



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

HENRY CLAY MORRISON

(Methodist)

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH of HENRY CLAY MORRISON, D. D.

by C. F. Wimberly

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HIS PENTECOST

The birth of a baby boy in poverty and obscurity has sometimes changed the world's map and history. The humble Babe in the manger marked the beginning of a New Era. When William Booth caught a vision of the "submerged masses" the Salvation Army came into existence. When Dr. A. J. Gordon dreamed that Christ attended one of his services one day, the popular, satisfied, cultured pastor became a flame of holy evangelism and missionary zeal. Valentine Burk, the jailbird and bank robber, with his picture in every rogue's gallery in America, read a sermon from Mr. Moody in a daily paper which was tossed to him through the bars of the prison, and a new life was born, one that made its impression upon the entire city of St. Louis.

"When the day of Pentecost was fully come," and the Holy Fire fell upon the one hundred and twenty in the Upper Room, the church of the New Dispensation was born. The Epiphany of the Holy Ghost transformed a little band of trembling, cowardly, unsophisticated peasants and fishermen into a company of heroes – loving their lives not unto death – and turned the world upside down.

At this period of his life we see Henry Clay Morrison, a popular young pulpit orator – his reputation reaching out into an ever widening circle, proud, dressy, ambitious, and with it all, religious – and a lover of men. Each year from the time of his readmission to Conference, committees from larger churches "pulled" for him to be their pastor. Here we have the program: Eleventh Street, Covington, Highlands, Danville, Frankfort, etc., each one a promotion. We find him "making good," with crowded houses waiting upon his ministry, calls coming from the largest churches of the Conference, and unusual revivals being held under his leadership in these same large churches. An ideal situation surely – lacking nothing from a human viewpoint. But through it all there were times of sore heart-hunger, an impetuous temper, a lack of peace and abiding power. At times there was in Henry Morrison a soul-reach – a cry – of which he barely, if at all, knew the meaning.

One man alone in the Kentucky Conference professed entire sanctification – Rev. W. B. Godbey, D. D. Some agitation was in progress over the subject of the "higher life." A noted evangelist named Barnes was preaching within the bounds of the Kentucky Conference, and put much stress upon it. But he was such a mixture of predestination, free grace, final perseverance, universal salvation, that a great part of his ministry was lost upon the minds of the stronger men – especially those with training in Arminian

theology. Because of these adulterations they could not endorse Barnes. Yet he was truly a sanctified man, but finally landed in the camp of Alexander Dowie. Henry Morrison rejected both him and his message utterly. John S. Keen, of the Louisville Conference, and a most remarkable man, became an exponent of sanctification, and several members of the Kentucky Conference professed the experience. One of them, Rev. H. B. Cockrill, was closely associated with Morrison – became deeply interested, and finally came into the Pentecostal blessing and published his experience in the church papers.

These facts, together with a hungry heart, gradually accumulated about this great “Depositum,” until it took possession of Henry Morrison.

It reached a climax during his pastorate in the Highlands, -that beautiful residence section above Cincinnati, on the Kentucky side of the Ohio river. Rev. J. H. Young was assisting him in a revival meeting. They were dining out one day when a letter came from his friend, Cockrill, telling him that he had received his Pentecost. The vision of the whole truth came to him then and there. He saw the doctrine, and that it was for him. The thought almost overwhelmed him. Excusing himself at the close of the meal, he started for his room, expecting, when alone, to be sanctified wholly. He stopped and prayed with several families, however, before reaching his room. Dr. Young passed by him while he was in some home and reached the room ahead of him, much to his disappointment – as he wanted to be alone.

