

Their Story:
20th Century
Pentecostals

by Fred J. Foster

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entitled Think It Not Strange

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It was the great world-wide camp meeting in Los Angeles in 1913, with hundreds of preachers present from all over the Union and Canada. The occasion was a baptismal service in the pool near the big tent. Evangelist R. E. McAlister was speaking. He explained the different methods of baptism, versus the Scriptural mode. He mentioned the triune immersionist method—baptizing the candidate three times, face downward. He analyzed it thus: “They justify their method by saying that baptism is in the likeness of Christ’s death, and make a point from the Scripture that Christ bowed His head and died.” He concluded abruptly by saying, “that the Scriptural answer to all this was that the apostles invariably baptized their converts once in the name of Jesus Christ; that the words Father, Son and Holy Ghost were never used in Christian baptism.”

An inaudible shudder swept the preachers on the platform and the people in the vast arena. The preacher noticed it, and stood in awesome silence. Brother Denny mounted the platform in one bound, took the preacher aside, and told him not to preach

that doctrine or it would associate the camp with a Dr. Sykes who so baptized.

“Evangelist McAlister resumed his explanation, and said he did not mean to convey the idea that because the apostles baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, it was wrong to baptize according to the formula in Matthew 28:19. Thus ended the confusion on the platform. But the Gun Was Fired from that Platform Which Was Destined to Resound Throughout All Christendom, and that Within a Year.”¹

Little realizing that the sparks from his words would light great fires of revelation in the hearts of many of his hearers, R. E. McAlister walked from the platform that day fifty years ago. The sound is still ringing today.

When still a young man, it rang clear and strong in the author’s heart, and his feeling is that much is owed this twentieth-century church. Through God, she has rescued, nourished and mothered us to the rich spiritual experience we enjoy so greatly. Countless thousands have been influenced by this religious awakening to bring believers into harmony with early church practices and beliefs. Very little is in print, though, about this awakening, and, in the light of this, I have embarked upon the journey of writing the history of the Oneness Movement.

REASONS WHY THIS HISTORY IS WRITTEN

(1) First of all, there is a definite need for such a history. The Oneness Movement has made a distinct mark upon the religious world and has shared a great part in the history of the Pentecostal movement of

the twentieth century.

(2) Many living today know very little of the struggles of the early part of the century. If this knowledge were better known, greater appreciation for the noble warriors of the past and for some still living in their elder life would be had.

(3) The world needs a history of the church in the twentieth century, so like the first-century church. The Bible is emphatic that Christ will come for a bride like unto the church He founded in the beginning of the church age; a church teaching and practicing the same basic doctrines the apostles propagated.

(4) History is filled with the attainments of those who were challenged to heroic deeds by the vision, accomplishment and devotion of men and groups of the past. May this history also accomplish this noble act in the lives of the ministry who read its pages.

THE PRIMARY CONCERN

The primary concern of this study will be the pinpointing of happenings and events relative to those Pentecostals who baptize by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ, and who receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial sign of speaking with other tongues, in relation to the second chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”²

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly