

JOSEPH D. MCPHERSON

*Historical Support for Early Methodist Views of Water
and Spirit Baptism*

This paper is a product of the Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminar for 2011. This program at Asbury Theological Seminary, under the leadership of Dr. Kenneth Collins, provides Wesleyan scholars with a month long intensive opportunity for research, writing, and interacting with other Wesleyan scholars for the furthering of academic knowledge in fields of Wesleyan Studies.

Abstract

This paper explores the historical theological positions regarding water and Spirit Baptism in early Methodism and how these views diverged in the American Holiness Movement. Early Methodist teaching was more in line with Church history in associating water baptism with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. American Holiness teaching reduced the importance of water baptism to a symbolic act of repentance with a later outpouring of the Holy Spirit leading to entire sanctification.

Keywords: Holy Spirit, baptism, Methodist, Holiness Movement, theology

Joseph D. McPherson is a Methodist historian who has taught and researched in the field since 1961. He is the author of *“Our People Die Well” Glorious Accounts of Early Methodists at Death’s Door*.

Introduction

While the American Holiness Movement has often made claims of their adherence to Wesleyan theology, they have in reality moved away from John Wesley and early Methodist teaching in a number of significant ways.¹ One clear example is in their views of water and Spirit baptism.

The purpose of my paper is twofold. First, I will demonstrate the clear separation of the American Holiness understanding of water and Spirit baptism from that of John Wesley, his Methodist contemporaries and immediate heirs. Then, I will show how early Methodist teaching is grounded in historic Christianity, while the American Holiness view is not. Specifically, I will begin by stating early Methodist views of baptism, followed by a contrasting description of teaching found in the American Holiness Movement. Then I will provide an historical survey of the subject from the early church, Reformation and contemporary denominations with historical precedence, showing how early Methodist teaching is grounded in Christian consensus. Finally, I will conclude with a brief summary and comment.

I. Views of Early Methodists Concerning Water and Spirit Baptism

Early Methodist leaders considered Spirit baptism and the rite of water baptism as being essential to entrance into the Church of Christ. Water baptism was an outward and visible sign of that inward work of Spirit baptism otherwise described by St. Paul as “*the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*” (Titus 3:5).

By reviewing a sampling of the writings of John Wesley, John Fletcher, Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, Luther Lee and W. B. Pope concerning baptism, a fresh reminder of early Methodists’ theological stance on the subject can be found. The views of these early Methodist leaders provide a benchmark for a comparison between current and historical beliefs of the subject.

A. John Wesley (1703-91)

Before his ascension, Jesus promised His followers that they would “*be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence*” (Acts 1:5). “And so are all true believers, to the end of the world,” responded John Wesley in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.²

In Romans 8:9 the Apostle Paul writes that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Him. Again in his *Notes*, Wesley comments: “*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ—dwelling and governing him, He is none of his—He is not a member of Christ; not a Christian; not in a state of salvation.*” This is “[a] plain, express declaration, which admits of no exception. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.”³

For the founder of Methodism, all true believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit; not just those who have been entirely sanctified or perfected in

love. Wesley believed that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the means by which regeneration is accomplished. In his written work entitled “A Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” Wesley asks his readers the question: “Are you still a stranger to that inward baptism wherewith all true believers are baptized?”⁴

In a letter to Rev. Potter, Wesley writes, “it does not appear that [St. Paul’s] was a sudden conversion. It is true, ‘a great light suddenly shone round about him;’ but this light did not convert him. After he had seen this, ‘he was three days without sight, and neither did eat or drink.’ And probably, during the whole time, God was gradually working in his heart, till he arose and being baptized, washed away his sins, and was filled with the Holy Ghost.”⁵

Wesley understood Paul’s initial conversion to entail the forgiveness of sin and being “filled with the Holy Ghost,” signified by water baptism. Thus Wesley considered the apostle’s initial filling with the Holy Spirit in the presence of Ananias to be synonymous with Spirit baptism.

In a December 1770 letter to Joseph Benson, Wesley gives a lengthy description of entire sanctification as a second definite “change” in the believer’s heart. He then writes, “If they like to call this ‘receiving the Holy Ghost,’ they may: Only the phrase, in that sense, is not scriptural, and not quite proper; for they all ‘received the Holy Ghost’ when they were justified. God then, ‘sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying Abba, Father.’”⁶

Some may look upon Wesley’s use of the word “received” as having less significance than the terms “*baptized*” and “*filled*.”⁷ This, however, is easily settled when recalling that the Samaritans in Acts 8:17 “*received the Holy Ghost*” after Peter and John had prayed and laid hands upon them. Few would deny that these Samaritans were baptized with the Holy Spirit on that occasion simply because Acts states that they “*received the Holy Ghost*.” Various expressions for Spirit baptism are used interchangeably by New Testament writers to describe that great effusion of the Spirit upon new believers. We read that the Spirit “*fell*” on some, was “*given*,” “*poured out*” and “*shed forth*” on others. Believers are also said to “*receive*,” “*be endued*,” “*filled*,” as well as “*baptized with the Holy Spirit*.”⁸

The great work of regeneration, Wesley believed, is accomplished by nothing less than a powerful effusion or baptism of the Holy Spirit. New birth wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit is described as

“...that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is ‘created anew in Jesus Christ;’ when it is ‘renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness;’ when the love of the world is changed into the love of God; pride into humility; passion

into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned into the 'mind which was in Christ Jesus.' This is the nature of the new birth: 'So is every one that is born of the Spirit.'"⁹

In another portion of his writings the founder of Methodism assures that "It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation, and none can create a soul anew, but He who at first created the heavens and the earth."¹⁰

Although water baptism is not synonymous with regeneration, Wesley believed it to be an outward and visible sign of this inward work of grace. This is supported by a journal entry in which he writes, "I baptized a gentlewoman at the Foundry; and the peace she immediately found was a fresh proof, that the outward sign, duly received, is always accompanied with the inward grace."¹¹ A Quaker testified of his baptismal experience saying, "I sensibly found the Holy Ghost, descend into my soul; the joy rose higher and higher, till at last I could neither speak nor move; but seemed rapt into the third heaven."¹² These accounts further support Mr. Wesley's conviction that water baptism is not only an outward sign of an inward work of grace but also a contributing means to that end.¹³ To him "It is the initiatory sacrament, which enters us into covenant with God. It was instituted by Christ, who alone has power to institute a proper sacrament, a sign, seal, pledge, and means of grace, perpetually obligatory on all Christians."¹⁴

While some might question the founder of Methodism's assertion that water baptism is a "means of grace," he clearly states that "In all ages, the outward baptism is a means of the inward: as outward circumcision was of the circumcision of the heart."¹⁵ For support he quotes various scriptural references beginning with the words of Jesus: "*Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). "By water then, as a means," says he, "the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called by the Apostle, *'the washing of regeneration'*" (Titus 3:5).¹⁶

To be clear, Wesley is not making himself a proponent of baptismal regeneration when understood in terms of a sole reliance upon the application of water for regeneration. He plainly declares that he assigns "no greater virtue to baptism than Christ himself has done." Rather than ascribing regeneration "to the outward washing," he attributes it fully "to the inward grace, which, added thereto, makes it a sacrament. Herein a principle of grace is infused," says he, "which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit of God..."¹⁷ He assures his readers that according to 1 Peter 3:21, "*Baptism doth now save us* if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe, and obey the gospel."¹⁸ Noah's ark (completed in fulfillment of his

faith and obedience) became the means by which he and his family were carried safely through the water. This “antitype” or “thing typified by the ark, even baptism now saveth us,” writes Wesley. Explaining further, he says that “through the water of baptism we are saved from the sin which overwhelms the world as a flood: not, indeed, the bare outward sign, but the inward grace; a divine consciousness that both our persons and our actions are accepted through Him who died and rose again for us.”¹⁹

Wesley is convinced that “the Apostles themselves baptized great numbers, not by dipping, but by washing, sprinkling, or pouring water. This,” says he, “clearly represented the cleansing from sin, which is figured by baptism.”²⁰

B. John Fletcher (1729-85)

John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, became the celebrated apologist of early Methodist teachings. His *Checks to Antinomianism* display the way in which he successfully vindicated Mr. Wesley’s theological stance against some of the unscriptural tenets of Calvinism and the antinomianism naturally spawned thereby. “One equal to him I have not known;” writes Wesley, “one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God.”²¹

In his *Last Check to Antinomianism*, Fletcher shows common understanding with Wesley concerning water baptism. Here he makes reference to the Apostles’ manner of preaching after Pentecost. He says that they began to preach “the full baptism of Christ which has two branches, the baptism of water, and the baptism of the Spirit, or of celestial fire... But,” cautions Fletcher, “how many learned men, to this day, see no difference between water baptism and spiritual regeneration, between the means of grace and grace itself, between ‘the form’ and ‘the power of godliness!’”²²

In many places, Fletcher also demonstrates his adherence to Wesley’s teaching on Spirit baptism. In his essay entitled, “Spiritual Manifestations of the Son of God,” he considers being “baptized with the Holy Ghost and spiritual fire,” as a “blessing which can alone make a man a Christian.”²³ Likewise, he shows in one of his sermon outlines the “General necessity of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.” The reason he gives for such a “necessity” is that “All are tainted with sin” and “must be born again.”²⁴ Herein he sees the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Ghost for the accomplishment of the new birth.

In his *Equal Check*, he reminds his readers of St. Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Although Fletcher presumes that many of the Corinthian believers had yet to experience the mature state of entire sanctification at the time Paul wrote, he assures them that “*by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*”²⁵ Fletcher was convinced that Paul was not referring to those only who have had an advanced experience of grace but was making the point that *all* members, without exception, had

entered the body or the invisible Church of Christ by Spirit baptism. It was an initiatory event and common experience for all true believers. Fletcher declares “This blessing, which under the Jewish dispensation was the prerogative of prophets and prophetesses only, is [now] common to all true Christians. The four evangelists and St. Peter, our Lord and his forerunner, agree to name it *‘the baptism of the Holy Ghost.’*”²⁶

In “A Sermon on the New Birth,” Fletcher contrasts the “difference between the reformation of a Pharisee and the regeneration of a child of God. “Some degrees of preventing grace and of reason and reflection, suffice for the [reformation of the Pharisee], but nothing less can [bring about the regeneration of a child of God] than a baptism of the Holy Ghost.”²⁷

Later in the same sermon, Fletcher speaks of the new birth as a spiritual resurrection. He assures the penitent seeker of a “balm in Gilead.” Better yet, “Faith in the blood of Christ,” says he, “can not only heal the wounds of a dying soul, but raise to life one that is spiritually dead.”²⁸ To the true penitent and seeker after the new birth he writes these words of encouragement: “Yes, you shall be baptized by the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins and justified freely by faith.”²⁹

It is known that Fletcher, in other parts of his writings, applied the language of *“baptism of the Holy Ghost”* to the work of entire sanctification.³⁰ Laurence Wood and Timothy L. Smith lend much emphasis to this fact.³¹ However, to suppose that Fletcher used the expression, *“baptism with the Holy Ghost”* exclusively with reference to entire sanctification would be a mistake as seen by my preceding discussion. He, like other early Methodists, plainly used the language of Spirit baptism in reference to regeneration. By using the same terminology for both regeneration and entire sanctification he does differ from Wesley. He is seen as viewing the baptism of the Holy Spirit in a holistic sense.³²

C. Adam Clarke (1760-1832)

Adam Clarke is well known for his excellent *Commentary on the Bible*. He was one of Wesley’s itinerant preachers in early life and later proved himself to be an outstanding scholar and master of Semitic languages.

In his comments on John 3:5, Clarke sees water in the baptismal rite as “an emblem of the Holy Spirit.”³³ Commenting on Acts 2:38 he continues to express this concept by explaining that “baptism [points] out the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and it is in reference to that purification that it is administered, and should in consideration never be separated from it. For [water] baptism itself purifies not the conscience; it only points out the grace by which this is to be done.”³⁴

It is important to notice that Clarke strongly expresses a persuasion, that the initiatory event of water and Spirit baptism is accompanied with a purifying effect.

In Acts 10, we read of Peter's preaching to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. The content of Peter's message was elementary in nature and content, suited to an audience needing an introduction to Christ and the "remission of sins" (plural). While expounding on the gracious privileges offered to all who believe in Christ's name the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and those gathered with him to hear the word. Clarke makes the following observations on verse 47, wherein Peter asks, "*Can anyone withhold water?*"

These had evidently received the Holy Ghost, and consequently were become members of the mystical body of Christ; and yet St. Peter requires that they shall receive baptism by water, that they might become members of the Christian Church. In other cases, they received baptism first, and the Spirit afterwards by the imposition of hands; see Acts 19:4-6, where the disciples who had received only the baptism of John were baptized again with water in the name of the Lord Jesus; and, after even this, the apostles prayed, and laid their hands on them, before they were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. So we find that Jesus Christ had his water baptism as well as John; and that even he who gave the baptism of the Holy Ghost required the administration of water baptism also. Therefore, the baptism of the Spirit did not supersede the baptism by water; nor indeed can it; as baptism, as well as the supper of the lord, were intended, not only to be means of grace, but standing, irrefragable proofs of the truth of Christianity.³⁵

Like Wesley and Fletcher, Clarke adds his support to the view that "water baptism" is a "means of grace." Wesley's comments on 1 Peter 3:21 have been shared above. But Clarke also has some valuable observations concerning the Apostle's statement that "*baptism doth also now save us.*"

Noah believed in God; walked uprightly before him, and found grace in his sight; he obeyed him in building the ark, and God made it the means of his salvation from the waters of the deluge. *Baptism* implies a consecration and dedication of the soul and body to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He who is faithful to his baptismal covenant, taking God through Christ, by the eternal Spirit, for his portion, is saved here from his sins; and *through the resurrection of Christ from the dead*, has the well-grounded hope of eternal glory. This is all plain; but was it the *deluge*, itself, or the *ark*; or the *being saved* by that ark from the deluge, that was the *antitype* of which St. Peter speaks? Noah and his family were saved by water; i.e. it was the instrument of their being saved through the good providence of God. So the water of *baptism*, typifying the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, is the means of salvation to all

those who receive this Holy Spirit in its quickening, cleansing efficacy. Now as the waters of the flood could not have saved Noah and his family, had they not made use of the ark; so the water of baptism saves not man, but as it is the means of his getting his heart purified by the Holy Spirit, and typifying to him that purification.³⁶

Clarke gives special consideration to the words “*by the washing of regeneration*” as recorded in Titus 3:5. “Undoubtedly,” says he, “the apostle here means baptism, the rite by which persons were admitted into the Church, and the visible sign of the cleansing, purifying influences of the Holy Spirit, which the apostle immediately subjoins. Baptism is ... a sign, and therefore should never be separated from the thing signified; but it is a rite commanded by God himself, and therefore the thing should never be expected without it.”³⁷

Clarke reminds his readers that it was Jesus Himself who plainly “asserts that a man [must] be born of water and the Holy Spirit, that is, of the Holy Ghost, which, represented under the similitude of water, cleanses, refreshes, and purifies the soul.” Again, like Wesley and Fletcher, Clarke sees the baptism of the Holy Spirit in regeneration as signified by baptism with water.³⁸

D. Richard Watson (1781-1833)

Richard Watson was a proficient Bible scholar and theologian, who wrote the first systematic theology for early Methodism.

In his biblical treatment of water baptism, Watson shows that water “baptism is to the new covenant what circumcision was to the old, and took its place by the *appointment* of Christ.”³⁹ He further states that “baptism [was] expressly made the initiatory rite, by which believers of ‘all nations’ were to be introduced into the Church and covenant of grace; an office in which it manifestly took the place of circumcision, which heretofore, even from the time of Abraham, had been the only initiatory rite into the same covenant.”⁴⁰

The significance of baptism goes beyond the act of obedience and “submission to the Lordship of Christ,” as emphasized by Allan Brown.⁴¹ Watson emphatically claims that

baptism has an end, an “intent,” “not the putting away the filth of the flesh,” but obtaining “a good conscience toward God;” and it *requires, claims* this good conscience through that faith in Christ whereof cometh remission of sins, the cleansing of the “conscience from dead works,” and those supplies of supernatural aid by which, in future, men may “live in all good conscience before God.” It is thus that we see how St. Peter preserves the correspondence between the act of Noah in preparing the ark as an act of faith by which he was justified, and the act of submitting to Christian baptism, which is also

obviously an act of faith, in order to the remission of sins, or the obtaining a good conscience before God. This is farther strengthened by his immediately adding, “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;” a clause which our translators by use of a parenthesis, connect with “baptism doth now save us;” so that their meaning is, we are saved by baptism through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and as he “rose again for our justification,” this sufficiently shows the true sense of the apostle, who, by our being “saved,” clearly means our being justified by faith.⁴²

Watson enlarges upon this theme by assuring his readers that “baptism is the outward sign of our entrance into God’s covenant of mercy; and that when it is *an act of true faith, it becomes an instrument of salvation*, like that act of faith in Noah, by which, when moved with fear, he ‘prepared an ark to the saving of his house,’ and survived the destruction of an unbelieving world.”⁴³ (Emphasis added)

“But as a *sign* baptism is, more than circumcision;” writes Watson,

because the covenant, under its new dispensation, was not only to offer pardon upon believing, deliverance from the bondage of fleshly appetites, and a peculiar spiritual relation to God, all which we find under the Old Testament; but also to bestow *the Holy Spirit*, in his FULNESS, upon all believers; and of this effusion of ‘the power from on high,’ baptism was made the visible sign; and perhaps for this, among some other obvious reasons, was substituted for circumcision, because baptism *by effusion, or pouring ...* was a natural symbol of this heavenly gift.”⁴⁴

Watson clearly understands water baptism to be “an instrument of salvation” when undertaken as an “act of true faith.”

Furthermore, like the Methodists of his day, he connects water baptism to Spirit baptism. Watson states that water baptism is “a sign of the new covenant, corresponding to circumcision” and “the symbol of regeneration, the washing away of sin, and ‘the renewing of the Holy Ghost’ ... which he shed, or poured out, ‘on us abundantly through Jesus Christ... Of this great new covenant blessing, baptism was therefore eminently the sign; and it represented ‘the pouring out’ of the Spirit, ‘the descending’ of the Spirit, the ‘falling’ of the Spirit ‘upon men.’”⁴⁵

E. Luther Lee (1800-89)

Unlike other early Methodist leaders cited in this paper who were natives of England, Luther Lee was an American Methodist who with Orange Scott became cofounders of The Wesleyan Methodist Connection, a group that separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843. Although issues of

abolition and church government gave rise to this separation, Luther Lee, a well-known professor of theology, never turned from the fundamental doctrines of early Methodism even though he lived through the rise of the American Holiness Movement.

In his *Elements of Theology* Lee refers to the historical account of Pentecost and the crowd's response to Peter's sermon. Awakened sinners were pricked in their hearts and wanted to know what they must do to relieve themselves of the burden of guilt. Peter directed them to "*repent and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.*" Lee comments on the reason and significance of such instructions from Peter. It was "'for the remission of sins' as a means of obtaining pardon that they 'were commanded to 'repent and be baptized.' The words can mean nothing else." He explains as follows:

It was necessary for them to be baptized as a means of obtaining pardon, in the sense that any known duty must be performed by an awakened sinner, before he can obtain forgiveness and acceptance ... The promise which [Peter] added makes the same thing more certain. "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This cannot mean the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost of working miracles, for that was clearly never conferred upon that multitude of three thousand souls. They were not regenerated, had not been pardoned when Peter told them to be baptized, and promised them the gift of the Holy Ghost ... by which internal baptism in its heart-renewing influence, must be meant. Here we have a clear case of baptism before what is called regeneration. It is then added, "Then they that gladly received his word," not they who mocked, "were baptized," and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." No doubt, on being baptized they received remission of sins, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost.⁴⁶

Together with earlier leaders of Methodism, Lee concludes "that all who believed in the truth of Christianity, and entertain an honest purpose to live by it as a system of faith and duty, are Scriptural subjects of baptism."⁴⁷ Supposing he were faced with the question: "would you now baptize men and women before conversion, or before they profess to have obtained pardon?" Lee unhesitatingly answers, "To be sure I would, if I believed that they desired it in connection with an honest purpose to seek God."⁴⁸ To him "It is the only Scriptural ground." Continuing in a spirit of confidence, he says, "If an awakened sinner should come to me, who had never been baptized, and ask me what he must do to be saved, I would tell him to be baptized, as one item in the list of duties I would lay before him."⁴⁹

Lee, like early Methodists, connects Spirit baptism to water baptism and conversion. He identifies the "*gift of the Holy Ghost*" with that "internal

baptism in its heart-renewing influence.” In other words he sees the “*gift of the Holy Ghost*” promised by Peter to be, in reality, a promise of the “*baptism of the Holy Ghost*.”

Lee assures his readers that “Baptism is a sign or symbol of the purification of the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is an outward visible sign of an internal washing.” “Purification,” says he “is always associated with baptism.”⁵⁰

F. W.B. Pope (1822-1903)

In his *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, William Burt Pope provides below his defining statement on the sacrament of baptism with the Holy Spirit’s accompanying work in the initial work of conversion:

Baptism is an ordinance appointed by our Lord to be the rite of initiation into the new covenant of grace and fellowship of its kingdom; being the sign and seal of the blessings of that covenant conferred upon those who thereby avow their acceptance of the one condition of faith in Jesus Christ with its obligations. It is the sacrament of union with Christ, of pardon and renewal through His Gospel, and of membership in His Church: being the outward and visible sign of the sealing of the Holy Ghost, Who is the interior Bond of communion between the believer and the Lord, the Agent in imparting that forgiveness and regeneration of which the washing of water is the sign...⁵¹

This prominent theologian reminds us that the “Prophets ... predicted the effusion [or baptism] of the Holy Spirit, of which Christian baptism [by water] was to be the symbol, under the similitude of cleansing waters: poured out, forever flowing, and sprinkled upon the soul.”⁵²

