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HOW LONG SHALL WE TARRY? A RECEPTION HISTORY OF TARRYING FOR THE BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT IN EARLY PENTECOSTAL TESTIMONIES

History Interest Group

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INTRODUCTION

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he instructed his disciples to “Wait in Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). Drawing from these words, “tarrying” became a uniquely Pentecost ritual whereby believers developed the practice of actively lingering for the impartation of the Spirit. As Wolfgang Vondey comments, “The entire tone of Pentecostal worship has been described at times as ‘one of waiting.’”¹ There are a number of empirically based studies focused on the reception of the Spirit that document a number of variables surrounding reception of the Spirit.² However, there has yet to be a study related to the amount of time Pentecostals spent tarrying before they received the baptism in Spirit in light of Jesus’ command to “wait until you have been endued with power from on high”(Luke 24:49).³

¹ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: T & T Clarke, 2017), 62.

² For example, see Aaron T. Friesen, *Norming the Abnormal: The Development of the Doctrine of Initial Evidence in Classical Pentecostalism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013); Mark J. Cartledge, *Charismatic Glossolalia: an Empirical—Theological Study* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

³ The closest investigation of the Pentecostal experiences can be found in Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. *Azusa Street Mission & Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic), 177-186, devotes considerable time to describing the Spirit-baptism experiences at the Azusa Street Mission. However, he limited himself to a “quick analysis of a half-dozen” of the hundreds of testimonies as a demonstrative sample.

This paper will investigate the methodology of tarrying for the baptism in the Holy Spirit as expressed in the testimonies recorded throughout the thirteen existing issues of the *Apostolic Faith* (1906-1908) of the Azusa Street Mission. In order to extract the “ordinary theology”⁴ expressed by this diverse cross-section of early Pentecostals, this study will engage in a history of reception of how Pentecostals received Jesus’ command to “tarry” and how that reception shaped the expectation of the early Pentecostals experience of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁵ Of the hundreds of testimonies in the *Apostolic Faith*, 80 have been identified that specifically mention the amount of time the subject “tarried” or waited before receiving for the baptism.⁶ From this population, each testimony was documented according to the following variables: the stated amount of time before reception took place, the location and context of their reception, and any expressed barriers to receiving.⁷ Based on these variables, this study

⁴ Jeff Astley, “The Analysis, Investigation, and Application of Ordinary Theology,” in Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis (eds.), *Exploring Ordinary Theology* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), defines “ordinary theology” as “the theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly theological education.” Similarly, Mark J. Cartledge, Jeff Astley, Leslie J. Francis et. al. *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 16, assert that Pentecostal ordinary theology expresses the “common sense expertise” of those who had experienced Spirit.

⁵ Reception History will be used in two ways in this piece. First, as a hermeneutical approach to Pentecostal literature that explores how early Pentecostals received the scriptural edict to “tarry” found in Luke 24 and Acts 1. But it will also be used in a very experiential sense as a historical account of how Pentecostals “received” the baptism in the Spirit.

⁶ Tarrying is a synonym for “waiting” in this study. Many of the accounts documented use the term “tarry” to describe their experience, but not all. Therefore, the individual accounts were selected based on the single criteria of whether a length of time was mentioned in relationship to receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

⁷ The gender of this population was surprisingly equal, representing forty men and forty women. The ages of the seekers were also not a significant detail in most of the testimonies, although several testimonies of children as young as 11 years old were included. There was little information that would indicate the race of the seekers outside those who may have been notable in history.

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will seek to identify patterns concerning the role tarrying played in early reception of the Spirit by early Pentecostals.⁸

THE ORIGIN OF TARRYING

Like many Pentecostal spiritual practices, tarrying has its roots in African spirituality.⁹ David Daniels refers to the practice of tarrying as “the core of African American Pentecostal spirituality.”¹⁰ Tarrying originated within slave communities in the American South where unrestrained by the European sensibilities of order and control that characterized the religion of slave owners, slaves found solace in secret meetings where there was emotional singing, shouting, and dancing in what was called the “ring shout.” This dynamic act of communal lingering and praying invited worshippers into a transformational experience with God through the Spirit.¹¹ As one ring shout participant testified, “At camp-meeting there must be a ring here, a ring there, and a ring over yonder, or sinners will not get converted.”¹² As Daniels points out, the elements of active

⁸ Rather than a formal empirical study using quantitative analysis, this study is a rudimentary survey of only expressed phenomenon. One obvious limitation of a study like this is that these testimonies are naturally limited to those who had achieved the goal of receiving Spirit-baptism. This cannot account for the totality of experiences since the voices of those who had not yet received are not accounted for.

