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## **An Unusual True Story of Courage, Strength and Conviction in the Days of American Slavery**

### **BORN THREE TIMES**

*The Memoirs of an African-American Missionary  
Who Finds True Liberation in Europe*

**by Thomas L. Johnson**

The story of the man who becomes rich is not uncommon. But it is rare to find the story of a man who rose from the very lowest rank in society, a member of a despised caste known as the chattel slave, to a position of renown, as a missionary, preacher and lecturer. **BORN THREE TIMES** (Bylany Press) is a truly inspiring narrative of human potential and capacity. Thomas Johnson depicts his life under slavery and his life as a free man. The great change in condition, from prisoner to world traveler, from an insignificant “nobody” to celebrated evangelist and speaker — all this seems to be fiction, but it is absolutely true. He describes his slow steps in education. Tasks which other people conquer in childhood, such as learning the alphabet, he must deal with as an adult. Scenes of life which are taken for granted by the free-born, are challenging and unnerving to those like Johnson who had lived in bondage.

Further, Johnson describes his many complex feelings about people and places. He tells us his thoughts about his former owners, about Southerners, about Northerners. He gives us insight into how other black slaves reacted to their bondage, their hopes, aspirations and dreams. In something that is rare in books of this kind, he also reveals the secret opinions he and other slaves had of their own and other cultures. England was considered the greatest nation in the world, because Queen Victoria had done so much to free slaves. The following was a common theme: “I tell you, there are only two places where a coloured man can get justice, that’s England and Heaven.”

Although he acknowledged that as a black his racial homeland was in Africa, he appears to have felt surprisingly limited resonance with the culture he encountered there during his missionary work. Johnson made what was at the time a very audacious decision, to move his family overseas to Britain. He believed his place was in England, a land with which he had absolutely no racial, ethnic or cultural affiliations. He makes clear his reason: the widespread prejudice and hatred in America, North and South, that existed against former slaves. Johnson thought that there would be less racism amongst people who had never tolerated slavery in their own country. One indeed detects in his writing a genuine warmth towards the inhabitants of his new home, an intangible feeling he cannot explain.

Thomas Johnson made great sacrifices in order to accomplish his life mission. He sought those situations where he could most efficiently use his talents, putting aside all other considerations. This is surely the most prominent and ongoing theme of his autobiography.

We have no other biographical information about Thomas L. Johnson, other than what is written in his autobiography. However, Johnson has done a splendid job in describing his life and experiences, giving us insight into how blacks looked at their plight, how they viewed America and the rest of the world. We know that he was born in 1836 in Virginia. His mother was black, and his father was of mixed race (an octoroon, i.e. one-eighth negro), but a free man. Under the peculiar laws of the time, a free man could marry a slave but the children would remain slaves. Johnson was freed by the Emancipation act, and went on to live in England, a place from which where he carried out remarkable missionary work in Africa. Although frequently in poor health, he was constantly speaking and traveling, bringing to others a unique message of hope

**BORN THREE TIMES** is a testament to human resolve and free will. Johnson not only broke the physical shackles holding him back, but also the mental restraints programmed or conditioned into him through years of subjugation. Ultimately, this is a book about liberation and rebirth. Johnson claims he was actually born three times: Born August 7th, 1836—a “Thing”. Born again (John iii. 7), June, 1857—a Child of God. Born into human liberty, April 3rd, 1865—a Free Man.

Paul Dennis Sporer (editor) is the author of *The Dimensions of Companionship; Liberating Love; The Concept of Family; and Equal but Different*. He has also served as editor on more than 30 culturally and historically significant books, including *Painting Explained*, by Thomas Gullick; *Is Secession Treason?*, by Albert Bledsoe; *The Heart of Aryavarta*, by Lawrence Dundas; *Beauty and Art*, by Aldam Heaton; *The French at Home*, by Albert Rhodes; *From Slave Cabin to Pulpit*, by Peter Randolph; *Newer Ideals of Peace*, by Jane Addams; *Views of Old Europe*, by Bayard Taylor; *Gentle Measures*, by Jacob Abbott; *Parental Influences*, William Bacon; *Finding a Way Out*, by Robert Moton; *The New Birth*, by Austin Phelps; *Tupelo*, by John Hill Aughey; *An Incident of Travel*, Arthur Jerome Eddy; *End of an Era*, by John Sergeant Wise; *The Missionary*, by Samuel Mazzuchelli; *Half a Century*, by Jane Swisshelm; *Born Three Times*, by Thomas L. Johnson; *Dark Hollow*, by Anna Katharine Green; and *1492: Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, by Mary Johnston.

For further information about **BORN THREE TIMES**, or to arrange an interview with the editor, Paul Dennis Sporer, please contact Cassandra Foxton, [inform\\_at\\_anzapublishing.com](mailto:inform_at_anzapublishing.com). The publisher's website address is [AnzaPublishing.com](http://AnzaPublishing.com).

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