Pope furthermore assures his readers that regeneration “is the Divine begetting of the filial life of Christ in us.” He identifies “Baptism ... as the sacrament of the new birth, or rather of the soul’s entrance into Christ [which] gives regeneration both a special name and a special character. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is one of its definitions.”⁵³

Having lived most of the nineteenth century, Pope, like Luther Lee, witnessed the rise and wide spread influence of the American Holiness Movement with its changing theological propensities. In the following he expressed this interesting warning:

There has been a tendency among some teachers of religion in modern times to speak of Christian perfection as to seem to make it the entrance into a new order of life, one namely of higher consecration under the influence of the Holy Ghost. That this higher life is the secret of entire consecration there can be no doubt. But there is no warrant in Scripture for making it a new dispensation of the Spirit, or a Pentecostal visitation

superadded to the state of conversion. *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* means *Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?* In other words entire consecration is the stronger energy of a Spirit already in the regenerate, not a Spirit to be sent down from on high. This kingdom of God is already within, if we would let it come in its perfection. Neither SINCE in this passage, nor the AFTER in *after that ye believed*, has anything corresponding in the original Greek. This teaching tends to diminish the value of regeneration, which is itself a life *hid with Christ in God*...⁵⁴

Pope thus makes the point in statements above that a new convert has initially received or been baptized by the Holy Spirit and that the experience of Christian perfection does not require an added “Pentecostal visitation [of the Holy Spirit] superadded to the state of conversion.” The same Holy Spirit that has taken up His residence in the heart of the newly regenerated soul is to be allowed to continue His work of entirely sanctifying and perfecting ministry.

G. Summary and Early Issues of Methodism

From this cursory study thus far, we see that each of these early Methodist leaders viewed both water and Spirit baptism as initiatory events. None of them subscribed to what is termed “baptismal regeneration” as defined by the dependence upon the application of water alone for regeneration. Baptism by water was, nevertheless, clearly held to be an outward symbol of that inward baptism of the Spirit, which is received in regeneration. However, it was more than a sign, more than an outward “symbol” and “seal” of God’s covenant, it was also a “means of grace” when duly administered.⁵⁵ This view was scripturally supported by the directions of Peter given on the day of Pentecost to the penitent seekers to “*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*” (Acts 2:38).

They understood that for various reasons, such as lack of true repentance and a living faith, Spirit baptism did not always accompany water baptism at the same moment, though it often did. In his sermon “The New Birth” Wesley clarifies this issue by stating, “Baptism is a sacrament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, to be a sign and seal of regeneration by his Spirit. Here it is manifest, baptism, the sign, is spoken of as distinct from regeneration, the thing signified.” The “inward part, or thing signified is,” says he, “death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness. Nothing, therefore, is plainer, than that ... baptism is not the new birth.” He further explains that

the one is an external, the other an internal, work; that the one is a visible, the other an invisible thing, and therefore wholly

different from each other?—the one being an act of man, purifying the body; the other a change wrought by God in the soul: So that the former is just as distinguishable from the latter, as the soul from the body, or water from the Holy Ghost...

[A]s the new birth is not the same thing with baptism, so it does not always accompany baptism: They do not constantly go together. A man may possibly be “born of water,” and yet not be “born of the Spirit.”⁵⁶

Wesley does not, however, minimize the importance of water baptism. To offset such a view, he comments in response to St. Peter’s question following the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and the Gentiles of his household. “*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost, even as we?*” (Acts 10:47) “He does not say, ‘They have the baptism of the Spirit; therefore they do not need baptism with water:’ but just the contrary; ‘If they have received the Spirit, then baptize them with water.’

“How easily,” continues Mr. Wesley, “is this question decided, if we will take the Word of God for our judge! Either men have received the Holy Ghost, or not. If they have not, ‘Repent,’ saith God, ‘and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’ If they have, if they are already baptized with the Holy Ghost, then, *who can forbid water?*”⁵⁷

A question must be addressed here, one raised by contemporary Wesleyan scholarship. Did Fletcher influence a change in Wesley’s theology, as claimed by Laurence Wood,⁵⁸ so as to alter the latter’s views concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit? More particularly, did Wesley in his later writings use the terminology of “*baptism of the Holy Ghost*” in reference to entire sanctification? A close reading of Wesley’s sermons and writings produced in the last thirty years of his life appear to strongly point to the answer “No.”⁵⁹ Kenneth Collins, Robert Lyon, Donald Dayton, and Randy Maddox have all taken strong exception to Laurence Wood’s assertion that Fletcher influenced the elderly Wesley to alter his views so as to identify as synonymous entire sanctification and the Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ Wesley’s writings uniformly reflect his view that all true believers, including babes in Christ, are baptized with the Holy Ghost.⁶¹ While Fletcher’s strengths are seen in his masterful confutation of the tenets of Calvinism and his exceptionally holy life, Wesley, noticeably adheres more closely and consistently with New Testament writers and historic Christianity in his view of baptism. In a word, it was his view that baptism (both water and Spirit) is a one-time initiatory event; an event by which the new convert experiences an entrance into the body of Christ, the Church. One baptism, followed by many fillings is more in keeping with Wesley’s view.⁶² This is seen in Acts 4:31, where a

number of believers, after the day of Pentecost “were all filled [again] with the Holy Ghost.” Adam Clarke writes:

Though these disciples had received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, yet they were capable of larger communications: and what they had then received did not preclude the necessity of frequent supplies, on emergent occasions. Indeed, one communication of this Spirit always makes and disposes for another. Neither apostle nor private Christian can subsist in the Divine life without frequent influences from on high. Had these disciples depended on their pentecostal grace, they might have sunk now under the terror and menaces of their combined and powerful foes. God gives grace for the *time being*, but no stock for *futurity*, because he will keep all his followers *continually dependent* on himself.⁶³

Another related issue raised by some Wesleyan scholars is the argument that since the apostles were converted before the day of Pentecost, their experience of Spirit Baptism was entire sanctification. Early Methodists would have considered it a grave mistake to make the experience of the disciples prior to Pentecost the pattern for regeneration. No respected eighteenth century Methodist equated the baptism of the Holy Spirit solely to entire sanctification. They would have considered such a view as regrettably lowering the standards of both regeneration and entire sanctification. Pentecost to them was the watershed of salvation history. As Kenneth Collins has stated, “Pentecost was the birth of the Church, not its perfection.”⁶⁴

The disciples, under the tutoring of Christ, lived in a time of transition between the old covenant and the new. The Mosaic dispensation of the law was giving way to the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The specific experience of the disciples can never be duplicated fully. Their experience must ever be considered unique. Although Christ’s disciples were doubtlessly Christians in some sense during this period according to their inferior dispensation, it is impossible to look at their experience in those days as a pattern, far less a norm, for the experience of regeneration today. All early Methodist leaders uniformly agreed that Christ’s Spirit baptism made available at Pentecost is conditionally necessary for making one a truly regenerated believer and member of His spiritual Church. They understood that such a baptism alone had the power to spiritually raise dead souls to life in Christ.

To those who would “contend that the experience (before and after Pentecost) of the original disciples (Acts 2:4) provide a model or pattern today,” Dr. Robert Lyon assures us that “Two observations make this impossible: (1) the model is not followed elsewhere in Acts or the early Church; (2) it fails to consider the *heils-geschichtlich* significance of Pentecost as the once-for-all inaugurative event which establishes the Church.”⁶⁵

II. Generally Accepted Views of the American Holiness Movement

Concerning Water and Spirit Baptism

In the Nineteenth century, a number of individuals began to appear whose strength of leadership and influence ultimately brought significant changes in Methodist theology, on the issue of baptism. Three representative examples of such leadership and influence in what became known as the American Holiness Movement are shared to illustrate this transition, along with two representative denominations.

