



THE ATTAINMENT OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AS A WESLEYAN/HOLINESS RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE ANGLICAN RITE OF CONFIRMATION

LAURENCE W. WOOD

The intent of this paper is to explore some similarities between the theology of confirmation and the theology of Christian perfection espoused by John Wesley and John Fletcher and later popularized in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. This paper does not try to establish that there was an intentional Wesleyan reinterpretation of the rite of confirmation, yet it will establish that there is a close connection with striking similarities nonetheless. It will also be seen, however, that these similarities stem in part from the same theological-biblical considerations. The most obvious similarity between the rite of confirmation in the Anglican tradition and the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection is the emphasis on a post-conversion experience of the Spirit which gives to the believer an increase in sanctifying grace.

James Dunn, a friendly critic of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement and whose theology reflects a typical Reformed interpretation of the Holy Spirit, points out that "within Christianity down through the centuries, there has always been a strain of teaching" that every believer should receive the Spirit of Pentecost subsequent to their conversion. He further acknowledges that "it was the [Wesleyan] Holiness Movement which brought belief in Spirit-baptism into prominence as a distinct doctrine."¹ This doctrine is more than a "strain of teaching" within Christianity. Dunn allows that it was held "without question" until Wyclif.² It is

Laurence W. Wood is Frank Paul Morris Professor of Systematic Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary.

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still the prevailing assumption within catholic Christianity. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement make up a larger share of Christian thought than Lutherans and Calvinists.

The Continental Reformers rejected the concept of a post-conversion experience of the Spirit. This rejection was accompanied by a moralistic misunderstanding of sanctification based on the idea of performance rather than on the ethic of intent and love. It is no mere coincidence that the Reformers' denial of Christian perfection in this life is connected to their denial of a post-conversion experience of the Spirit. Jürgen Moltmann, a Reformed theologian himself, says the Lutheran/Reformed doctrines "left out... 'the kingdom of the Spirit' " and "combined it with the kingdom of the Son."³ This merging of the Spirit into the Word (Christ) eliminated a basis for full sanctification until the eschaton.

To underscore the difference between the Lutheran and the Methodist idea of sanctification, Moltmann records in his book, *The Spirit of Life*, Wesley's controversial debate with the Moravian leader, Count Zinzendorff. In that debate (which Moltmann quotes in full), Wesley's argument for Christian perfection is linked to his belief that the disciples were justified before Pentecost and that after the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost they were made more holy. Wesley asked Zinzendorff: "Were not the apostles justified before the death of Christ.... But were they no more holy after the day of Pentecost, than before Christ's death.... Were they not on that day filled with the Holy Ghost?" The point of Wesley's debate with Zinzendorff was to show that his concept of Christian perfection was a post-conversion experience of the Spirit.⁴ This connection between an increase in holiness and the infilling of the Spirit is the main point of similarity between the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness and the Anglican rite of confirmation.

I. THE BESTOWAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONFIRMATION

The complex development surrounding the emergence of the rite of confirmation is beyond the scope of this paper,⁵ but a brief sampling abstracted from the more involved and intricate development of the rite of confirmation will serve to show that the sacramental concerns of confirmation became the concerns of Wesleyan theology, even though implicitly so. It is generally recognized that the pre-Nicene Fathers set the stage for it becoming a separate rite because they had a more inclusive doctrine of baptism which consisted of the *act* of water-baptism which granted forgiveness of sins and a subsequent anointing with oil accompanied by the laying on of hands which bestowed the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit.⁶ Water-baptism and Spirit-baptism were thus conjoined as two distinct events under the larger umbrella of the baptismal liturgy. Anglican G.W.H. Lampe admits that "this is the general pre-Nicene understanding of the rite," though he himself embraced a Reformed interpretation of confirmation as a ratification of baptism rather than a bestowal of the Spirit. He blames the emergence of the catholic concept of confirmation on the early Church Fathers who focused on sanctification rather than justification.⁷ For Wesley, this emphasis of the early Church Fathers on sanctification represented the true essence of the gospel. The connection

which Lampe sees, however, between the emphasis on sanctification and a post-conversion experience of the Spirit is sound.

This two-stage view of baptism is implicit in Irenaeus⁸ (ca. 185) and is made explicit in Tertullian (ca. 160-222) who composed the first treatise ever written on baptism.⁹ Cyprian (ca. 251), following Tertullian as the second great Latin theologian of the Church, says water baptism grants forgiveness of sins and prepares the believer for the reception of the Spirit through whom we "are made perfect with the Lord's seal."¹⁰ Being made "perfect" through "the descent of the Spirit" is called by Clement of Alexandria a "deification" in *Paidagogus* (6.25-26).¹¹ By the fifth century the rite of laying on of hands and bestowal of the Spirit was generally separated from baptism and performed by the bishop.¹² Augustine says this has been a uniform practice of the Church in all ages.¹³ He refers to "the imposition of the hands" as the "sacrament of the Spirit" who is given after one is born of the Spirit.¹⁴ Benedictine abbot, Rabanus Maurus, in the mid-ninth century established the theology of confirmation.¹⁵ Peter Lombard around 1150 A.D. listed confirmation as one of seven sacraments.¹⁶ The development of the theology of confirmation was, of course, not always clear, nor is it clearly agreed upon by Roman Catholic theologians today. Gerard Austin shows that "no other sacrament has had such a checkered history. No other sacrament has changed so frequently in ritual, prayers, and meaning through the centuries."¹⁷

In the process of this development of a theology of confirmation, Gregory Dix has shown that originally baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit were two distinct parts of a larger meaning of Christian baptism. He shows that baptism with the Spirit was not optional or supplemental to water baptism, but an essential aspect of the meaning of the Christian life. Baptism with the Spirit was "a sealing unto the day of redemption." It was a foretaste of the eternal salvation. Dix notes that in the fifth century a change in terminology occurred. Baptism with the Spirit which had been originally called a "sealing" was renamed with "the new term *confirmatio*." Dix saw this change in terminology to be a weakening of the meaning of the baptism with the Spirit. He writes:

The change of term has its own significance. A document which needs 'sealing' is not valid until the seal has been affixed. The 'confirmation' of a document, though it may add to its authority, implies that it was already operative before it was 'confirmed.' This is precisely the change of emphasis which was now taking place in the West.¹⁸

Thomas Aquinas (13th Century) preserved both the meaning of "strengthening" and "sanctifying grace" for the rite of Confirmation: "This sacrament gives the Holy Spirit to the baptized for their strengthening just as he was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and as he was given to the baptized through the imposition of hands by the apostles.... The sending or giving of the Holy Spirit is always accompanied by sanctifying grace."¹⁹ In addition to the public rite of confirmation, St. Thomas also exhorted all believers to experience personally in this life the perfection of love through the Spirit which he defines as a perfection of intent ("precepts"), not performance ("counsels").²⁰

Thomas allowed that the effects of confirmation—the fullness of the Spirit in sanctifying and empowering grace—could be experienced independently of the sacrament of confirmation itself. He cites the experience of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, as an example of this spontaneous and non-sacramental dispensing of the grace of confirmation.²¹ As it will be pointed out below, this allowance for a non-sacramental experience of the sanctifying fullness of the Spirit became the normal pattern and expectation among English Protestants such as some of the Puritan Divines in the seventeenth century, the Wesley brothers and John Fletcher in the eighteenth century, culminating in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement in the nineteenth century.

The English Reformers, like Cranmer,²² did not reject the rite of confirmation as a conferring of the Spirit of Pentecost, whereas the Continental Reformers did.²³ In the Anglican ritual of confirmation, which was revised in 1662 and used in Wesley's day, the following is found in one of the prayers:

"Confirm and settle the godly Resolutions They have now made. Sanctify *Them throughout* [italics mine] that They may become the Temples of the Holy Ghost."²⁴

Here the similarity between Wesley's concept of full sanctification, or Christian perfection, and the Anglican rite of confirmation is made obvious.

Wesley, like Calvin,²⁵ rejected confirmation as a sacrament. Wesley also seemed to discard it as a ritual altogether because he did not include it in *The Sunday Service* which he prepared for the American Methodists.²⁶ In a letter to a Roman Catholic, Wesley objected both to the concept of confirmation as a sacrament and to its elaborate ceremony. Wesley does not say he rejected the rite of confirmation as an ordinance, but only its sacramental status and its extravagant symbolism as practiced in Roman Catholicism. He writes:

In consecration of the chrism, the Bishop blows upon it, to signify the descent of the Holy Ghost for the sanctification of it...and that it hath [thus] a power of sanctification as the instrument of God...so the Bishop prays in the consecration of it, that God "in bestowing spiritual grace upon this ointment, would pour out the fullness of sanctification, and that it may be to all that are to be anointed with it, for the adoption of sons by the Holy Spirit."²⁷

Notice in this prayer of confirmation cited by Wesley the connection between "pour out" (a reference to the pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit) and the "fullness of sanctification." For Wesley, "the fullness of sanctification" was given through the Spirit in a personal, evangelical, and non-sacramental way, and the connection between full sanctification and the pouring out of the Spirit was to be highlighted in John Fletcher.

II. WESLEY'S REPLACEMENT OF CONFIRMATION WITH AN EVANGELICAL EXPERIENCE

Though a High Churchman, Wesley's emphasis was upon a personal, evangelical faith more than upon the sacramental means of grace. The combination of his Puritan heritage, along with the Moravian influence upon his early thinking, put him in a con-

flicting situation with his high church Anglican loyalties. Yet the focus on salvation by faith (which he derived more from the English Reformers than the Continental Reformers)²⁸ became his passion, and he insisted that salvation by faith means we are fully sanctified by faith as well as justified by faith.²⁹

Though he ignored the rite of confirmation, he did not ignore the reality which confirmation signified. As he put it in the closing paragraph of *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, "we expect...to be sanctified wholly through His Spirit."³⁰ Wesley's writings are replete with references to the Holy Spirit who conforms us to the image of Christ. There is no competition between Christ and the Spirit. The objective work of Christ's redeeming life, death, and resurrection had to be finished before the subjective work of the Holy Spirit could seal the believer with the imprint of Christ's likeness. Hence the primary reason why the Spirit of Christ is called the *Holy Spirit* is because his task, Wesley says, is to make us holy like Christ.³¹

He also refers to Christians who have been perfected in love as being "full of His Spirit."³² "To those who deny perfection to be attainable in this life," Wesley asks: "Has there not been a larger measure of the Holy Spirit given under the Gospel than under the Jewish dispensation? If not, in what sense was the Spirit not given before Christ was glorified? (John vii.39)."³³ To those who thought a person ought not to expect to be made perfect in love until a lengthy period after their conversion, Wesley wrote: "It is neither wise nor modest to affirm that a person must be a believer for any length of time before he is capable of receiving a high degree of the Spirit of holiness."³⁴ He further advises those who are seeking perfection of love to pray much: "God hardly gives *His Spirit* (italics mine) even to those whom He has established in grace, if they do not pray for it on all occasions, not only once, but many times."³⁵ He specifically linked the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit to the meaning of full sanctification. "The Holy Ghost was not yet given in His sanctifying graces, as He was after Jesus was glorified.... And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then *first it was* (italics mine), that they who 'waited for the promise of the Father' were made *more than conquerors over sin* [full sanctification for Wesley, italics mine] by the Holy Ghost given unto them."³⁶

In his sermon on "Scriptural Christianity" (1744), based on Acts 4:31—"they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," Wesley shows that the call to be filled with the Spirit is a call to appropriate the sanctifying grace and fruit of the Spirit. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost," Wesley says, "to give them...the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit." He further defines the fullness of the Spirit to mean that the disciples "were all of one heart and of one soul" and who, "one and all, have the love of God filling their hearts and constraining them to love their neighbor as themselves."³⁷