Dr. Young was anxious to close the meeting, saying there was going to be no revival. *“No, Young,” exclaimed Morrison, “the meeting must go on; the power of God is all over this hill – the power of God is in this room right now.” The Holy Ghost fell on him, and he became as one dead, falling back upon a divan. Dr. Young, greatly alarmed, caught him in his arms and tried to arouse him. “I could hear all he said, but had no power to answer,” Dr. Morrison tells us. “Some seconds must have passed. Just as I seemed to come to myself and recover the use of my limbs a great ball of liquid fire, the size of a large ball seemed to descend and strike me in the face, then dissolve and enter into me. I leaped and shouted aloud, ‘Glory to God.’ Dr. Young shouted: ‘Morrison, what do you mean? -- I thought you were dying.’ ‘I have done nothing,’ I replied, ‘the Lord did it.’ I arose and walked the floor shouting and feeling as light as a feather. My first impulse was to tell all my friends just what had happened. But a strong impression also came to me not to tell them for fear of seeming boastfulness and giving offense. Something also suggested that ‘you should not profess – but live holiness.’ This trick of Satan scored a victory, although for some time there was an unusual peace and unction attended my preaching; notwithstanding, it was not long before the blessing was gone.”* However, this event was an epoch-making event in the life of this great preacher, but as yet he had not paid down the full price. He came to Kadesh Barnea, and had entered in, but lacked instruction, and gradually drifted back into the wilderness. Like the children of Israel in the long ago, he must again wander in confusion and suffering before he reached the banks of Jordan.

At the following Conference he was stationed at Danville, Ky., one of the most cultured and delightful little cities in the state. Calls began to come in faster, and from a wider range, until it seemed that the Lord was drawing him out into the field of evangelism. Sufficient influence was, however, brought to bear upon him to keep him three years longer in the pastorate. Those were wonderfully fruitful years. Danville, where he stayed one of them, then Frankfort, were both strategic points for Kentucky Methodism. During the year at Danville he tells us that the Spirit often spoke to him about the lost blessing, and put an impelling power upon him to seek anew the lost territory. *“One night in October,” he says, “I awoke with a great sense of fear – it was two o’clock, the town clock was just striking – and felt that I must get up at once and pray. I leaped out of bed and began to beg Christ to help me; He seemed to deal with me very positively; He impressed me with His great patience and forbearance, bore in upon my consciousness that I must cut loose from some things to which I seemed to be clinging almost unconsciously and enter into a closer and a more faithful relationship with Him, or there must*

be a final separation.”

The struggle lasted fifteen days; it was a time of mental suffering, fasting, and prayer. Yet this terrible experience had intermittent seasons of hope and comfort; the Lord blessed his preaching during the period with an unusual degree of unction; but the battle would be renewed as soon as he stepped down out of the pulpit. “I was,” he says, “in an awful school; it would hardly be lawful for me to go into details and tell what the Lord revealed to me of the nature of sin, and the hatefulness of it. He so withdrew all comfort from me and all witness of acceptance, that I had a foretaste of what it would be to be separated from Him forever. In addition Satan buffeted, ridiculed, taunted, and tempted me almost beyond endurance.”

The situation became almost unbearable, whereupon advice and counsel were sought from a Presbyterian preacher, Dr. McKee, a professor of theology, then living in Danville. This pious, scholarly gentleman gave him much comfort in these words: “My young brother, the Lord has not forsaken you, but is leading you into what Mr. Wesley called ‘Christian Perfection,’ the Baptists call it ‘rest of faith,’ the Presbyterians call it the ‘higher life,’ or the ‘fulness of the Spirit.’” “He also stated that he had received the same experience when a young pastor in Louisville. No seeker of full salvation has a harder death to die than the young preacher with gifts, graces, and a reasonable ambition. This class of seekers must literally die out to the future – of place and promotions; he must go forth unto Him bearing His reproach.

On the last day of this soul-struggle Henry Morrison had to be assisted in walking from the public square to his room from loss of sleep, fasting, etc., physical strength had been exhausted. When he reached the front porch the preacher fainted; his sleek, plug hat tumbled off and bounced about on the floor. Twice more during the day he became unconscious. *At last the flood-gates broke in upon his soul and the Blessing returned.* But owing to a lack of instruction, and dreading the consequences of telling his cultured, fastidious congregation that God had sanctified him, the blessed assurance departed from him the second time. This meant many more days and nights of bitter struggle before he became rooted and grounded in the faith. Oh, how Satan bluffs, tempts, and hinders a soul seeking to be free!