A. J. A. Wood (1828-1905)

Like most writers in the 19th century American Holiness Movement, J. A. Wood assumes that the disciples were Christians in the fully regenerated sense prior to Pentecost and that Spirit baptism is confined to a work of God subsequent to regeneration.⁶⁶ Although he looked upon regeneration as an “impartation of spiritual life to the soul,” which he assures is wrought “instantaneously by the Holy Spirit,” producing “a change from death to life, from the dominion of sin to the reign of grace,”⁶⁷ he failed to see the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the necessary and divine component by which this great change is made possible. Herein he departs from the teachings of early Methodist leaders.

Furthermore, water baptism is not found in his writings to be a significant issue nor is regeneration always mentioned in ways that reflect its lofty importance in early Methodism. In the first 73 pages of his book, *Perfect Love*, Wood uses the deprecating terms of “mere regeneration” and “merely regenerated” no less than ten times.⁶⁸ Kenneth Collins responds with indignation to such language, stating, “there is nothing ‘mere’ about regeneration, nothing ‘mere’ about being a child of God.”⁶⁹ From the perspective of early Methodism, this manner of expression has the subtle effect of minimizing the gracious and powerful work of regeneration in order that the experience of entire sanctification might appear more exalted. This text became standard curriculum in subsequent Holiness Bible Colleges and is regarded as an “holiness classic.”⁷⁰

B. William B. Godbey (1833-1920)

In contrast to early Methodism, William Godbey labors to wrest Acts 2:38 away from those who would infer that Peter’s instructions given to the penitents on the day of Pentecost included water baptism as a condition for their salvation. “‘For remission,’” according to him, “does not necessarily mean ‘in order to remission.’” He sees “remission of sins” received “as a result of repentance and confirmed by water baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the glorious hyperbole of the gospel dispensation.” He further states, “the Holy Ghost confers gifts on the sinner, *i.e.*, conviction, repentance,

regeneration, justification and adoption to bring him into the kingdom. Then when you are truly converted,” says he, “it is your glorious privilege to receive from the Father and the Son the ‘gift of the Holy Ghost,’ *i.e.*, the Holy Ghost Himself as an indwelling Sanctifier and Comforter... After you have received the ‘gift of the Holy Ghost,’” you have “thus been sanctified wholly.”⁷¹

Here Godbey is so fearful of what might be understood to be Peter’s sanctioning baptismal regeneration that he works to assure his audience that water baptism is only a testimony or confirmation of the “remission of sins.” He is careful likewise to assign all references to the “gift of the Holy Ghost” to entire sanctification.⁷²

Regarding Acts 4:31, where some who had been filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost were again “*filled with the Spirit*” Godbey comments “This second Pentecost gloriously sanctifies the converts of the first...”⁷³ Godbey, like other adherents of the American Holiness Movement cannot suppose that Spirit baptism or Spirit filling can possibly take place other than in the work of entire sanctification.

C. Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle (1860-1936)

In keeping with the Salvation Army’s theological stance against recognition of the sacraments, Samuel Logan Brengle’s mention of water baptism is obviously missing. He describes “The first blessing in Jesus Christ” as “salvation, with its negative side of remission of sins and forgiveness, and its positive side of renewal or regeneration—the new birth—one experience.”⁷⁴ He then states, “the second blessing is entire sanctification, with its negative side of cleansing, and its positive side of filling with the Holy Ghost—one whole, rounded, glorious, epochal experience.”⁷⁵

With Brengle no mention is made of water baptism or the Holy Spirit’s part in the great work of regeneration. The Third Person of the Trinity is primarily cited as accomplishing the work of entire sanctification and Spirit filling.

In addition to Wood, Godbey and Brengle, numerous others could also be mentioned as having significant influence upon the thinking and teachings of the American Holiness Movement, including Phoebe Palmer, Charles Finney, H. C. Morrison and Leslie D. Wilcox.⁷⁶

We will share next the official statements of the Wesleyan Church and the Church of the Nazarene with the belief that they represent quite well the views of the Holiness Movement at large concerning the issue of water and Spirit baptism.

D. Two Representative Denominations in the American Holiness Tradition – The Wesleyan Church and The Church of the Nazarene

Denominational heirs to the American Holiness Movement continue to articulate its unique understanding of water and Spirit baptism. There are

two notable examples: The Wesleyan Church and The Church of the Nazarene. From the 2008 Discipline of the Wesleyan Church we find the following statement concerning regeneration:

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that work of the Holy Spirit whereby, when one truly repents and believes, one's moral nature is given a distinctively spiritual life with the capacity for love and obedience. This new life is received by faith in Jesus Christ, it enables the pardoned sinner to serve God with the will and affections of the heart, and by it the regenerate are delivered from the power of sin which reigns over all the unregenerate.⁷⁷

We notice that this statement describing regeneration makes no reference to water or Spirit baptism. Only by turning to the statement on "Initial, Progressive, and Entire Sanctification" do we find baptism mentioned:

Sanctification is initiated at the moment of justification and regeneration. From that moment there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer walks with God and daily grows in grace and in a more perfect obedience to God. This prepares for the crises of entire sanctification which is wrought instantaneously when believers present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being affected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers that person for effective service. It is followed by lifelong growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The life of holiness continues through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and evidences itself by loving obedience to God's revealed will.⁷⁸

Here Spirit baptism is directly connected to entire sanctification.

In the current *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* we read the following statement concerning the inward work of regeneration:

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.⁷⁹

In this same *Manual* we read the following statement concerning entire sanctification:

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire development to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.⁸⁰

In contrast to the views of early Methodists these formal statements of The Wesleyan Church and the Church of the Nazarene make no reference to baptism by water or the Holy Spirit when addressing the work of regeneration and initial conversion. Although they do refer to the Holy Spirit's presence and His active part in regeneration, actual baptism with the Holy Spirit is believed to take place *only* in the work of entire sanctification. Water baptism as stated in the Articles of Faith within the *Discipline of the Wesleyan Church* and *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* is acknowledged as a sacrament commanded by our Lord, the significance of which is a public testimony and declaration of faith in Jesus as their Savior. Altogether lacking is a statement declaring the relationship of water baptism to Spirit baptism. Herein they differ from the theological position of early Methodists.⁸¹

III. Supporting Witnesses to Early Methodism's Views of Baptism

There has been a significant departure by the American Holiness Movement in its teachings of New Testament water and Spirit baptism from that of early Methodism. Water baptism is generally looked upon with minor significance, being at best an outward testimony to initial salvation. Spirit baptism is presented as synonymous with entire sanctification, excluded from initial conversion and limited to a second work of grace. By contrast early Methodists considered regeneration or the new birth to be experienced through the baptism of the Holy Spirit symbolized by water baptism. The latter was not only considered a sacrament, sign, seal and pledge but a means of grace. Both water and Spirit baptism were viewed as initiatory events in the order of salvation followed by a "going on to perfection."

By taking some sample statements from historical periods of the Christian Church and Christian denominations with historical precedence, we hope to see which of these views (the early Methodist view or that of the current American Holiness Movement) have the greatest historical support.