This sermon is remarkably similar in substance to Homily XIX in the so-called Marcarius the Egyptian in the fourth century. His theme was: "Be filled with the Spirit," which he equated with perfection of love, the fruit of the Spirit, and cleansing from indwelling sin.³⁸ His appeal was for believers to accept God's offer of grace without any reference to the sacraments as such. Wesley cited pseudo-Marcarius to show that the early Church Fathers also said that believers still need to be cleansed from indwelling sin after their initial conversion.³⁹

Another similarity between confirmation and Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfec-

tion is found in his *Explanatory upon the New Testament* which translates Acts 19:2: "Have you received the Holy Ghost *since* ye believed?" Of course, this is the same translation of the King James Version and this particular text reflected the Anglican theology of confirmation where believing precedes the right to receive the Pentecostal Spirit. If Wesley thought that Paul intended to say that these disciples should have received the Spirit at the time of their conversion in this particular text, its grammatical construction could have been translated, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed." Such variations from the King James Version he promised to make in his "Preface" to the *Explanatory Notes*, and he often did.⁴⁰ But here he agreed with the King James Version. In his commentary, he suggests the Holy Spirit was given to the Ephesians for their sanctification. This corresponds with his comment on Acts 2:38: "The gift of the Holy Ghost does not mean, in this place, the power of speaking with tongues; for the promise of this was not given to all that were afar off, in distant ages and nations; but rather the constant fruits of faith, even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost [=sanctification]." In *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, the following verse is written as an interpretation of Acts 19:6, "The Holy Ghost came on them":

Still the Holy Ghost descends
The Indwelling Comforter,
All the griefs and troubles ends
Of those that Christ revere;
Works His miracles within,
Renews their hearts, and tongues, and eyes;
Makes an utter end of sin,
And wholly sanctifies.⁴¹

III. JOHN FLETCHER— THE LINKING OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AND CONFIRMATION

John Fletcher was a Geneva-trained scholar who had gone to England and became a Methodist. He also became the widely-known vicar of Madeley Church of England. He became Wesley's personally-designated successor, though he declined. His premature death would have prevented it anyway. Fletcher brought this connection between perfection and Pentecost into clearer focus. His emphasis on "a sanctifying baptism with the Holy Spirit" was *prominently* featured throughout his *Checks to Antinomianism*, which were intended to be an apologetic for Wesley's theological emphases. Wesley edited, published, and fully endorsed them.⁴² Fletcher's writings became standard reading for all Methodist preachers, both in England and in America. And his primary category for defining Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection was his doctrine of dispensations (not to be confused with Schofield's dispensationalism).

According to his doctrine of dispensations, Fletcher interpreted one's relation to God according to varying degrees of faith. That is, one may be living experientially in the dispensation of the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit. Fletcher believed in the unity of the Triune God and the togetherness of the distinct functions of the Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit. For Fletcher, it was no more tritheistic to say that experientially there are those who experience varying degrees of faith which can be categorized as "Faith in the Father," "Faith in the Son," and "Faith in the Spirit," even as it is not tritheistic or modalistic to say that God revealed Himself in history, first as Father, then as Son, and finally as Holy Spirit, just as it is not modalistic to pray to the Father, to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit.⁴³ So Fletcher interpreted the individual history of salvation for each person in correlation with the dispensations of the Father, Son, and Spirit as revealed in the biblical history of salvation. Some have a relationship to God which is even pre-Abrahamic as righteous heathens, or it may be Abrahamic and Mosaic as the dispensation of the Father unfolded in the Old Testament, or it may be pre-pentecostal as the disciples of John and Jesus' disciples during his early existence who thus lived in the dispensation of the Son, or it may be fully Christian as the disciples became on the day of Pentecost, who lived in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. "Pentecostal Christianity" represented the highest stage of faith which he identified with the meaning of full sanctification.⁴⁴

Wesley had the profoundest appreciation for Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations. Wesley recommended and approved Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations in 1773: "Mr. Fletcher has given us a wonderful view of the different dispensations which we are under. I believe that difficult subject was never placed in so clear a light before. *It seems God has raised him up for this very thing* *italics mine!*"⁴⁵ In 1773, Wesley personally designated Fletcher to be his successor of the Methodists because of his "clear understanding" of "Methodist doctrine."⁴⁶

Fletcher referred to the seventeenth-century Puritan Divines as support for his views of perfection, especially calling attention to their idea of *full* assurance of faith as a postconversion experience of the Spirit.⁴⁷ One such Arminian Puritan was John Goodwin. Interestingly enough, Wesley published an abridged edition of his *Justification by Faith*.⁴⁸ This seventeenth-century Arminian Puritan also wrote another book, *A Being Filled with the Spirit*. It defines the fullness of the Spirit in terms of a post-conversion experience which grants full assurance,⁴⁹ perfection of love,⁵⁰ and spiritual strength to live the Christian life.⁵¹ A century before Wesley and Fletcher, John Goodwin was already promoting the doctrine of holiness and doing it quite explicitly! Because of this emphasis on infused righteousness, he even before Wesley was called a "methodist."⁵² He exhorts all believers to "be filled with the Spirit." His two books *Justification by Faith* and *A Being Filled with the Spirit* are the equivalent (whether consciously so or not) of an evangelical, non-sacramental re-interpretation of the rites of baptism and confirmation that anticipated in a remarkable way Fletcher's thinking.

Wesley was frequently accused of not being truly Anglican in his theology of Christian perfection. Fletcher came to his defense, noting that Wesley's doctrine of perfection was only implementing in the lives of believers the reality of the Spirit promised in the rite of confirmation. To the Anglican clergymen who rejected Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, Fletcher reminded them at their baptism that they "were ranked among Christ's soldiers, and received a Christian name, in token that...[they] would 'keep God's holy will and commandments all the days of...