⁹ Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 18-19, argues that Pentecostalism inherited from African spirituality the elements of orality in liturgy, narrative theology, testimony and participatory worship. See also Walter Hollenweger, “The Black Roots of Pentecostalism” *Pentecostals after a Century*, (eds.) Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger (JPTSUP 15; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 33-44; Estrela Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011).

¹⁰ David D. Daniels III, “‘Until the Power of the Lord Comes Down’: African American Pentecostal Spirituality and Tarrying,” in Clive Erricker and Jane Erricker (eds.), *Contemporary Spiritualities: Social and Religious Contexts* (London: Continuum, 2001), 175.

¹¹ Daniels, “‘Until the Power of the Lord Comes Down,” 175.

¹² Albert L. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 69.

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waiting on God, patterned repetition of praise words, and fervent prayer until the “power of the Lord come down” became the basis for the practice of tarrying.¹³ As a son of former slaves, it is not surprising that the tarrying service was one of the essential elements William Seymour employed in the upper room especially designated to initiate seekers into the Pentecostal experience at the Azusa Street Mission.¹⁴

RECEIVING JESUS’ COMMAND TO TARRY

Tarrying for the Pentecostal experience was more than an element of Pentecostal spirituality; it was an apostolic standard set by Jesus himself. At the Azusa Mission, those who were saved and sanctified were instructed using Jesus’ command to “tarry” until they received “power from on high.”¹⁵ For Seymour, the command to tarry was proof that the Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit was differentiated from the holiness experience of sanctification.¹⁶ He comments,

Jesus said, “Tarry ye.” For what? For a work of grace? No, for He had said before He went down into the grave, “Ye are clean.” He got all the fears and

¹³ Daniels, “‘Until the Power of the Lord Comes Down,” 178.

¹⁴ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. *Azusa Street Mission & Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic), 160. “At Azusa Mission,” *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), 2; Seymour comments, “When the altar call is made on Sunday, the seekers for Pentecost pass upstairs and seekers for justification and sanctification remain below. Souls receive Pentecost right along at the altars. Some get saved and sanctified.”

¹⁵ Despite the ubiquitous use of the term “tarrying” in the reports and testimonies, nearly all the references to Jesus’ command came in the form of exhortations by William Seymour *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 1; “The Enduement of Power,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 2; W.J. Seymour, “Counterfeits,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 2; *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 3; William J. Seymour, “The Baptism with the Holy Ghost,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7.

¹⁶ William J. Seymour, “Two Works of Grace and the Gift of the Holy Ghost,” *AF* 1.1 (Sep, 1906), 3; Whereas it is often said that holiness Pentecostals had three works of grace (salvation, sanctification, baptism in the Spirit), Seymour had a different way of referring to it. He says, “Sanctification is the second and last work of grace, but the baptism in the Spirit is a gift of power.” “The Enduement of Power,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 2. Seymour says, “They were not to tarry in Jerusalem till He should pour out His blood upon them, but tarry for the promise of the Father.”

doubts out of His church before He went back to bright glory. So after He had ascended to the Father, all they had to do was to praise God till the comforter came.¹⁷

The work of grace of sanctification came with an inner “witness of the Spirit,” which did not require tarrying; it required faith.¹⁸ Tarrying for the Holy Ghost, on the other hand, was God’s responsibility that required the recipient to be subject to God’s timing and his sovereignty.¹⁹ The act of receiving was not in the control of the seeker, therefore it required “waiting on God.”²⁰ They used the terms “tarrying for the baptism” synonymously with “waiting on God.”²¹

TARRY UNTIL THE EVIDENCE COME

What is clear about each of these testimonies in the *Apostolic Faith* is that concept of tarrying was contingent upon the doctrine of speaking in tongues as evidence. For the seeker, the “Bible evidence” of speaking in tongues verified the apostolic pattern and served as sign to the seeker that their wait was over.²² As one seeker testified, “I have not the baptism with the Holy Ghost because I have not the gift of tongues, the evidence of

¹⁷ *AF* (Sep, 1907), 3.