A. Early Church

A quick survey of the early church fathers shows that they connected Spirit baptism and water baptism as initiatory events in the Christian life. Irenaeus (c. 135-202), in his written work entitled, "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," speaks of the apostles as "showing to mankind the way of life, to turn them from idols and fornication and covetousness, cleansing their souls and bodies by the baptism of water and of the Holy Spirit."⁸² In this same written work Irenaeus assures his readers that "For such is the state of those who have believed, since in them continually abides

the Holy Spirit, who was given by Him in baptism...⁷⁸³

Origen (185-254) in explaining John's baptism in Luke 3:3 and Acts 19:3-4, teaches, "Regeneration did not take place with John [the Baptist]. However, with Jesus, through His disciples, it does occur. What is called the bath of regeneration takes place with renewal of the Spirit. For the Spirit now comes, as well."⁷⁸⁴

Cyprian (fl. 248-58) makes clear that the Holy Spirit must be involved in our baptism to be effectual. "For," says he, "water alone is not able to cleanse away sins, and to sanctify a man unless he has the Holy Spirit."⁷⁸⁵ "Cyprian argues that those who have been baptized by effusion (*aspergi vel perfundi*) have received the gift of the Spirit no less than those baptized by immersion. Appeal is made in justification to Ezekiel 35:25 and to other texts where sprinkling is mentioned."⁷⁸⁶ In his "Treatise on Re-Baptism" (c. 257) he states, "Our salvation is founded in the baptism of the Spirit, which for the most part is associated with the baptism of water."⁷⁸⁷

In his "Catechetical Lectures," Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-86) connects Spirit baptism with water baptism: "[H]e who plunges into the waters and is baptized is encompassed on all sides by the waters, so were they also baptized completely by the Holy Spirit. The water, however, flows round the outside only, but the Spirit baptizes also the soul within and that completely..."⁷⁸⁸

Ambrose (c. 333-97) in treatment of Titus 3:5 asks the question: "Who is the one who is born of the Spirit and is made Spirit?" He answers:

It is one who is renewed in the Spirit of his mind. It is one who is regenerated by water and the Holy Spirit. We receive the hope of eternal life through the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. And elsewhere the apostle Peter says: "You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." For who is he that is baptized with the Holy Spirit but he who is born again through water and the Holy Spirit? Therefore the Lord said of the Holy Spirit, "Truly, truly, I say to you, except a man be born again by water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And therefore he declared that we are born of him into the kingdom of God by being born again by water and the Spirit.⁸⁹

Commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:11, Ambrosiaster (fl. c. 366-84) assures his readers that it is "In baptism [that] the believer is washed clean from all sins and is made righteous in the name of the Lord, and through the Spirit of God he is adopted as God's child."⁷⁹⁰

Bede the Venerable (c. 673-735) calls attention to the relationship between water and Spirit baptism in his comments on Acts 1:5:

When the Lord said, "John indeed baptized with water," he did not continue with "yet you shall baptize" but with "yet you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit," because neither the

apostles nor their followers, who still baptize in the church to this day, had the power to baptize except as John did, that is, with water. However, when the name of Christ is invoked, the interior power of the Holy Spirit is present, which, with the human administration of water, simultaneously purifies the souls and the bodies of those being baptized. This did not happen in the baptism of John—"for the Spirit had not yet been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."⁹¹

Later in comments on 1 Peter 2:16a he makes the point that "We are truly free if we have been cleansed of our sins through baptism and if we have been redeemed from slavery to the devil, because we have been made children of God."⁹²

In closing this study of the intimate relationship that exists between water and Spirit baptism in the church fathers, Cyprian's personal testimony of baptism represents well the fathers' understanding and experience. In a letter written to his friend Donatus, Cyprian writes of "his hesitation to receive the sacrament of Baptism, since he felt as a worldly 35-year-old lawyer that there was no way his habit patterns, his love of comfort and pleasure, power and money could be changed."⁹³ He then describes the moment of his own baptism as follows:

But at last I made up my mind to ask for Baptism. I went down into those life-giving waters, and all the stains of my past were washed away. I committed my life to the Lord; he cleansed my heart and filled me with his Holy Spirit. I was born again, a new man. Then, in a most marvelous way, all my doubts cleared up. I could now see what had been hidden from me before. I found I could do things that had previously been impossible.

I saw that as long as I had been living according to my lower nature I was at the mercy of sin and my course was set for death; but that by living according to my new birth in the Holy Spirit I had already begun to share God's eternal life.⁹⁴

In this personal testimony, Cyprian claims several significant experiences, including the "new birth in the Holy Spirit," cleansing from sin, a total consecration of life to the Lord and a being filled with the Holy Spirit. All of this is said to have taken place concurrently with his being baptized by water—a divinely ordered means of grace to which he submitted in faith and obedience as a condition for experiencing the new birth. Cyprian's testimony here would be at home in early Methodism.

B. Reformation

The early church's connection of water baptism with regeneration and Spirit baptism continues in the Reformation. Martin Luther (1483-1546)

takes a strong view of baptism's role in the new birth. Jonathan D. Trigg states that while preaching on John 3:6 in the year 1537, "Luther makes an unequivocal identification of baptism and the new birth. Christians are 'born anew through baptism in which the Holy Spirit is active, making new persons of them ... [And] they must be born anew by water and the Holy Spirit...'"⁹⁵

John W. Riggs quotes from Luther's prayer written for inclusion in his 1526 baptismal rite or ceremony. It reflects quite clearly his belief in baptism of the Spirit as taking place simultaneously with water baptism and culminating in a cleansing from sin:

Pour out your Holy Spirit so that those who are here baptized may be given new life. Wash away the sin of all those who are cleansed by this water and bring them forth as inheritors of your glorious kingdom.⁹⁶

Ulrich (or Huldreich) Zwingli (1484-1531) was a noted Swiss reformer who "draws the distinction between the inward baptism of the Spirit and the outward rite with water." Although he acknowledges that they both take place with initial conversion, he also asserts, "None save God can give [the inward baptism of the Spirit]. And nobody can be saved without it."⁹⁷

In his catechism, Martin Bucer (1491-1551) asserted the validity of the sacrament and baptism. One question in that catechism reads as follows: "How can the water and outer word, with which baptism is administered, renew with the Holy Spirit, incorporate into Christ, clothe with Christ, and make participation in his death?" To this the child answered:

Our Lord Jesus, our high priest and Savior, acts and accomplishes everything through his Holy Spirit. He uses for this work the service of the ministry of the church, in outer words and signs. Thus they are called sacraments and *mysteria*, holy secrets: while one thing happens inwardly through the power of Christ, another thing appears and happens outwardly in the ministry of the church. The exterior sign of baptism, administered by the pastor, indicated the interior gracious activity accomplished by God through the Spirit. The faith of the one being baptized was needed for the sacrament to have efficacy...⁹⁸

John Calvin (1509-1664) in the year 1559 "added an assertion that made clear ... he wanted to avoid the error that would enclose the 'cause of justification and power of the Holy Spirit' within the elements: 'We must note,' says he, 'that what the minister represents and attests by outward action God accomplishes within, lest what God claims for himself alone should be turned over to the human person.'"⁹⁹

C. Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican

This historical connection between water baptism and Spirit baptism is also found in those denominations with ties to historic Christianity, such as Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Anglicanism. The following representative theologians, though living in more recent times, represent the views of their respective denominations and are consistent with their historical teaching. First, representing the view of Roman Catholicism, Fr. Francis Martin teaches, “There are ... various descriptions of baptism in the Spirit provided by Episcopal conferences... The statement of Irish Bishops affirms that, ‘The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a conversion gift through which one receives a new and significant commitment to the leadership of Jesus, an openness to the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit.’” According to Fr. Martin, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the activation in our lives of the Holy Spirit given to us in Baptism and Confirmation ... Baptism in the Holy Spirit releases the Holy Spirit to act freely in our lives by making us like Jesus.”¹⁰⁰

