

Thomas Myerscough (1858-1932)

by Keith Malcomson

Thomas Myerscough was a pioneering figure in the early days of the Pentecostal movement, whose labour in the purpose of God had a lasting impact on the spread of Christianity.

Scripture: Proverbs 2:3, Proverbs 16:3, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12:4, Ephesians 4:11, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "Pentecostal History", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Keith Malcomson reflects on the forgotten Pentecostal pioneer, Thomas Myerscough, highlighting his strategic labor in God's purpose, his journey of seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and his significant impact on the early Pentecostal movement through Bible teaching and leadership. Myerscough's dedication to studying the Scriptures, leading to the establishment of a Pentecostal center in Preston and a thriving church, showcases the power of deep searching of the Word and strong Bible teaching in building a spiritual community. His role in forming the Assemblies of God of Great Britain and Ireland and his contributions to hymnals and Pentecostal conventions demonstrate his wisdom, leadership, and commitment to spreading the Gospel.

Transcript

Of all the Pentecostal Pioneers I think Thomas Myerscough is the most forgotten. His labour in the purpose of God was strategic, timely and providential. There is basically nothing written about him, I pray God will yet move someone's heart to rectify that and to give him his rightful place amongst our pioneers. As yet I have found little about his birth, upbringing and conversion apart from that he was born in 1858 and in 1874 at the age of 16 was saved. It would be interesting to see who influenced this man who influenced so many others.

He was leader of a small group of believers called the Preston Evangelistic Association drawn from several churches in Preston who met almost every evening for Bible study and outreach. Among these young men were W.F.P.Burton, James Salter and Edmund Hodgson. Early in 1908 upon hearing of new Pentecostal manifestation's and after reading Dr. A.T. Pierson about it, he was "dead set" against it. A brother who he was challenging about these Pentecostal manifestations asked him "Have you examined the Word of God for yourselves without prejudice?" he had to admit he had not.

So along with his fellow students they carefully searched the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation for the next nine months to see if this thing was of the Lord. Nightly they met together to investigate the

operations of the Spirit in Gods Word, with a strong cry to God for His power. Being thus convinced, Myerscough was led to attend the meetings at Sunderland in 1909 where he received his baptism in the Holy Ghost. His outstanding qualities as a Bible scholar and teacher led to the official Bible School of the Pentecostal Missionary Union (PMU) being placed in his care at Preston.

Some of the students at this school were Willie Burton, George Jeffreys, Robert Darragh and E.J.Philips. Young men came from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales to sit at his feet and be taught. "It is doubtful whether any school has ever had a group of students who have achieved so much in view of the short time that they were in Bible School." The success of this school was greater than any other during this early period. From here were sent out the future leaders of the Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM) and the leaders of the Elim Alliance movement, who reached multitudes of souls and raised up thousands of churches at home and abroad. He continued with the PMU until his resignation in 1913 when the School moved to London. No doubt the doctrinal differences of infant baptism held to by Boddy and Polhill had a lot to do with this change.

As a result of this Pentecostal outpouring Donald Gee said "a Pentecostal centre was established in Preston that has been second to none, perhaps in all the world, for its far-reaching fruitfulness to the glory of God." First, by being a mission centre as seen above. Second, for the establishing of one of the first Pentecostal churches that was truly an example of what Scripture taught. Myerscough was a local estate agent highly respected in the business world and had no thought of starting a church. But these young believers who were receiving the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues were most often rejected and pushed out of their own churches. The group that formed in 1911 first called itself a Pentecostal mission. They met in the centre of Preston in a large upper room which was reached via "a dingy stairway of 45 steps." Their meetings were truly Pentecostal with the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost a normal part. This work was initially raised up out of deep searching's of Scripture and strong Bible teaching. It continued and grew with the same. Throughout these early years the church had three Bible studies a week, often lasting two hours and was the means of making it a training centre to prepare these believers. Again it was normal for meetings to continue late into the night.

By the early 20's this upper room was overflowing down the steps so they bought a plot of land and built a new church in 1923. Within the first two years in it, about 300 hundred people had been baptised in water. Every week an open-air meeting was held in Preston central open market where young zealous preachers who were feeling the call of God could break their teeth in first attempts of preaching. This has always been the means of training up new preachers in every generation. Great crowds would gather to listen and often hecklers would contend.

The third great mark was the Annual Easter Convention. The Upper room of Preston was visited by many leading preachers from various different countries at its weekly meetings as well as its conventions. The Convention started in 1920. It was normal for Wigglesworth to convene this Convention each year until 1948, due to the close bond of friendship he had with Myerscough. It would start on Good Friday and last until Easter Monday with three meetings a day and two preachers speaking at each meeting. Several missionaries and preachers would sit on the platform amidst a gathered crowd of 500. Myerscough would sit on the platform and lead the singing at his famed "billhorn" portable organ. He played under the unction of the Holy Ghost as the gathered host would sing with the understanding and in the Spirit. Across the wall was a great banner with the words "Not Your Own, His." The highlight of the Convention was Easter Monday which was set aside as a missions day. Burton's CEM played an important role at these meetings. Great challenges would be made to give to the mission and to go to the mission field. A special

call would always go to the young to offer them selves for missionary service and at this last service people would fill the altars with hands being laid on. As years passed the convention went from strength to strength drawing thousands of believers together causing it to be held in increasingly bigger buildings.

After the war he was the only leader who instilled great confidence across the board amongst Pentecostals. Some felt he was the one to unite these new independent churches. He felt differently, yet he did play a key roll in 1924 in the formation of the Assemblies of God of Great Britain and Ireland. He then served on their commity where he was always seen as a man of mature wisdom who had a wise, careful, thoughtful and Scriptural word in season for each situation. In 1925 along with Gee and Thomas he compiled the first edition of The Redemption Tidings Hymn Book. He would often write articles for Elim's magazine, The Elim Evangel as well as teaching a summer school at their Bible School. Throughout the 20's he was often found ministering at some Pentecostal Convention in Britain. In 31 he accompanied Wigglesworth on a preaching tour of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. He served on the exectitive commity of the AOG until his death in 1932, at the age of 72, which happened during the Easter Convention. Over the years he played a vital role to PMU, CEM and AoG missions as secretary and treasurer. One of the last statements he had been heard to utter was "buy the truth". He was marked out by Donald Gee as an "outstanding expositor of the Holy Scriptures".

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