Henry Morrison, however, became fully rooted and grounded in this Great Depositum of Methodism, as many parts of the world has found out. It was this soul revolution which cast out, and cast off, all social and ecclesiastical autocracy; it marked the Independence Day of this chosen vessel; it was the crossing-over day of Jordan into the Canaan of peace, joy, persecution – and Power. The door was effectually opened, but there were many adversaries. Once Morrison became established, faces of clay, social and religious preferment, the tongue of criticism and ridicule were unable to move him. The needle was never truer to the pole than he has been to this great truth, and as a result, for every door that was closed through prejudice and misunderstanding, God has opened for him hundreds of others; so that his lines have gone out into all the earth declaring to rich and poor, high and low, in cathedrals and brush-arbors, conferences and camp meetings, that God can save and sanctify the soul of every believer, through the merits of Jesus’ Blood – all men, everywhere.

The story of Henry Morrison’s Pentecost is, in a general way, known to all. His light has been set upon a hill, and by it many thousands have been guided into the best things of life and salvation. Multitudes will praise God in that Morning Land, that he sought and obtained his Pentecost. (some of his excellent work is to be found on the “Entry Directions” page.)

Dr. Henry Clay Morrison was born March 10, 1857. He is to be remembered as the editor of the Pentecostal Herald, and as the brilliant leader of Asbury College, no less than as one of the most eloquent preachers ever to stand on an American platform. William Jennings Bryan was introduced by

Dr. Morrison during the career of this brilliant and eloquent figure; and when he arose to speak, the great statesman, doubtless the most eloquent man in America since the days of Daniel Webster, said, "I look upon Henry Clay Morrison as the most eloquent preacher of our nation."

Dr. Morrison relates how as a boy he was converted in 1870 under the ministry of Rev. James Phillips, at the local Kentucky church where the Morrisons attended. On that memorable occasion, Dr. Morrison says, after striking the Rock of Redemption at the Methodist altar, "My whole heart was aglow with love. I leaped for joy." Writing years after the event, he goes on to say: "Many years of conflict have passed away since that glad night, but sitting here in the silent room, by the smoldering fire in the grate, the memory of the incidents of that happy hour are as clear and fresh in my mind as if they had occurred only last week. It seems as if I can almost see the bright faces which smiled upon me that evening, and almost hear the songs. I thank God I still have the peace He gave me then." Some six years after his conversion, he attended Vanderbilt University, and on returning home was licensed to preach. Gifted with a brilliant mind as well as a silver tongue, Dr. Morrison found success easily attained. Great congregations filled his churches to overflowing. God gave him souls. All the while, in his heart there was the constant battle with the carnal mind. He says:

"As time passed, my zeal somewhat abated and I frequently fell into sin, but repented as soon as I became conscious of wrongdoing, and would not cease to pray until restored to the favor of my Lord. I frequently indulged in levity to such excesses that I suffered sorrow and shame in my heart, weeping and praying for forgiveness and grace to control both my evil temper and my disposition to levity, but made poor headway."

Writing of the successes which followed his pastoral and evangelistic activities in the early periods of his ministry, he said: "But at that very time there were secret thoughts and imaginations hidden away in my heart which I should have blushed with shame to have my most intimate friends know. And though I think I went for many months, possibly years, without bitter anger, I had locked in me a volcano of temper which would leap into a consuming flame in a moment if I thought anyone proposed to tamper with what I thought my sacred, personal right ... Not that I was guilty of gross sin, but there were lapses and inconsistencies. When I would do good, evil was present with me. My heart was in my work, but there was uncleanness in my heart. While the regenerating grace of God enabled me to hold under restraint the evil that worked within, the seeds of it were there and could only be kept from springing into lengthy and ruinous growth by watchfulness and prayer."