He clarifies further that Spirit baptism is tied to baptism. He states, “Sacramental Baptism is recognized by virtually all Christians—Catholic, Orthodox, and mainline Protestant churches—as the principal sacrament of initiation and the foundation of the Christian life ... Baptism in the Spirit ... helps one live out the call to holiness received in Baptism...”¹⁰¹

Second, according to Orthodox tradition, the two-part ritual of baptism and Chrismation, or an anointing of the convert with oil, comprises initial entrance into the mystical Church and body of Christ. According to Protospesbyter Michael Pomazansky, Chrismation is usually performed “immediately after ... Baptism, comprising together with it a single Church rite.” During the administering of this rite the Bishop or priest pronounces the words: “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰²

Another Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann in reflection upon Paul’s words in Galatians 3:27 “*As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,*” asks, “what does it mean ‘*to put on Christ*’ if not that in Baptism we receive His life as our life...”¹⁰³

Thus the rite of the white garment is not merely a reminder of and a call to a pure and righteous life, for if it were only that, it would indeed add nothing to Baptism: it is self-evident that we are baptized in order to lead a Christian life, which, in turn, must be as ‘pure’ and ‘righteous’ as possible. What it reveals and therefore communicates is the radical newness of that purity and righteousness, of that new spiritual life for which the neophyte was regenerated in the baptismal immersion and which will now be bestowed upon him through the ‘seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.’¹⁰⁴

“[W]here is this true spirituality, this total vision of man, of his nature and his vocation, better revealed than in the Sacrament whose purpose is precisely to restore in man his true nature, to bestow upon him the new life by regenerating him ‘by Water and the Spirit?’”¹⁰⁵

To Schmemmann, “The liturgical evidence is clear. On the one hand, Chrismation is not only an organic part of the baptismal mystery: it is performed as the fulfillment of Baptism, just as the next act of that mystery— participation in the Eucharist—is the fulfillment of Chrismation.”¹⁰⁶

Schmemmann then provides a partial view of the Orthodox ritual of Christian initiation that included water baptism and Chrismation.

And when he has put his garment on him the Priest prays thus: Blessed art Thou, O Lord Almighty ... who hast given unto us, unworthy though we be, blessed purification through hallowed water, and divine sanctification through life-giving Chrismation; who now, also, hast been graciously pleased to regenerate thy servant that has newly received Illumination by water and the Spirit, and grantest unto him remission of sins, whether voluntary or involuntary. Do thou, the same Master, compassionate King of kings, grant also unto him the seal of the gift of thy Holy and Almighty and Adorable Spirit, and participation in the Holy Body and the precious Blood of thy Christ...¹⁰⁷

There is “no discontinuity,” writes Schmemmann, “between the baptismal immersion, the rite of the white garment, and the anointment with the Holy Chrism. One receives the white garment because one is baptized and *in order* to be anointed.” This anointing symbolizes “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁸

“[I]t is precisely because of the newness and the radical uniqueness of this sacrament that it bestows on man not any particular gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit, *but the Holy Spirit Himself as gift...*”¹⁰⁹

Third, in Anglicanism the following statement of the Anglican Bishops addresses well some of the current misunderstandings found within today’s American Holiness Movement concerning initial conversion and the conscious reception of the Holy Spirit.

In recent years there had been ... a fresh enrichment in many Christians’ spirit-given experience of Christ, and in many cases they have called it “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Some of these people have seen their experience as similar to that of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and other comparable events in Acts. Despite the observable parallels, however, there are problems attaching to the use of this term to describe an experience separated, often by a long period of time, from the person’s initial conversion to Christ.

In the first place, this usage suggests that what is sub-normal in the New Testament should be regarded as normal today: namely, that a long interval should elapse between new birth and any conscious realization or reception of the Spirit's powers.

In the second place, the New Testament use of the words "baptize" and especially "baptize into" stresses their initiatory content and context, and therefore refers to Christian initiation, rather than to a later enrichment of Christian experience.¹¹⁰

According to Fr. Martin, "The document is referring to the fact that, for the New Testament, there is not a gap between sacramental baptism and the experience of and intimacy with Jesus, Savior and Lord."¹¹¹ This statement by Anglican Bishops is an attempt to correct the views of some who currently look for the baptism of the Spirit at some distant time beyond the moment of initial conversion as well as focusing attention on the historic Christian understanding of the Anglican Church.

D. United Methodist

Finally, there has been an attempt by an historic Methodist body to recover the baptism theology of John Wesley and early Methodism. An official position on the subject has been adopted by The General Conference of the United Methodist Church entitled, "By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism." Four brief statements from this official document once again appropriate the scriptural views of baptism formerly taught by early Methodism and the Christian church from its earliest history:

- (1) "... baptism is by water and the Spirit" (John 3:5, Acts 2:38).
- (2) "God bestows upon baptized persons the presence of the Holy Spirit, marks them with an identifying seal as God's own, and implants in their hearts the first installment of their inheritance as sons and daughters of God" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).
- (3) "Since the Apostolic Age, baptism by water and baptism of the Holy Spirit have been connected" (Acts 19:1-7).
- (4) "The use of water in baptism also symbolizes cleansing from sin, death to the old life, and rising to begin new life in Christ."¹¹²

Conclusion

Early Methodist views of water and Spirit baptism are supported by historical evidence that reaches back to the earliest history of the Christian Church. Water baptism historically considered is an outward and visible sign of Spirit baptism. The two were connected and considered to be initiatory events in the conversion of believers.

In contrast to the views of early Methodism and historic Christianity the American Holiness Movement gives minimal importance to water baptism, considering it to be little more than an outward testimony to the attaining of justification or forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, their relegation of Spirit baptism to entire sanctification, separating it from regeneration, is a departure from early Methodism and the Church expressed through the ages.

End Notes

¹ Much of the research for this paper was completed during my participation in the Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminar of June 2011 on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. To spend a whole month under the inspirational leadership of Dr. Kenneth Collins and enjoy the rich fellowship of fellow seminary participants who held related interests in Wesley studies and early Methodist literature was certainly a thrill and a once in a lifetime experience.

² John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. (London: The Epworth Press, 1966), 393.

³ *Ibid.*, 547.

⁴ John Wesley, "A Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; Reprint by Baker Book House, 1978), 8:184.

⁵ John Wesley, "Letter to Rev. Potter," *The Works of John Wesley*, 9:93.

⁶ John Wesley, "Letter to Joseph Benson," *The Works of John Wesley*, 12:416.

⁷ See J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, Beacon House Press, 1994), 362-5, 405-8).

⁸ Robert W. Lyon, "Baptism and Spirit Baptism in the New Testament," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, no.1 (1979), 14-24; Terms in Luke and Acts found to be synonymous with baptism of the Holy Spirit are located in Acts 1:8; 2:4; 2:18; 2:33; 2:41; 5:32; 8:18; 10:44, and 19:6.

⁹ John Wesley, "The New Birth," *The Works of John Wesley*, 6:71.

¹⁰ John Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," *The Works of John Wesley*, 8:5.

¹¹ John Wesley, "Journals," *The Works of John Wesley*, 2:523.

¹² Charles Wesley, *The Journal of Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, Reprinted 1980), 1:151.