[their] life." He further reminds them that at their subsequent confirmation they vowed to "keep God's holy will and commandments so as utterly 'to abolish the whole body of sin.'" For them to reject Christian perfection is "to pull down what he [the bishop] confirmed, and to demolish the perfection which he made you vow to attain, and to 'walk in all the days of your life.'" ⁵³ Fletcher also appealed to the Anglican rite of confirmation as supporting his doctrine of dispensations. For it makes a distinction between the faith of "imperfect Christians who, like the apostles before the day of Pentecost, are yet strangers to the great outpouring of the Spirit, on the one hand, and the faith of "Christians complete in Christ" who have "faith 'in the Holy Ghost.'" In further defending his doctrine of dispensations, he shows that the ordinance of confirmation was "originally intended to lead young believers to the fullness of the Christian dispensation." ⁵⁴ Fletcher gave an evangelical interpretation to the exegetical foundation for the Anglican rite of confirmation when he described the Samaritans' reception of the sanctifying Spirit in Acts 8:17 as subsequent to their becoming Christian believers. ⁵⁵

IV. THE WESLEYAN/HOLINESS MOVEMENT AND THE SANCTIFYING SPIRIT

John Fletcher is the bridge between Wesley and the Wesleyan/Holiness movement, and his influence extends indirectly beyond Methodism in general to Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement, though Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement did not maintain his focus on sanctification. Fletcher is also a way back to an appreciation for our Anglican roots and to catholic Christianity. For Fletcher synthesized with a clarity and a focus hitherto unknown in the history of catholic Christianity the internal reality and feeling of a personal doctrine of the Holy Spirit implicit in the Anglican rite of confirmation. And he did it with Wesley's blessing and commendation. His "favourite subject" (as Wesley reported it) ⁵⁶ was the sanctifying baptism with the Holy Spirit which is quite literally splashed on the pages throughout his *Checks to Antinomianism*. Wesley commented in his diary after Fletcher had preached a sermon on this theme at the Methodist Conferences in 1781: "I do not wonder he should be so popular." ⁵⁷ In describing Fletcher's writings in general, Wesley spoke about the "clearness of the arguments" "the purity of the language" along with his "clear understanding" of "Methodist doctrine." ⁵⁸

Wesley's high commendation is why the early Methodists cited Fletcher alongside Wesley in their preaching and devotional writings, which is especially evident among the American Methodists. Because Wesley's writings had been largely completed before Fletcher's *Checks*, Fletcher had the perspective of hindsight to view the whole of Wesley's writings with an intellectual penetration which even Wesley greatly admired.

In fact, the theology of Wesley as synthesized into a consistent whole in Fletcher's *Checks to Antinomianism* was the textbook of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. The subsequent theological and devotional literature which sustained the nineteenth century Wesleyan/Holiness Movement was largely an extended commentary on Fletcher's central ideas.

We cannot trace the details of the historical developments of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement within the limits of this paper, except briefly to note its phenomenal rise in the

early 1800s and its subsequent spread throughout North America, England, France, Germany, the Scandinavian Countries, and around the globe through its missionary activity.⁵⁹ Its predominant message was the sanctifying baptism with the Spirit. The date of 1839 could be considered a discernible point for the beginning of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement with the publication of a journal under the title of *A Guide to Christian Perfection*. Its editor was Timothy Merritt, a prominent New England minister who had extensive experience as an editor in the Methodist Publishing House.⁶⁰ Earlier he had published a book entitled, *The Christian's Manual; a Treatise on Christian Perfection, with Directions for Obtaining That State* (1825). The influences of John Wesley and John Fletcher were equally evident in his treatise. Fletcher's emphasis on the infilling of the Spirit as the means of being made perfect in love was highlighted in his book as well as in the journal, *A Guide to Christian Perfection*, which was published monthly for the promotion of holiness. The spread of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement extended beyond the Methodist Church, first through the efforts of leaders like Phoebe Palmer, a doctor's wife in New York who held the so-called "Parlor Meetings" in her home designed to promote the holiness message.⁶¹ She also became the editor of *The Guide to Christian Perfection*, which was renamed the *Herald of Holiness*. Thomas Oden refers to her as one, if not the leading, woman theologian in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He writes: "It would be difficult to identify a more influential and substantive Protestant woman theological writer of the time than Mrs. Palmer because of the extraordinary range, depth, and international character of her ministry and authorship."⁶² Other means for spreading the holiness message were through the camp-meetings which were organized largely under the leadership of the Rev. J.A. Wood, a highly respected and scholarly Methodist minister.⁶³ The promotion of holiness throughout the United States focused on being filled with the Spirit as its central theme. A holiness revival also highly impacted the Methodist Church during the years immediately following the Civil War. Numerous conferences reported that special meetings were being held where many believers were being entirely sanctified. This occasioned considerable conflict within the Methodist Church since not everyone was sympathetic to the Wesleyan/Holiness emphasis. Consequently, offshoot denominations of the Methodist Church were started, such as the Nazarene Church, The Wesleyan Church, and the Free Methodist Church.⁶⁴ In spite of the fragmentation into splinter groups, the cause of the Wesleyan message of holiness continued to grow, and institutions such as Asbury Theological Seminary were founded to promote, not only the Wesleyan theological distinctives, but the historic Christian faith as well. Henry Clay Morrison, a prominent Methodist minister in Kentucky, evangelist, and college president, was the founder of Asbury Theological Seminary which was established in 1923.

In recent years the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement has found itself in transition. Its greatest challenge, however, has been to re-think its doctrine of holiness in the light of the rise of Pentecostalism. The preference for speaking of perfect love as attainable through the Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit turned acidic when Pentecostalism (often referred to as "the tongues movement") emerged from within its own ranks in the early 1900s. The ethical concepts of purity of heart, the fruit of the Spirit, and perfection of love as the meaning of the Spirit-filled life were substituted with miracles, wonders, and the divine possession of ecstatic power in pentecostalism.

This development has also given further rise to the Charismatic Movement which has swept across mainline denominations.

It is interesting to note that Karl Rahner has interpreted the Charismatic Movement within Roman Catholicism with its emphasis on the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a personalizing of the meaning of the sacrament of confirmation.⁶⁵ As Donald Dayton has shown, the Pentecostalist and Charismatic movements are rooted in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition with its emphasis upon the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This connection shows the historical significance of Fletcher's influence and shows that he is by way of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement the primary link between the Anglican rite of confirmation and the twentieth century emphasis upon an evangelical, personalized experience of the fullness of the Spirit. As it has also been pointed out, being filled with the Spirit, being made perfect in love, and enjoying the full assurance of faith were also themes found in seventeenth century Puritan divines, especially as seen in John Goodwin's, *A Being Filled with the Spirit*. Yet it was Fletcher who highlighted the sanctification aspect of being filled with the Spirit which was popularized by the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. The Pentecostalist/Charismatic movement retained an emphasis upon the baptism with the Spirit, but largely substituted the emphasis on sanctification with a focus on the gifts of the Spirit.