¹⁸ “New Tongued Missionaries for Africa,” *AF* 1.3 (Nov, 1906), 3, illustrated one Azusa attendee’s conversation with the Lord. “The Spirit said to me as plainly as a voice, “How did you receive your justification? How did you receive your sanctification?” I said, Lord, by faith. He then said, “Receive me.”

¹⁹ Daniels, “Until the Power of the Lord Comes Down,” 179.

²⁰ Note the way *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 1, expresses it, “Companies of Christians in many places were waiting on God, tarrying for the baptism with the Holy Ghost.”

²¹ “Praying for the Holy Ghost,” *AF* 1.2 (Oct, 1906), 3; “Filled with God’s Glory,” *AF* 1.7 (Apr, 1907), 4; “In Fort Worth Tex.,” *AF* 1.7 (Apr, 1907), 8.

²² *AF* 1.2 (Oct, 1906), 1; “Ask What Ye Will,” *AF* 1.2 (Oct, 1906), 3; “Pentecost in Toronto,” *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4; “Pentecost in the Middle States,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 3; “What Pentecost Did for One Family,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7; “Holiness Preacher Who Received Pentecost,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7.

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Pentecost.”²³ This sign was particularly important in the experiences of those who had prolonged periods of waiting. For example, Glen A. Cook had several experiences where he was “under the power” for hours at a time, yet remained unconvinced that he was baptized in the Spirit because he lacked the apostolic evidence.²⁴ In fact, Seymour himself warned against seekers confusing dramatic experiences such as falling under the power with the Pentecostal baptism. He notes, “We have been running off with blessings and anointings with God’s power, instead of tarrying until Bible evidence of Pentecost came.”²⁵

While many seekers described receiving Pentecost as “glorious” and “wonderful,” for those with prolonged tarrying experiences this process was not always blessed. Louis Osteberg described his nine months of tarrying as “torturous” because each service left him feeling “as far away as ever before.”²⁶ Arthur B. Shepherd recalled that his weeks of tarrying were “tedious in the extreme, but God’s grace was sufficient.”²⁷ Mrs. James Hebdon became discouraged to the point of almost giving up because as she testified,

²³ “Baptized in Minneapolis,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 4. Similarly, “Holiness Preacher Who Received Pentecost,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7, testified, “I then began to tarry and pray night and day, and did not stop until I was wonderfully baptized with the Holy Ghost, and He gave me the blessed evidence which always follows, which is the speaking in tongues.”

²⁴ G.A. Cook, “Receiving the Holy Ghost,” *AF* 1.3 (Nov, 1906), 2. Other examples are found in, “Pentecost in the Middle States,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 3; “A Chicago Evangelist’s Pentecost,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 4; “Pentecostal Testimonies,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 8.

²⁵ *AF* 1.1 (Sept, 1906), 2.

²⁶ “Filled with God’s Glory,” *AF* 1.7 (Apr, 1907), 4. In the midst of sharing his frustration with friends, Osterberg describes, “I was like a man grasping at straws.” But with his friends prayers he was able to believe again and “little by little I felt the power fall. To make a long story short, I was soon speaking in other tongues.”

²⁷ “Pentecostal Testimonies,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/March, 1907), p. 8.

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“over fifty times I arose from the altar to face the world without my enduement of power.”²⁸ In most of these cases, the seekers were encouraged to “pray through” until they got the victory.²⁹ As Seymour reminded seekers, “[Jesus] did not say how long they were to tarry, but He did say, ‘until ye be endued.’”³⁰

The emphasis on speaking in tongues as the terminal sign inevitably led to believers seeking tongues instead of the baptism. Seymour warned, “Dear loved ones, do not seek for tongues, but seek for the baptism with the Holy Ghost....Then He will manifest His power in the demonstration of speaking or singing in tongues, just as the Holy Ghost chooses.”³¹ Seymour was right to be concerned that tongues would become a hindrance for seekers. This was illustrated by “Sister Mead”, who despite having Seymour and Florence Crawford personally praying for her for several weeks, became extremely disappointed because she had not yet spoke in tongues. Sister Mead admitted that tongues became a “stumbling block” from the enemy and a tool “to get me discouraged, telling me this baptism was not for me.” Once she got over her preoccupation with tongues she was able to receive “in simplicity” and faith, only then did the tongues follow as a sign.³²

²⁸ “Found the Pearl of Great Price”, *AF* 1.6 (Feb/March, 1907), p. 4.