¹³ John Wesley, "A Treatise on Baptism," *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:188.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 883 (1 Peter 3:21).

²⁰ John Wesley, "A Treaty on Baptism," *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:189.

²¹ John Wesley, "The Life and Death of Mr. Fletcher," *The Works of John Wesley*, 11:365.

²² John Fletcher, "The Last Check to Antinomianism," in *The Works of John Fletcher* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishers, 1974), 3:280.

²³ John Fletcher, "Spiritual Manifestations of the Son of God," *The Works of John Fletcher*, 4:287.

²⁴ John Fletcher, "General Necessity of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost," *The Works of John Fletcher*, 4:195.

²⁵ John Fletcher, "Equal Check," *The Works of John Fletcher*, 2:289.

²⁶ John Fletcher, "Equal Check," *The Works of John Fletcher*, 2:49.

²⁷ John Fletcher, "A Sermon on the New Birth," *The Works of John Fletcher*, 4:111-2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:112.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:115.

³⁰ John Fletcher, "Last Check to Antinomianism," *The Works of John Fletcher*, 2:632-3,656.

³¹ Laurence W. Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2002), 6-8. In reality, Wood's entire work makes this emphasis; Timothy L. Smith, "The Doctrine of the Sanctifying Spirit: Charles Finney's Synthesis of Wesleyan and Covenant Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13, no.2 (1978), 106.

³² Adam Clarke, *Christian Theology* (Salem, Ohio: Convention Book Store, 1967), 206. While Wesley understood the term "baptism" (both water and Spirit) as referring only to the initiatory event of conversion or regeneration and therefore refrained from using the term "baptism of the Holy Ghost" with reference to any work of the Spirit beyond regeneration, Fletcher and Clarke evidently felt at liberty to use the same terminology in reference to both regeneration and entire sanctification.

³³ Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), 5:531.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5:699.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:767.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6:862.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6:657.

³⁸ Adam Clarke, *Christian Theology* (Salem, Ohio: Convention Book Store, 1967), 255.

³⁹ Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*. (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), 2: 620.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:620-1.

⁴¹ Allan Brown, "A Forgotten Commandment" *God's Revivalist* 123, no. 7 (2011), 1-4.

⁴² Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2:624-5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2:625.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:626.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:626-7.

⁴⁶ Luther Lee, *Elements of Theology* (Syracuse, NY: A. W. Hall Publishers, 1892), 550-1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 551.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 550-1.

⁵¹ William Burt Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1880), 3:311.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3:312.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3:312-3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:64.

⁵⁵ John Wesley, "A Treatise on Baptism," *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:188.

⁵⁶ John Wesley, "The New Birth," *The Works of John Wesley*, 6:73-4.

⁵⁷ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 436 (Acts 10:47).

⁵⁸ Laurence Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, 37. This is but one of many references in Wood's work that makes the claim that Wesley's theology was influenced and changed by Fletcher.

⁵⁹ Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 244-67. In these pages the reader is given summary reviews of sermons written by Wesley late in life. Among these are "Scripture Way of Salvation," 1765, "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," 1788, "On a Single Eye," 1789, "On Faith," 1788, "On the Discoveries of Faith," 1788, and "The Wedding Garment," 1790. The content of these sermons provide evidence of no profound alteration in Wesley's theology over the years but rather a discernable continuity of thought and teaching throughout his ministerial life.

⁶⁰ Kenneth J. Collins, "The State of Wesley Studies in North America," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (2009), 28-36.

⁶¹ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 393 (Acts 1:5).

⁶² John Wesley, "The First Fruits of the Spirit," *The Works of John Wesley*, 5:96. In this sermon, Wesley enforces the concept of being filled again. In a letter to Miss J.C.M., 13:49, Wesley speaks of love filling the heart in the past as well as again in the present. In his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* and comments on Acts 4:31, he says that "They were all filled Afresh."

⁶³ Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 5:713.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 289.

⁶⁵ Robert W. Lyon, "Baptism and Spirit Baptism in the New Testament," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 25.

⁶⁶ J. A. Wood, *Perfect Love* (Nicholasville, Kentucky: Schmul Publishing Co., 2008), 236-7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8, 19, 31, 34, 37, 46, 49, 50, 53, 72.

⁶⁹ Kenneth Collins, "The State of Wesley Studies in North America," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 33.

⁷⁰ *Perfect Love* by J. A. Wood is known to be a textbook and reference guide to holiness teachings at Allegheny Wesleyan College in Salem, Ohio and Hobe Sound Bible College in Hobe Sound, Florida.

⁷¹ W. B. Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, Revivalist Office, 1899), 5:62-3.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁴ Samuel L. Brengle, *When the Holy Ghost is Come* (London: Judd Street, King's Cross, 1909), 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁶ See J. A. Wood, *Perfect Love*, wherein regeneration is repeatedly referred to as “mere regeneration” and the newly converted as “merely regenerated.” An attitude of devaluing regeneration prevails in the attempt to exalt entire sanctification. A full summation of the theology of the American Holiness Movement, according to Wood, is found in 8, 31, 34, 49, 53, 72, 235-7 ; Wallace Thornton, *Radical Righteousness* (Nicholasville, KY: Schmul Publishing Co.,1998), 46-161; Vic Reasoner, *The Hole in the Holiness Movement* (Evansville, Indiana: Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers, 1991), 35, 81-100.

⁷⁷ *Discipline of the Wesleyan Church 2008* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2008), ¶ 230.

⁷⁸ Ibid., ¶ 236.

⁷⁹ *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2009), ¶ 13.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 34-5.

⁸¹ *Discipline of the Wesleyan Church 2008* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2008), ¶ 242; *Manual of The Church of the Nazarene 2009-2013* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2009), ¶ 16.

⁸² Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. from the Arminian with introduction and notes by J. Armitage Robinson (London: Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), 41.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 63.

⁸⁵ Cyprian, “To Pompey, Against the Epistle of Stephen about the Baptism of Heretics,” trans Ernest Wallis, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 73.5.

⁸⁶ Cyprian, “To Magnus, on Baptizing the Novatians and Those Who Obtain Grace on a Sick-Bed,” trans Ernest Wallis, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, 75.12.

⁸⁷ David W. Bercot, ed., “Treatise on Re-Baptism,” *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, 55.

⁸⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, “Catechetical Lectures,” ed. Francis Martin, *New Testament V Acts*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 113.

⁸⁹ Ambrose, “On the Holy Spirit,” ed. Peter Gorday, *New Testament IX*

Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 304-5.

⁹⁰ Ambrosiaster, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," ed. Gerald Bray, *New Testament 7 1-2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 54.

⁹¹ Bede, "Commentary on Acts," ed. Francis Martin, *New Testament V Acts*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 113.

⁹² Bede, "Commentary on 1 Peter," ed. Gerald Bray, *New Testament XI James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 93.

⁹³ Francis Martin, ed., *Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Reflections on a Contemporary Grace in the Light of the Catholic Tradition* (Petersham, Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1998), 34. The citation is from the work *From Darkness to Light*, edited by Ann Field (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1978), 190.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Jonathan D. Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 78.

⁹⁶ John W. Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 14.

⁹⁷ G. W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 219.

⁹⁸ John W. Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition*, 33.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Martin, ed., *Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Reflections on a Contemporary Grace in the Light of the Catholic Tradition*, 20.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰² Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2005), 174-275.

¹⁰³ Alexander Shmemann, *Of Water and the Spirit* (Athens: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 68.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 46-7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹² "By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism (2004)," *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2008* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), 8013.