V. THE PROMOTION OF HOLINESS AND THE BAPTISMAL LITURGY

If the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement thinks the Pentecostalists are too subjective and emotional, Wesley thought the Roman Catholics were too objectivistic. Wesley perceived their rite of confirmation to be too formalistic, as if sanctification could be objectively dispensed to a believer through a chrism. Perhaps it could be said that Wesley's disregard of the formal, objective rite of the laying on of hands ("confirmation") influenced the progressive subjectivizing of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by way of Fletcher, the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, and finally the Pentecostalist denominations. A path leads from Roman Catholicism with its formal/sacramentalist dispensing of the Spirit in confirmation, to Anglicanism with its redefining of confirmation as an ordinance, to Methodism and the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement with its substitution of confirmation with an evangelical experience of holiness, and finally to Pentecostalism which totally subjectivized the work of the Holy Spirit by marketing an emotional and powerful feeling of divine possession. At least, from the perspective of the present standpoint, such a development seems to have occurred, even though the historical connections may not be easily confirmed and documented and there is no indication that such a path was deliberately chosen. At least, Fletcher interpreted confirmation as implying the infilling of the Spirit and the perfection of love, and his influence is highly visible as the source of the Wesleyan and consequent Pentecostal and Charismatic developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And with the general recognition that the Charismatic Renewal Movement is in part a personalizing of the meaning of confirmation,⁶⁶ such a path from Roman Catholicism through the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement to the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements seems to be evident. Thomas Oden has described this subjectivizing shift from Anglicanism to Pentecostalism as involving several interrelated factors:

The journey from Wesley to modern Holiness, Pentecostal, and charismatic

movements is ostensibly a stark transition from episcopal leadership to greater lay leadership, from Anglican assumptions about the sacraments to those resembling Quaker and Baptist, from a greater stress upon reasonable religion to emotive intensity, from the Prayer-Book to glossolalia, from a relatively hierarchical patriarchal form of leadership to one in which women take an increasing part, from trine theology to a greater focus upon the Holy Spirit, and from water baptism to Spirit baptism. Yet those who look more closely at these transitions see that the changes were subtle, involving gradual shifts, but with momentous effect.⁶⁷

A detailed analysis of the rise of Pentecostalism from within the theological framework of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement is found in Donald Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Dayton locates the immediate source of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement with its emphasis on the fullness of the Spirit in John Fletcher, but I have indicated here that its ultimate roots extend to John Goodwin (and other seventeenth century Puritan Divines), and indirectly to the theology of confirmation in Anglican/Roman Catholic traditions (as Fletcher so interpreted) with confirmation being an extension of baptism as found in the teachings of the Early Church Fathers, as Lampe and Dix have shown.

The Wesleyan/Holiness Movement has had little dialogue with its Anglican heritage, though the liturgists within The United Methodist Church have had extensive dialogue with Anglican thought. *Instead, its major dialogical partner has been the Reformed tradition within American Evangelicalism with whom it has the least in common.* One way to recover the true identity of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement is for it to reconsider the significance of liturgy and its evangelical benefits and to align itself more directly with its Anglican roots. A discovery of the significance of the Anglican liturgical tradition and especially a re-focusing of its attention on the rite of the imposition of hands and the bestowal of the Spirit as an aspect of baptism could serve as a revitalization of the holiness message. For it would provide the liturgical context of the objective, historical event of Pentecost and prevent a further slide into emotionalism and a gnostic-like privatization of faith. For then the call to holiness would be rooted in the public worshiping experience of the entire body of Christ as each believer participates liturgically in the event of Pentecost. This public participation in the meaning of holiness would enforce upon Methodists the importance of personally experiencing Christian perfection and would help alleviate the fears which Wesley expressed that Methodists would forget that their special calling was "to promote holiness across these lands." As Gregory Dix points out, "because liturgy is the vital act of the Church's life, in the end it will mould the ideas of those who live that life."⁶⁸

The logo of the United Methodist Church includes the dual symbols of Easter and Pentecost. Throughout the history of the Christian Church, the sacrament of water baptism has been identified with the meaning of Easter, as Paul puts it in Roman 6:4: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Easter is for the New Testament what the Exodus event was for the Old Testament.⁶⁹ Likewise, the baptism with the Spirit ("the laying on of hands") is identified with Pentecost and means being "sealed" unto the day of redemption. Paul shows that this "sealing" occurs after one has believed: The King James Version, reinforcing the theol-

ogy of Anglicanism and its doctrine of confirmation, makes the subsequent aspect of being sealed with the Spirit prominent: "In whom ye also trusted, *after* that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also *after* that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Pentecost is for the New Testament what the Conquest event was for the Old Testament. For the Conquest meant the establishment of the kingdom of Israel and the condition for living in the kingdom was "loving the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your soul." This perfection of love, Moses explained, was possible only because the seal of the Lord would be placed upon his people through a circumcision of the heart (Deut. 30:6). The prophets predicted a new conquest when God would place His Spirit within his people and they would be faithful to the promise God made with Abraham. The promise initially made to Abraham had its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost. Paul writes in Galatians 4:6: "But when the time had fully come, *God sent forth his Son*, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, *God has sent the Spirit of his Son* into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father." Notice the two "sending"—"*God sent his Son*" and "*God sent the Spirit*." Notice that "sonship" is the condition for receiving the seal of the Spirit of the Son in our hearts. Paul says God's initial promise to Abraham to give him and his posterity a kingdom where he would be their God had its ultimate fulfillment in the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ at Pentecost: "In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). Likewise Peter quotes the prophet Joel to show that the promise of God to send his Spirit was now fulfilled (Acts 2:16). As we have already seen, this twofold stage of initiation into the Church as the body of Christ is reflected in the baptism liturgy of the early Church Fathers. Being justified by faith (water baptism) and being fully sanctified and made perfect (in love) is through the agency of the Holy Spirit (the laying on of hands).

The meaning of sanctifying grace is thus begun in the first step of the Christian life symbolized in water baptism and brought to fulfillment in Spirit baptism. Water baptism and Spirit baptism are thus two interrelated and inseparable moments which together constitute the foundation of the Christian life. Hence the United Methodist logo captures these two moments in a theologically precise and illuminating manner. As we shall point out shortly, the United Methodist Book of Hymnal (1989) and Book of Worship (1992) also now include both water baptism *and Spirit baptism* ("Laying on of hands") as part of the baptismal liturgy and membership in the Church.

Wesley says: "We expect...to be sanctified wholly through His Spirit."⁷⁰ Perhaps the public rite of the laying on of hands (traditionally called confirmation) would at least serve to reinforce the evangelical experience of full sanctification, even as water-baptism reinforces the evangelical experience of the new birth. Does not Jesus' command to baptize (Matt. 28:19) imply baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit? Are not the dual symbols of water (being buried with Christ signifying forgiveness of sins) and also the laying on of hands (the descent of the Spirit signifying sanctifying grace) both

included in the larger meaning of Christian baptism? The writings of the early Church Fathers say "Yes." Then it could be argued that "confirmation" is a sacrament as well since it is an extension of baptism. The general Protestant position is that the act of water baptism is a sacrament, not the laying of hands since Jesus did not explicitly command the laying on of hands (baptism with the Spirit). However, Jesus did command the disciples to tarry for the endowment of the Spirit after his resurrection had occurred. This is why the laying on of hands was included as part of the baptism liturgy during the pre-Nicene period. For both baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit constituted the meaning of the Christian life. This twofold meaning of Christian baptism was obscured when the second aspect of the laying of hands was delayed in time from baptism with water and called confirmation in the Fifth Century.

If we take seriously Wesley's interpretative role which he assigns to the tradition of the early Church Fathers because they stood the closest to the New Testament days, then this larger meaning of baptism should be a significant part of our evaluation of the validity of "confirmation" or whatever it might be called. However, there is one obvious difference in application of water and the laying on of hands. For water baptism occurs only once, since Jesus died and rose again only once, whereas the imposition of hands and reception of the Spirit's fullness may be repeated on several occasions. If the laying on of hands is part of the larger meaning of the sacrament of baptism as the early Church Fathers believed, then the act of laying on of hands could be a repeated experience even as the Lord's Supper is, though the act of water baptism is a once-for-all event. Certainly, the instances of new converts in the early church being both baptized with water and subsequently receiving the fullness of the Spirit through the laying on of hands in Acts 8:15, and Acts 19:6, has interpretative significance for the larger meaning of baptism. And by all means, our Lord's baptism as a pattern for all Christians included both the act of water baptism and the subsequent descent of the Spirit.

Rudolf Bultmann has shown that though the act of water-baptism and the reception of the Spirit occurred separately in the book of Acts, they were still thought of as a larger single event. Yet Bultmann shows that Paul clearly distinguished between "babes in Christ" and "Spirit-endowed Christians" (1 Cor. 3:1).⁷¹ James Dunn, who agrees with Calvin's denial of a post-conversion experience of the Spirit, fails to appreciate this Pauline concept. In a typical Reformed way, Dunn complains of the way the Sacramentalists and the Wesleyans "disjoined"⁷² water baptism and Spirit baptism. Actually he is right that the two aspects are not to be "disjoined;" however, they should be "conjoined," but Dunn "dissolves" the distinction. The work of sanctification completed through the infilling of the Spirit is really begun in the birth of the Spirit. Easter and Pentecost form a continuum of grace, not a disjoining of isolated events.

The Continental Protestant reformers assumed that the practice of baptism in the New Testament only had reference to the act of water baptism itself, not noticing that such was not the case with the apostolic and early Church Fathers and thus probably not in the New Testament either.⁷³ Paul says, "By one Spirit we have all been baptized into Christ" (1 Cor. 12:13). Baptism is twofold—water baptism and Spirit baptism are conjoined as distinct but inseparable parts of one larger complex saving experience. Entrance into the Church is thus to be understood as an interrelated two-stage experi-

ence of Easter and Pentecost. The letters of the New Testament are largely pastoral exhortations to implement in our lives the salvation-historical events of Easter and Pentecost which initiate us into the Church.

The Continental Reformers actually deformed the larger meaning of baptism by reducing it only to the application of water which symbolized being buried with Christ and raised to newness of life, but they disregarded the laying on of hands as the outpouring of His Spirit. Perhaps this reduced meaning of the reformers developed because the rite of confirmation had become so separated from baptism that the baptism liturgy of the early Church Fathers with its balance between the two aspects was lost from view.⁷⁴

An emphasis on ritual slowly has developed over the years within the history of The United Methodist Church. Wesley developed the order of service and ritual for the American Methodists in 1784. It was a revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* and Wesley called it, The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America. One conspicuous omission from the Anglican liturgy was the order of confirmation and church membership.⁷⁵ The Sunday services in Methodist Churches were informal (corresponding to the informal services held in the Methodist preaching houses in England) and largely lacking the liturgical worship services characteristic of Anglicanism. But over the years, American Methodism has become more liturgical and has developed a stronger emphasis on the sacramental nature of Christian experience, especially as its liturgists have participated in ecumenical discussions in recent years and sought a "recovery of its antecedents in the theology and practice of the early Christian church."⁷⁶ It is not my intention to address this issue, except briefly as it relates to the rite on confirmation.