²⁹ “Pentecost in Pueblo, Colo”, *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), p. 4. Tom Hezmalhalch encouraged who were seeking for sanctification and baptism who did not “get through” were encouraged “to go on until they had the victory”.

³⁰ *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), p. 3.

³¹ *AF* 1.12 (Jan, 1908), 3.

³² “New Tongued Missionaries for Africa,” *AF* 1.3 (Nov, 1906), 3. Sister Mead navigated through her disappointment when Spirit showed her that she should receive the Spirit the same way she received salvation and sanctification: “by faith.”

Because of the overemphasis on tongues, some came with a resistance to speaking in tongues. But this too could become a hindrance. One sister who came to the mission admitted she “did not want tongues” but after she prayed through, “God baptized her like all the rest.”³³ Although Seymour was cautious on tongues, he did recognize tongues were a legitimate part of the apostolic pattern. Seekers were encouraged to continue to tarry until the evidence came, no matter how long.

Don’t stop because you do not receive the baptism with the Holy Ghost at the first, but continue until you are filled.... Many people today are willing to tarry just so long, and then they give up and fail to receive their personal Pentecost that would measure with the Bible.³⁴

The need for endurance in waiting was sometimes expressed as a “battle” that seekers would need to press through until they received the victory by “getting through” to the baptism.³⁵

HOW LONG SHOULD THEY TARRY?

According to the biblical “pattern” of tarrying, Jesus told the disciples they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit “in a few days” (Acts 1:5). In reality, the disciples tarried for ten days before they received. What is interesting is that the majority of the testimonies followed similar trajectories in that 77.5% reported received in about a

³³ “Testimonies,” *AF* 2.13 (May, 1908), 1.

³⁴ *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 3. An almost exact statement was also included in W.J.S. “Letter to One Seeking the Holy Ghost,” *AF* (Jun, 1907), 3.

³⁵ Tom Hezmalhalch, “Pentecost in Pueblo, Colo,” *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4, commented, “others who were seeking for sanctification and baptism and did not get through, were encouraged to go on until they had the victory.”³⁵ See also *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 1; “A Businessman’s Testimony of Pentecost”, *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), p. 4; *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), p. 3.

week.³⁶ M.L Ryan expressed the expectation that one would receive the Spirit in a similar amount of time when testified, “I had my mind made up that I must seek for the Pentecostal Baptism at least one week before receiving it. To my utterable surprise and joy the power fell upon me at once.”³⁷ Ryan’s “surprise” that the Pentecostal baptism was immediately available suggests that at some level he was influenced by the expectation that waiting was part of the process of receiving.

Seymour certainly did not believe receiving the baptism in the Spirit was an inherently prolonged process. He insisted that anyone could receive “this day or this night.”³⁸ He expected that the properly prepared seeker should have “no trouble in receiving the Pentecostal baptism.”³⁹ He commented, “You do not have to strain your mind in order to receive the Holy Ghost, but just believe the Word of Jesus and the Lord pours the Holy Ghost into your heart just as freely as you breathe.”⁴⁰ To some degree, the testimonies confirm this as 56% (45 of 80) received immediately or within the same day. Therefore, in Seymour’s understanding, Jesus’ command to tarry was seen more so as a command to follow the apostolic pattern than it was a statement of how long one must wait before the fullness of the Spirit was available.

³⁶ For example, “Pentecost in Washington,” *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4, records the testimony of Mrs. K.E. Andrews who “after tarrying six days I received the same enduement or power that Jesus promised to His disciples.”

³⁷ “Bro. Ryan Receives His Pentecost,” *AF* 1.3 (Nov, 1906), 3.

³⁸ “Tarry in One Accord,” *AF* 2.13 (May, 1908), 3.

³⁹ William J. Seymour, “The Baptism with the Holy Ghost,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7.

⁴⁰ *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), 1.