At this time, he met a minister by name of Cockrill, who was seeking for, and later obtained, the glorious experience of entire sanctification. On receiving a letter from Rev. Cockrill, Dr. Morrison excused himself from the evangelist who was working with him at the time and read the letter. *"As I read it, the scales fell from my eyes. My mind fully grasped the doctrine of instantaneous sanctification. I saw it was for me and wept for joy. I said, 'It is God's will. It is His Word. Now is the time and my whole heart desires it and it will now be done.' At that instant, the Holy Ghost and Fire fell upon me. I fell over on the divan utterly helpless. It seemed as though a great hand had taken hold upon my heart and was pulling it out of my body. Several moments must have passed when it seemed to me as if a ball of fire fell upon my head, upon my face; the sensation of my heart ceased and, I cried out, 'Glory to God!'"*

Dr. Young, the evangelist who was assisting him in a meeting, was present in the room at the time, and when he asked what had happened, Dr. Morrison said: "It is the Lord working with me. I have received my Pentecost." Dr. Young warned, "Say nothing about it, but live such a consistent devout life that you will impress people you are filled with the Spirit."

Dr. Morrison followed that advice, but he relates how "it was the mistake of my life". It was ignorance on my part, but I paid dearly for it. Within three months, the new power that had come into my life had

gradually leaked out, and I became painfully conscious of a great loss. After some seeking and neglecting, I set myself to recover the experience or die in the attempt.” For fifteen days and nights he fasted and called upon God. During the time, he became so weak that he fainted three times in one day. The doctor pronounced his trouble to be nervous prostration and prescribed this and that. “I kept my secret and struggled on,” said Dr. Morrison. The Spirit gave me a view of the corruption in the human heart and a conception of the wickedness of sin I had never known before.”

Great success marked the young minister, and after a brilliant pastorate he resigned and devoted his time to evangelistic labors. But for three years he struggled with this battle within his inner nature, which somehow or another kept him from enjoying full salvation, or the blessing of entire sanctification. During this time, he prayed and labored to the best of his ability, and came under the influence of the holiness movement.

“I entered the evangelistic work and began the publishing of a holiness paper with my mind fully made up to devote my life to the spreading of the doctrine of full salvation. I was a seeker, and urged others to seek for instantaneous sanctification. Some were wholly sanctified at almost every meeting I held. I rejoiced with them and pressed on. I was now fully awake to the importance of testimony and willing to speak, *if only my heart would again feel the full assurance of perfect love.*”

At the time, he was conducting a revival meeting in a large city church, when he visited Mrs. Anna M. Kirk of Columbus, Ohio, a saint of God who years earlier had been sanctified, and whose testimony to the grace of God was clear and definite. Dr. Morrison had but a few moments to spend with this gracious lady. As he started to leave the house for the station to catch his train for the revival, *Mrs. Kirk literally stood in the door and would not let him out until he sought and obtained the blessing of full salvation. They knelt in that parlor of the Columbus home, Dr. Morrison fully consecrating himself, Mrs. Kirk praying the glory of God upon his soul, and finally the power of God fell upon his heart.*

“There was a great peace in my own heart. A delightful calm settled upon my spiritual being. I searched for sin and found none. All appeared white within. There was no ecstasy, but a sense of purity. And with this feeling I arose later and said in my church: I want to testify that the blood of Jesus Christ sanctifies my heart from all sin.”

Writing of that event in 1904, the doctor said: “something more than a decade of years has passed away since I was enabled to proclaim the great transaction done, and by His grace I feel I am rooted and grounded in this precious truth.”

Dr. Morrison became one of the greatest holiness preachers and leaders of all time, but he almost missed it by grieving the Holy Ghost away, in failing to testify to the experience. The Bible says: “And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, *and by the word of their testimony*; and they loved not their life to the death.” Rev. 12:11

Source: Author Unknown

[The Enter His Rest website](#)