Jesus, and the gospel'.¹⁵³ Simpson consistently maintained this Christological emphasis in his treatment of Spirit baptism.

It was the proclamation of the gospel that was to comprise the church's main task. Evangelisation was *the* enterprise of the church.¹⁵⁴ One of the direct outcomes of the baptism of the Spirit that Simpson expected was a concern for evangelisation both in one's own community and in other cultures. 'If we are truly filled with the Holy Ghost and longing for the coming of Christ, we shall be active witnesses and workers in preparing for Him.' Simpson believed that Spirit-baptised Christians would be 'soul winners at home' and if they were not able to go abroad, they would assist those who could.¹⁵⁵

The baptism of the Spirit was for all the church and all Christians, regardless of what form their ministry took, should seek it. Whether the ministry was evangelism, preaching, teaching Sunday School, or prayer, all required an empowerment from the baptism of the

¹⁵¹ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:20.

¹⁵² Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 62.

¹⁵³ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:83.

¹⁵⁴ McGraw, *The doctrine*, 578.

¹⁵⁵ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:284.

Spirit. 'No man is fitted for the humblest service in the church of God until he receives the divine baptism of the Holy Ghost'.¹⁵⁶

Spirit baptism entailed physical benefits. The Holy Spirit did not only impact on the will but the physical body as well. The body indwelt by the Spirit would know a strengthening and an energising from the divine life of Christ within.¹⁵⁷ Indeed Simpson went as far as to say that the indwelling Spirit would lift the body 'above disease and pain' to know 'perfect health'.¹⁵⁸ In this Simpson was reflecting his understanding of divine healing. Divine healing included more than just the physical healing of the body. It encompassed divine health as well, brought about through the indwelling Christ imparting his resurrection life to the Christian.¹⁵⁹

The Issue of Tongues

Simpson rejected the cessationist doctrine which held that spiritual gifts had ceased with the death of the apostles. He held that every Christian should have a spiritual gift given sovereignly by the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁰ This included the gift of tongues which Simpson wrote had been given 'as an expression of lofty spiritual feeling and the intense moving of the heart'.¹⁶¹ It was a gift that Simpson saw as being restored in what he regarded as the 'end times'.¹⁶²

Simpson was aware of the limitations and dangers associated with the gift of tongues. He described it as a 'showy gift', the 'least honoured' of all the gifts.¹⁶³ It was a gift prone to abuse and indeed, because of its misuse, it had largely been withdrawn early in the post-apostolic age.¹⁶⁴ Simpson also knew of the 'emotional excesses' that accompanied the

¹⁵⁶ Simpson, *Present truth*, 86.

¹⁵⁷ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:115,116,130.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 96,130.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 24,25,30,31.

¹⁶⁰ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 74.

¹⁶¹ Simpson, *The highest Christian life*, 96.

¹⁶² Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 74.

¹⁶³ Simpson, *The highest Christian life*, 148.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 96,97.

manifestation of tongues associated with Edward Irving in the earlier part of the century.¹⁶⁵ Despite this Simpson did not reject tongues speaking as a legitimate spiritual gift nor did he discourage its use.

Even after the outbreak of the Azusa Street revival in 1906 and the subsequent divisions that tongues speaking caused in the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Simpson did not substantially alter his view of this gift.¹⁶⁶ He regarded this as a genuine work of God in which many had been blessed though he was, nonetheless, cautious about its effects.

He was less ambivalent about another aspect of this revival. He had no hesitation in rejecting the 'initial evidence' doctrine which maintained that tongues was the necessary evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This teaching he regarded as contrary to sound doctrine and harmful to the unity of the church. 'It is preposterous to say that the gift of tongues is the criterion of having received the Holy Ghost. The apostle distinctly asks, "Have all the gift of tongues?"'.¹⁶⁷ Further, as spiritual gifts were not related to a Christian's conversion or growth in holiness, such gifts could not be used to say whether a Christian had received the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁸ Its promotion, he believed, introduced into what he considered was a genuine work of God, "extravagance", "excess", "serious error", "wildfire" and "fanaticism".¹⁶⁹ Furthermore this doctrine divided the church between those who spoke in tongues and those who did not.

As a result of the impact of the Pentecostal movement, Nienkirchen argues that Simpson shifted his emphasis in his teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit away from the

¹⁶⁵ Gordon Strachan, *The Pentecostal theology of Edward Irving* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1973), 151f. I. Hamilton, 'Edward Irving'. In *New dictionary of theology*, editors S. B. Ferguson and David Wright. (Illinois: Inter-Varsity, 1988) 342. Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 75.

¹⁶⁶ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 589. Gilbertson, *The baptism*, 227.

¹⁶⁷ A. B. Simpson, 'Gifts and graces,' *Christian and Missionary Alliance weekly* (June 29, 1907): 302.

¹⁶⁸ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 90.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 89.

baptism as a means for power for service.¹⁷⁰ Instead he began to stress love over power and the role of the baptism of the Spirit in bringing 'union with Christ, cleansing from sin and equipment for (one's) practical Christian life'.¹⁷¹

Progressive Sanctification

There was a progressive element to Simpson's doctrine of sanctification but it came into effect only after the baptism of the Spirit, rather than conversion. Spirit baptism was, for Simpson as it was for Keswick teachers, only the beginning of the life of the Christian 'in the Spirit'.¹⁷² 'It is after we receive His sanctification and enter into perfect union with Him, that our real growth begins...'.¹⁷³ Along with others who taught a baptism of the Spirit subsequent to conversion, Simpson argued that after Spirit baptism the Christian could expect, and indeed should seek, further fillings with the Spirit which would lead the Christian deeper into God.¹⁷⁴ There were yet for the believer higher stages of spiritual blessing to be reached which Simpson described in terms of being 'filled with the Spirit.' It was possible to be baptised with the Spirit yet not be completely filled with the Spirit. He wrote in 1907, 'It is possible to have the Spirit actually indwelling yet not fully know or use all His attributes and resources'.¹⁷⁵ In an article in the same year Simpson described this further work of the Spirit as an 'enlarging, expanding and completing of that which has already begun.'¹⁷⁶

As with the actual baptism of the Spirit, Christians had an active part to play in this progressive aspect of their sanctification. Their Spirit baptism had to be maintained for what had been gained could be lost through neglect and such neglect could lead to the need at some

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 89,90.

¹⁷¹ A. B. Simpson, Editorial, *Christian and Missionary Alliance weekly* (October 19, 1907): 38.

¹⁷² *The message of Keswick*, 43. 'The late Mr Evan H Hopkins delighted to say that the Keswick message was a crisis with a view to a process.'

¹⁷³ Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, 2:181.

¹⁷⁴ Simpson, *A larger Christian life*, 58,64,65,121. Compare with *The message of Keswick*, 85; Torrey *The baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 67f.

¹⁷⁵ A. B. Simpson, 'The ministry of the Spirit,' *Living truths* (August, 1907):442.

¹⁷⁶ Simpson, 'What is meant by the latter rain,' 38.

future date for a time of renewal.¹⁷⁷ Believers had to intentionally cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

10 Simpson's Use of Scripture

The book of Acts was a key text in Simpson's teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was a book that he regarded as not only descriptive but prescriptive for the church of every era. Acts was normative for the whole church and provided a picture of what church life should be like if it would be open to the fullness of the Spirit. The supernatural would become a part of normal church life as it had been in Acts.¹⁷⁸ Luke's description of the Spirit's work in his second book was, for Simpson, reflected in his own restorationist views, a paradigm for the church to follow into the higher Christian life.¹⁷⁹

Thus Simpson was prepared to base his two-stage process of conversion-regeneration and Spirit baptism on Luke's account of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the coming of the gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and Paul's encounter with the disciples of John (Acts 19).

[While] not denying the historical uniqueness of Pentecost, he also saw the various effusions of the Spirit recounted in Acts as constituting a pattern for a normative 'Pentecost' to be appropriated personally by all believers since New Testament days just like the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.¹⁸⁰

In this Simpson anticipated the hermeneutical approach to Acts of the Pentecostal movement.¹⁸¹

Christ's life provided for Simpson another important pattern to follow, as it had done for Torrey and Gordon.¹⁸² Just as he was ready to derive doctrine from the narrative sections of Acts, so he was willing to use the life of Christ for support of his two-stage process of conversion and then Spirit baptism. Christ was first born of the Spirit and at about thirty

¹⁷⁷ McGraw, *The doctrine of sanctification*, 210.

¹⁷⁸ Nienkirchen, 'A. B. Simpson: forerunner', 134.

¹⁷⁹ Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 72.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 71

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, 69.

¹⁸² Torrey, *The person and work*, 217. Gilbertson, *The baptism*, 174.

years of age was baptised by the Holy Spirit in preparation for his public ministry. The life of Christ thus became a model for Christians to follow. Just as Jesus could not embark on his ministry until his divine baptism, so Christians were to seek a Spirit-given enabling before entering into service.

11 Conclusion

The baptism of the Holy Spirit occupied a central place in Simpson's ministry and theology. It was the centre-piece of his doctrine of sanctification. Spirit baptism was, for Simpson, as important as regeneration itself though it always was to be understood as separate from and subsequent to conversion. Although conversion was the work of the Holy Spirit, it was not until a believer was baptised with the Spirit that the Spirit dwelled in the Christian. This was but the beginning of the sanctifying work of the Spirit for it was only after Spirit baptism did the work of progressive sanctification begin. Further, the believer was to seek the fullness of the Spirit through additional 'fillings'.

Simpson, in his concern with Spirit baptism, reflected the wider interest of the evangelical church of his day in this issue. Simpson's own contribution lay in several important areas. He brought a strong Christological emphasis to this work of the Holy Spirit. His writings 'reflect a continued effort to link the work of the Spirit with the person of Christ'.¹⁸³ It was Christ who baptised with the Spirit and then, consequently, came to live in the Christian. The Holy Spirit then was the agent of union with Christ and his ministry was to reveal Christ to the Christian. Underlying this Christological focus was a desire to avoid an overemphasis on the Holy Spirit. 'The coming of the Comforter is to make Jesus intensely real, more real indeed than the Comforter Himself. For He adds a little later: "He shall not testify of Himself, He shall testify of Me"'.¹⁸⁴ Here Simpson can continue to speak to the

¹⁸³ Gilbertson, *The baptism*, 209.