It is interesting to note that the percentage of people who received quickly was higher during the first year of the revival. From September to December of 1906, 86% of the testimonies (18 of 21) claimed to have received the Spirit either immediately or in the first few days.⁴¹ Consequently, for much of the first year of the paper (1906), there were few admonitions from Seymour to encourage those who were "still waiting." It wasn't until mid-1907 that Seymour began to address those who were experiencing a prolonged season of tarrying.⁴² Seymour even wrote to "those still seeking" to see Jesus' command to tarry as a call to endure as long as it takes.⁴³ In addition to admonitions for believers to endure, in 1907 and 1908 the paper also focused more on providing instructions for those still waiting than individual testimonies of those who have received. Although it is hard to say with certainty, this could suggest that as time went on the instances of immediate receiving were waning and the number of people who were still in the process of seeking were increasing.⁴⁴

WHERE SHALL THEY TARRY?

The Azusa Street Mission was arguably the nexus of the greatest revival in modern history. Seekers were known to come from hundreds or even thousands of miles

⁴¹ The three exceptions were testimonies by three Holiness ministers. Each had prolonged experiences that they described as frustrating. All the rest were within days of beginning their seeking of baptism and most were immediate.

⁴² William J. Seymour, "The Baptism with the Holy Ghost," *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7; *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), 1; W.J.S. "Letter to One Seeking the Holy Ghost," *AF* (Jun, 1907), 3.

⁴³ W.J.S. "Letter to One Seeking the Holy Ghost," *AF* (Jun, 1907), 3.

⁴⁴ This is seen as the September 1906 and October 1906 contained far fewer individual testimonies. Reports were given of various revivals, but I recorded no personal testimonies by individuals giving details about the length of time they sought the baptism in the Spirit in either of these issues. Since there are no copies of November and December available, it is unclear if this pattern continued.

to seek for the baptism in the Holy Ghost.⁴⁵ One might assume that the revival at the Azusa Street Mission made it easier for individuals to be filled with the Spirit, but the testimonies may suggest otherwise. Of the 80 testimonies in the *Apostolic Faith*, less than half (35) were from Seymour’s Mission. Of these Azusa testimonies, 74% received in a week or less of seeking, which is 3% less than the average for the entire sample (77%). This suggests that visiting the Azusa Street Revival did not necessarily increase their likelihood of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit without prolonged tarrying. They were just as likely, if not more, to receive the baptism at another Pentecostal mission. This reality was not a surprise to Seymour, who believed what was happening at the mission was only a small part of what God was doing around the world.⁴⁶ He believed that anyone, anywhere could receive the baptism in the Spirit if “two or three are gathered in His name and pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁷

As for the specific environment, the stories of where people received highly varied. A preacher from Minneapolis reported, “Most of those who received the baptism in the Spirit are prostrated on the floor. Some received it while sitting in a chair or standing on their feet.”⁴⁸ One “very old sister“ simply walked into the Azusa Mission and began to shake hands with the saints when “the power fell on her and she was baptized

⁴⁵ “What Pentecost Did for One Family,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7, tells the story of R.J. Scott who “traveled 3,200 miles to Azusa with his family” because they were hungry for God. Cf. “Came 3,000 Miles for His Pentecost” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 3.

⁴⁶ *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), 3, notes, “Azusa Mission is not the head of this movement; we are a body of missions with Christ as the Head. All glory to God.”

⁴⁷ “Tarry in One Accord,” *AF* 2.13 (May, 1908), 3.

⁴⁸ “In the Last Day,” *AF* 1.9 (Jun, 1907), 1.

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with the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁹ However, a number of testimonies indicated that reception was not limited to Pentecostal services at all. Seymour notes, “People receive the baptism with the Holy Ghost while about their work. One sister in Whittler received hers while she was baking a cake.”⁵⁰ One sister received while going about doing “domestic work” at her home.⁵¹ Bro. Otto Braulin of Minneapolis received his Pentecost while “reading the paper.”⁵² Bro. Hebden received his Pentecost one morning while quietly meditating on the Word of the Lord and “not thinking of the baptism.”⁵³ And one received the baptism with the Holy Ghost “on Santa Fe train running forty miles an hour, and ten more after him received the same gift.”⁵⁴

While location did not seem to be a significant factor in Pentecostal reception of the Spirit, there is some evidence that the time of day was a factor as over 77% of those that mention the time of day reported receiving the baptism at night.⁵⁵ However, these

⁴⁹ “Hundreds Baptized in the South,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 3.

⁵⁰ *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 1.

⁵¹ *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), 1.

⁵² “Baptized in Minneapolis,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 4.

⁵³ “Pentecost in Toronto,” *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4.

⁵⁴ *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 1.

⁵⁵ *AF* 1.2 (Oct, 1906), 1; “New Tongued Missionaries for Africa,” *AF* 1.3 (Nov, 1906), 3; *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 3; “Baptized in Minneapolis,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 4; “San Francisco and Oakland,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 4; “Speeding to Foreign Lands,” *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 3; “A Businessman’s Testimony of Pentecost,” *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4; “Pentecost Falling, in San Francisco,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 2; “Pentecost in the Middle States,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 3; “Pentecostal Testimonies,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 8; “Pentecost in San Francisco,” *AF* 1.7 (Apr, 1907), 4. *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), 1; “Testimonies,” *AF* 2.13 (May, 1908), 1.

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numbers could be misleading, considering that these Pentecostal missions often had multiple services per week, most of which were in the evening.⁵⁶

WHO SHALL TARRY?

The greatest variable in the amount of time spent tarrying was ordinal in nature, referring to the type of person who was seeking the Pentecostal experience.⁵⁷ The subjects in these testimonies self-identified based on three classifications: 18 unsaved/unbelievers, 12 pastors/ministers, and 50 other undesignated believers. Of these three groups, unbelievers and “back sliders” seemed to be the least likely to have to “tarry” before they received the baptism. Of the eighteen testimonies by unbelievers, 77% received on the same day and all but one (94.4%) received in less than a week.⁵⁸ Unbelievers also had a fairly uniform experience in that all but one testified to progressing through the three distinctive stages of salvation, sanctification, and baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹ The uniformity of these testimonies are likely due to Seymour’s

⁵⁶ For example *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4., records that in Toronto there was a Monday Bible study, all day Wednesday prayer meeting, Friday healing service, Sunday morning, Sunday evening. The Azusa Street Mission held services seven days a week and three times a day. Robeck, *Azusa Street Mission & Revival*, 135-136.

⁵⁷ Cartledge, *Charismatic Glossalalia*, 132.

⁵⁸ The sole testimony of over a week was of a businessman who “wandered into a meeting” and was saved. This businessman’s prolonged time of tarrying, sixty days, was consistent with his other experiences, which included over a month and a half of seeking sanctification. “A Businessman’s Testimony of Pentecost,” *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4.

⁵⁹ *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), 4, records the testimony of a sick woman who came in for healing and in within “about half an hour” was baptized in the Spirit. Nora Wilcox, “In Denver, Colo.” *AF* 1.8 (May, 1907), 1, tells of a demonized woman who was saved, sanctified, and Spirit-baptized in “inside an hour.” “Pentecost in New York,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 4, records that a paralyzed man in New York was “reclaimed,” sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost in “thirty minutes.” “Testimonies,” *AF* 2.13 (May, 1908), 1, tells of a burglar who wandered into a service and was saved, sanctified, was water-baptized in the ocean and the same afternoon was baptized in the Holy Spirit

conviction that believers must progress through the proper order of Pentecostal experiences.⁶⁰

The second group, those simply identified as already saved and/or sanctified, occupied the majority of testimonies (62%). Of these fifty testimonies, 76% tarried under a week for their baptism and 48% received either immediately or the same day. Although the majority received in under a week, there were 24% who had to tarry for an extended time and gave reasons for the delay. For some, it was spiritual opposition that prevented them from receiving. For example, Arthur B. Shepherd, who waited "weeks" to be filled, commented, "Satan seemed to exhaust his resources in opposing me, and the weeks of waiting were tedious in the extreme."⁶¹ Levi Upton attributed his nine days of waiting as "some of the darkest conflict with the devil that I ever experienced."⁶² Still others, while a small number (10%), recognized that the issue rested with their own posture sin issues. One sister had to get alone in her room and pray until she got "the idols out" of her heart.⁶³ Myrtle K. Shideler struggled because "pride was not all out of my heart."⁶⁴ However, most of those who had sin issues also resolved them and received the very same day.

⁶⁰ "Praying for the Holy Ghost," *AF* 1.2 (Oct, 1906), 3; William J. Seymour, "The Baptism with the Holy Ghost," *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7.

⁶¹ "Pentecostal Testimonies," *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 8.

⁶² "Holiness Bible School Leader Receives Pentecost," *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 5.

⁶³ "Testimonies," *AF* 2.13 (May, 1908), p. 1.

⁶⁴ "Received Her Pentecost," *AF* 1.5 (Jan, 1907), p. 3.

The group of individuals who had to tarry most often were those who identified as ministers. Of the 12 minister testimonies, only 58% received in under a week compared to the 77% of the entire sample. This is interesting because one might assume that ministers who accepted the doctrine would have the least hindrances to receiving. However, a minister's prior doctrinal belief, especially coming from the Holiness tradition, seemed to be a factor that led to prolonged amount of time tarrying. As a Spirit-filled Nazarene pastor noted, "To get a fellow that has been preaching twenty years to see that he has not received the baptism, when he has been preaching all the time that he had it, and then to get him to turn seeker, is a hard job."⁶⁵ In fact, several Holiness preachers who were unconvinced that the baptism in the Spirit was a separate experience came to the Azusa Mission as a skeptic.⁶⁶ For example, Glen A. Cook originally came to Azusa Mission to condemn the movement, only Cook was quickly convinced and later testified it took five weeks to lay down his "pre-conceived ideas and teaching and became absolutely empty."⁶⁷ For Cook, each of his experiences in those five weeks had the potential of bringing him to the fullness, but he had to fight through his hesitance. He explains, "I believe I would have spoken in tongues then, if I had remained in the hands of the Lord long enough." Cook's experience suggest that for some ministers, the internal doctrinal struggles added to the length of their tarrying experience, perhaps directly in relation to breaking through to speak in tongues. This may also be an issue for William

⁶⁵ *AF* 1.2 (Oct, 1906), 1.

⁶⁶ Robeck, *Azusa Street Mission*, 90-92.

⁶⁷ G.A. Cook, "Receiving the Holy Ghost," *AF* 1.3 (Nov, 1906), 2.

Daniel D. Isgrigg, “How Long Shall We Tarry?”

H. Durham, who sought for over two weeks at the Azusa Mission before he received, perhaps because of his own internal struggle with the holiness sanctification doctrine.⁶⁸

Despite this increased length of tarrying among ministers, there were several notable leaders of the early Pentecostal movement who received with little or no tarrying. For example, when J.H. King heard about the baptism in the Holy Spirit from G.B. Cashwell, he searched the Scriptures for two days and on the third day he received his Pentecost.⁶⁹ Similarly, A.J. Tomlinson heard about the baptism from Cashwell in an evening meeting and the very next Sunday he received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.⁷⁰ This was also true of both William Seymour and Charles H. Mason, who also preached and led others into the baptism before they themselves received. William Seymour began holding cottage meetings after arriving in Los Angeles in April 1906 and almost immediately people began to receive the baptism but Seymour himself did not receive until three days later.⁷¹ C.H. Mason had already been preaching the baptism in the Spirit to his people, but upon arriving at Azusa Street Mission he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the first meeting he attended.⁷²

⁶⁸ “A Chicago Evangelist’s Pentecost,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 4. Durham initially reported here that he had received sanctification and then was filled with the Holy Spirit. But later he contradicted this testimony claiming ‘I had never believed that sanctification and baptism in the Holy Spirit were one and the same thing’. *Pentecostal Testimony* 2.1 (Jan 1912), p. 4. This reversal was instrumental in the finished work controversy with Seymour in 1912.

⁶⁹ Jacobsen (ed.), *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology*, 111.

⁷⁰ A.J. Tomlinson, “The Work at Cleveland, Tenn.,” *Bridegrooms Messenger* 1.7 (February 1, 1908), 4.

⁷¹ “Pentecost with Signs Following,” *AF* 1.4 (Dec, 1906), 1; Gaston Espinoza, *William Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism*, 55.