¹⁸⁴ Simpson, *When the Comforter came*, First day.

modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movements which, as Simpson foreshadowed in his reaction to classical Pentecostalism, have been guilty at times of just such an overemphasis.

Regarding the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Simpson lay between the Wesleyans, with their emphasis on holiness, and people like Torrey, who emphasised power for service. Simpson was adamant that both of these, holiness and power, were inseparable outcomes of Spirit baptism. It was inconceivable to have one without the other. It was, moreover, in reaction to the emerging Pentecostal movement of the early twentieth century that, towards the end of his ministry, he stressed to an even greater extent the necessity not to separate what he believed God had joined together.

Through his books and magazine articles, preaching and teaching, and convention ministry Simpson's influence spread far beyond the movement he had founded, reaching into the Pentecostal movement and the resulting Assemblies of God denomination. His influence upon the fledgling Assemblies of God is generally acknowledged.¹⁸⁵ In many ways he was one of the forerunners of the Pentecostal movement with his restorationist understanding of church history, his view on Spirit baptism and the availability of the gifts of the Spirit, and his hermeneutical use of Acts to derive doctrine.¹⁸⁶

Spirit baptism tied in with another concern of Simpson's, namely the restoration of the supernatural in the life of the church. He criticised the influence of rationalism and

¹⁸⁵ Simpson was seen by Vinson Synan, 'a Pentecostal Holiness Church historian' as one with others like R. A. Torrey and Andrew Murray, who by emphasising the need for each Christian to have a 'personal Pentecost' set 'the stage...for the rise of the modern Pentecostal movement' (Synan, Vinson. 1984. 'The rain falls in America,' *In the latter days. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1984), 44, 45 (Quoted in Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 27).

Carl Brumback, Assemblies of God (AG) historian, argued that Pentecostalism had borrowed from Simpson, *inter alia*, certain doctrines regarding the Holy Spirit. Articles 7 and 9 of the AG doctrinal statement are expanded versions of the Alliance's article 7 (Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson*, 28).

Simpson's influence in the emerging AG was not just through his writings and convention ministry but also through the many people who left the C&MA for the AG looking for 'something more' with regard to the Spirit's work. Nienkirchen argues that they attempted 'to inculcate early AG doctrine and spirituality with a solidly Christocentric focus in the tradition of Simpson's Fourfold Gospel' (*ibid.*, 46).

evolutionary thinking in the church which, he believed, had robbed it of its supernatural birthright. Only Spirit baptised believers would be able to replicate the book of Acts, which, for Simpson, portrayed normal church life. Perhaps it is also at this point that Simpson can speak to the church at the end of twentieth century, with its strong fascination for sociological sources of growth, as seen in the church growth movement. So while the evangelicals of Simpson's time strove hard to resist the rationalism of classical Liberalism, their late-twentieth century successors may have unwittingly succumbed to it under another guise, in the use of rationalistic programs to promote the growth of the church.

With his strongly Christological doctrine of Spirit baptism not requiring any specific evidence, such as tongues, Simpson provides an alternative understanding of Spirit baptism to that of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have dominated the church of the last part of this century, but many evangelicals have felt uneasy with aspects of their doctrine of the Spirit, especially the evidence doctrine. Realising the need for the Spirit's dynamic in the life of the church, yet not being able to accept the Pentecostal and Charismatic options, other alternatives have been explored such as the so-called 'Third Wave.' Simpson and his doctrine of Spirit baptism, provides, I believe, the basis for another alternative, an approach which warrants further consideration.

Appendix A

Simpson expressed the Christological emphasis in his doctrine of sanctification in his famous hymn, 'Himself.' The hymn manifested Simpson's concern that sanctification not be seen in objective terms, as an 'it', but primarily in relational terms, as Christ himself living in the Christian:

Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted, not the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.

Once 'twas painful trying, now 'tis perfect trust;
~~Once a half salvation, now the uttermost.~~
Once 'twas ceaseless holding, now He holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting, now my anchor's cast.

Once 'twas busy planning, now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring, now He has the care.
Once 'twas what I wanted, now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking, now 'tis ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me.
Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, now for Him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus, now I know He's mine;
Once my lamps were dying, now they brightly shine.
Once for death I waited, now his coming hail;
And my hopes are anchored, safe within the veil.

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Note: many of the books by Simpson have no publication date and some that do, being reprints, are of recent origin. John Sawin in his article 'Publications of Albert B Simpson' (*The birth of a vision*. Edited by David F Hartzfeld and Charles Nienkirchen. Alberta, Canada: Buena Book Services, 1986.) produced a list of Simpson's works with the date of first publication. It is this date that appears in brackets.

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