⁷² C.H. Mason, “Tennessee Evangelist Witnesses,” *AF* 1.6 (Feb/Mar, 1907), 7. The details are a bit unclear in this testimony but he insinuated that he received during his first meeting. He notes, “As I arose from the altar and took my seat, I fixed my eyes on Jesus, and the Holy Ghost took charge of me. I

CONCLUSION

Having looked at the history of the reception of the baptism in the Spirit found in the *Apostolic Faith*, a number of conclusions can be drawn. First, early Pentecostals received Jesus’ command to “tarry” as an invitation to pursue the baptism in the Spirit rather than a statement about the duration of time required before one could receive. Although the practice of tarrying was fully embraced, in general they believed that the Spirit was immediately available to seekers. This interpretation was confirmed in that 77% of seekers had a relatively short period of waiting, having received within a week of their initial seeking experience. The other 23% had to tarry longer than others, but only 10% of the sample tarried three weeks or more. This suggests that for most early Pentecostals, tarrying was not a prolonged experience.

Second, the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was essential to the concept of tarrying because it was the necessary signal that the tarrying process was complete. No matter how powerful one’s experience with the Spirit, seekers were encouraged to continue to tarry until they had received the “Bible evidence.” On the one hand, this was a great comfort because it confirmed the Spirit’s presence in those who received. But for those who had prolonged experiences, the lack of ability to speak in tongues led to discouragement and even became a hindrance. The ability to be a seeker without getting preoccupied with glossolalia proved a challenge. In these cases, a change in location from the altar to another less public context often eased the anxiety and allowed the

surrendered perfectly to Him and consented to Him. Then I began singing a song in unknown tongues, and it was the sweetest thing.”

seeker to receive more easily. This suggests that for some, revivalistic environments may actually hinder reception.

Third, this study points out that early Pentecostals did not see sin as a major hindrance to receiving. Only a small number identified particular issues, mostly pride and unbelief, before they could receive the baptism. But for the majority, there was seemingly no fault in the seeker for the prolonged process. However, prior doctrinal belief and pride was a significant factor, especially for ministers. The fact that ministers seemed to have the most difficulty receiving, while unbelievers seemed to walk seamlessly through the *via salutis* into an immediate Spirit baptism experience demonstrates that prior beliefs and expectations were at some level obstacles to receiving the Spirit immediately. For many ministers, there were internal conflicts over accepting the truth that they had not already “received the Spirit.” This reality would undoubtedly require humility for ministers to admit that they were outside the company of the initiated. This was certainly true of Brother Rosa who said, “I was too proud as a minister of the Gospel to humble myself in a lowly mission and let ladies pray over me for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and I had in my mind what people would think of me.”⁷³ I believe this point is informative to the minister and layman alike. Whatever hunger there may be for experiences with God, they must be accompanied by humility.

Perhaps the most instructive element of this study was that despite the effectiveness of the Azusa Street Mission in introducing the world to the Pentecostal experience, those who attended the services at the revival were not necessarily at a

⁷³ *AF* 1.2 (Oct, 1906), p. 1.

significant advantage to receiving the baptism in the Spirit. The percentage of those who received immediately or the same day outside Azusa was similar as those inside. This suggests that the true power of the tarrying meetings for early Pentecostals was not the hallowed location or how long they waited, it was the hunger engendered within a supportive communal environment.⁷⁴ This should be instructive to Pentecostals in this day when tarrying services have become uncommon in Pentecostal churches.⁷⁵ As Margaret Poloma has documented, only a small percentage of believers today receive the baptism in the Spirit outside of communal experiences.⁷⁶ The reason, pointed out by Poloma, is that in order for “non-glossolalics” to become initiated into the Spirit-filled life, they must be exposed to atmospheres in which there is a communal practice of glossolalia and the encouragement for believers to seek the baptism. This is what the Azusa Street Mission and all the other missions provided for believers. I would ultimately conclude that the practice of tarrying for the baptism in the Holy Spirit is just as needed today as it was a century ago, not because it is a prolonged process, but because there is always a new generation that needs the encouragement and spaces to seek a Pentecost of their own.

⁷⁴ William W. Menzies and Robert W. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 23, comment, “Believers seeking the baptism in the Spirit were brought into ‘tarrying meetings’ where a cluster of Spirit-baptized believers would gather around the candidate, furnishing a supportive context in which the individual could seek God for the blessing.”

⁷⁵ Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 40-42.

⁷⁶ Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 191, documents that in her congregational sample, only 20% of those in the congregation had received the Spirit while alone. She also notes that the vast majority of these experiences were at emotionally and spiritually charged environments such as altar services, revivals or camp services (41).