In the 1964 Methodist Hymnal, the order for confirmation followed the Anglican tradition in recognizing the laying on of hands as the act of confirmation for those already baptized and instructed in the doctrines and duties of the Christian faith. The minister laid his hands on the baptized young people and said: "The Lord defend you with his heavenly grace and by his Spirit confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen." The minister then addressed the congregation with these words: "Brethren, I commend to your love and care these persons whom we this day receive into the membership of this congregation. Do all in your power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love." What is included in this rite of confirmation is the Anglican/Catholic emphasis that initiation into the Church is composed of both water baptism and confirmation. Church membership is conditioned both upon water baptism (Easter) and the laying on of hands (Pentecost)⁷⁷ though this dual emphasis is not so clearly emphasized in the United Methodist teaching as it is in the Anglican and Roman Catholic tradition.⁷⁸ Significantly enough, this Methodist rite of confirmation is directly related to the doctrine of being made perfect in love (=full sanctification) in the concluding prayer of confirmation in the ritual.

As a result of ecumenical dialogue and closer examination of patristic sources, further reforms made their way into the initiation rites of The United Methodist Church in 1976 with the publication of *A Service of Baptism, Confirmation, and Renewal*.⁷⁹ The

baptism liturgy now included both the act of water baptism itself (signifying Jesus' death-resurrection) and the laying on of hands (signifying the descent of the Spirit). After the application of water, the minister lays his hands on the head of the person and says: "The power of the Holy Spirit work within you, that being born through water and the Spirit you may be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ. Amen."⁸⁰ This reform later made its way into *The United Methodist Hymnal* in 1989, and *The United Methodist Book of Worship* in 1992. The alternate words for the laying on of hands uses sealing: "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." This wording is more fitting and corresponds more closely to the usage of the early Church Fathers, as Gregory Dix has shown in his exposition of the meaning of confirmation in the Anglican tradition.⁸¹ It also more pointedly captures the meaning of sanctification as being stamped with the image of God, which is one of the distinctive teachings of Methodism. Unfortunately many United Methodist ministers have apparently not taken notice of this change in their baptismal liturgy. For this author has attended many baptisms and has never observed the new baptismal liturgy being used.

The new liturgy for The United Methodist Church includes the laying on of hands in infant baptism as well. Gregory Dix has argued for the usefulness of a rite of confirmation for young persons who were baptized in infancy since the New Testament emphasized "a conscious, adherence and response to the Gospel of God."⁸² However, initiation into the body of Christ for infants ought to include both water baptism and Spirit baptism ("laying on of hands"). And yet, adolescents can still be confirmed with the laying on of hands, even though they were baptized with water in infancy and hands were laid upon them for the giving of the Spirit. While water baptism is not repeated for a young person baptized in infancy (since Jesus died once and for all and hence our burial with him in water baptism is once and for all), yet the laying on of hands is not a once and for all event. For the Holy Spirit is received in his fullness again and again for the forming of one's relationship with Christ. Consequently, the rite of confirmation as an adolescent ritual can be a meaningful experience as the youth is taught more clearly the way of Christ and is offered the opportunity to make a public confession of his or her adherence to Christ.

Independently of Gregory Dix's similar conclusions, a Nazarene scholar and a leading Wesleyan/Holiness theologian, Paul Bassett, has noted in his work on the relation between entire sanctification and the bestowal of the Spirit among the early Church Fathers that by the late fourth century "the second part of the baptismal ritual was often believed to express primarily the coming and presence of the Spirit to strengthen or fortify the believer. In fact, little by little, the second part of the ritual was separated from the first and referred to as confirmation (*confirmatio*, which means affirmation, strengthening, encouragement). The note of purification or sanctification or perfection was not lost but it was muted, especially in the West."⁸³ This emphasis upon full sanctification as related to the meaning of the fullness of the Spirit needs to be made prominent in our understanding of the laying on of hands among Methodist believers who participate in baptism. As it now stands, this understanding is muted in spite of the fact that the baptism liturgy in *The United Methodist Hymnal* now

includes the laying on of hands as an essential part of Christian baptism.

Gregory Dix has argued that the original meaning of the laying on of hands (baptism with the Spirit) was more than water baptism. Nor was it a ratification of water baptism. Rather, it was "the sealing of the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption." Unlike some critics who misinterpret Dix, he does not put baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit in opposition to each other. The latter is a perfection of the former. Dix writes: "These two aspects [of water baptism and Spirit baptism] are not opposed to one another; they are different aspects of the same redemption."⁸⁴ He further shows that "if this scriptural duality were to be fully and widely restored in our teaching, Confirmation [the laying on of hands and baptism with the Spirit] would, in the course of time, automatically regain its proper importance in the Christian life in the minds of our people."⁸⁵ Likewise, the same could be said among Methodists if the meaning of the laying on of hands as a sealing of the Spirit unto the day of redemption would be emphasized.

As we have already emphasized, Dix believes there are at least two reasons why the baptism with the Spirit has been minimized in the Church today. First, it was reduced in its meaning to a mere strengthening of the Christian life rather than a sealing unto the day of redemption. This weakening of the meaning of the baptism with the Spirit occurred in the fifth century with the adoption of the word confirmation to describe its meaning. This reduced meaning of the laying on of hands was standardized as its fundamental interpretation through the Forged Decretals of Pope Melchior.⁸⁶ A second reason for the misunderstanding of the meaning of the baptism with the Spirit was the Western practice of postponing the time of confirmation until years after water baptism. Dix accepts the practical convenience of this postponement of the laying on of hands in confirmation, especially since infant baptism does not allow for a conscious decision of faith. Yet he acknowledges that it contributed to a decline in the appreciation and understanding of the significance of the baptism with the Spirit.⁸⁷

Dix calls for a renewed appreciation of the baptism with the Spirit as an essential aspect of the meaning of the Christian life. With that understanding would develop an increased appreciation for the reality of the divine mystery in our imperfect world, Dix believes.⁸⁸ Dix writes:

First, it seems difficult to exaggerate the importance of the fact that for the Christian as for the Church, baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ and the Pentecostal Baptism of the Spirit are not one thing but two, both of them necessary and inseparably connected, but not the same. It is *after* our Lord's own Baptism in the Jordan—inseparably connected henceforward in his own mind with the coming passion and resurrection—it is immediately after, but after this that the Messianic Spirit descends upon Him. It is after Jesus is 'glorified' in death, and resurrection—soon after, but after—that the Spirit is given, first to the Apostles and then to the Church corporately as associated with them. These are two moments in a single salvation into eternity, inseparably connected but not one and the same. The gift of the Spirit is not for those who receive Him a mere *consequence* of a previous salvation by the Son. Rather is it the Spirit

who actually *operates* the salvation of each Christian, though the Spirit is shed forth only upon those already united to the crucified and risen Christ by faith and regenerated and incorporated into Him. Such, I take it, is the fundamental meaning of the striking duality of the primitive liturgy of Initiation, Baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ being followed by the Sealing unto the day of Redemption—'the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.'⁸⁹

The Methodist emphasis upon full sanctification as a post-conversion experience of the Spirit was contradicted by the liturgical practice of its tradition until the recent liturgical developments within United Methodism. For it focused only on water baptism signifying our being buried with Christ. Without the laying on of hands as the completion of the meaning of our baptism this created a liturgical vacuum which eroded the meaning of the Spirit's fullness by suggesting it is to be postponed eschatologically as in Protestant Orthodoxy, or else it succumbed to a gnostic, individualistic, or fanatical experience which is not integrated into the larger experience of the worshipping community.

One point of clarification regarding the phrase, "receiving" or "giving" the Spirit might be helpful at this point, since some will assume that any talk about receiving the Spirit subsequent to the initial step of faith might suggest that the Spirit is not involved in the larger work of conversion and all the subsequent stages of the Christian life. New Testament scholarship throughout the Christian tradition has largely assumed that the phrases, "baptism with the Spirit" (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:15-16), "receiving the Spirit" (John 7:39; 14:17; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:38; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 19:2), the Spirit "falling upon" (Acts 8:16, 10:44; 11:15), the Spirit "coming upon" (Acts 1:8; 19:6), "filled with the Spirit" (Acts 2:4; 9:17) are equivalent phrases and are used interchangeably.⁹⁰ Of course, the Holy Spirit is operative at every stage of the Christian life. Certainly, the Spirit regenerates which water baptism signifies. And truly the Spirit begins his sanctifying work at the very point of one's new birth. In fact, the Holy Spirit works for the betterment and help of all persons even before their conversion. Yet, in the strict New Testament usage, phrases like "receive the Spirit" and "be filled with the Spirit" are like *technical terms* to denote the *special* giving of the Spirit as the meaning of Pentecost.

Karl Barth in his exegesis of the Pentecostal passages in the book of Acts draws a clear distinction between baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit. He shows that baptism with water is the first step of the Christian life⁹¹ and represents the sacrament of Easter (i.e., Jesus' death-resurrection).⁹² He says Pentecost is the "confirmation" of Easter.⁹³ The baptism with the Spirit follows baptism with water and denotes more specifically the "perfection" and "full sanctification" of the Christian life.⁹⁴ He sees the Pentecostal passages in the book of Acts subsequent to the Day of Pentecost, such as the disciples being filled with the Spirit in Acts 4:8, 31, as the progressive realization of the perfection of the Christian life.⁹⁵ While water baptism is a once-for-all event, there may be many times when the believer will be filled with the Spirit as one grows in sanctifying grace, according to Barth. While Barth is a Reformed theologian, his exposition of the meaning of Pentecost is highly illuminating. And his emphasis upon the repeated nature of the infilling of the Spirit underscores that, unlike water baptism, the

work of the Spirit is an always ongoing and dynamic experience in one's life. This point is also found, as we have pointed out, in the so-called Marcarius the Egyptian whose Homilies often summon the believer to experience the infilling of the Spirit, freedom from indwelling sin, and the perfection of love, but nowhere does he call for a rebaptism with water.

Thomas Oden in his third volume of systematic theology, *Life in the Spirit*, suggests that the "baptism with the Spirit" is initiation language and ought to be related to Christian baptism, whereas being "filled with the Spirit" is devotional language of daily wholehearted commitment to Christ.⁹⁶ I believe this distinction is a practical one, only if the twofold distinction of baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit are conjoined as distinct events within the larger meaning of Christian baptism as taught by the early Church Fathers and which is now implied in the baptism liturgy of The United Methodist Church.

Wesley was concerned that the Methodists would drop the doctrine of holiness. And at best Methodism in general has done little more than paid lip-service to its holiness heritage. Now that the laying on of hands and the descent of the Spirit is incorporated within the larger baptismal liturgy of The United Methodist Hymnal, this could serve with proper theological instruction as the liturgical foundation for the wider experience of the worshipping community in reinforcing the call for believers to be "sanctified wholly through the Spirit." Certainly the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement within The United Methodist Church should embrace this new liturgical practice.

Finally, what, then, can be done to promote the doctrine of holiness in our day? Would it be too much to suggest a rediscovery of the significance of the rite of confirmation might be helpful? Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying* highly influenced Wesley in his pursuit of holiness, but what is not usually known is that Taylor also promoted the rite of confirmation as a means of promoting holy living. Taylor emphasized that the ordinance, if met with faith, would make the baptized believer a "perfect Christian."⁹⁷ Likewise in our day, the Anglican Benedictine Gregory Dix has called for the restoration of the importance of the laying on of hands and the baptism with the Spirit as a means of revitalizing the Anglican Church.⁹⁸

Would not a proper understanding of the public ordinance of the laying on of hands as proposed by Taylor and Dix advance Wesley's original vision "to spread Scriptural holiness across these lands." Wesley apparently did not think so. Undoubtedly because he wanted to enforce its inner, personal appropriation. *Also Wesley did not have the material we have available today concerning the initiatory practices of the early Church Fathers.*⁹⁹ Perhaps Wesley was also too strongly influenced by the Puritan over-reaction to the Sacramentalists of their day, though Wesley strongly emphasized the importance of Holy Communion. *Are we today too deeply engrained with the anti-sacramentalist disposition of our Puritan forefathers to reconsider the theology of confirmation (laying on of hands)?* Fletcher used it effectively to enforce an understanding of the importance of implementing in one's own life the reality of sanctifying grace.¹⁰⁰ Why can it not be so interpreted and practiced today—even among Methodists, especially in the light of the new understanding and greater awareness of the patristic sources concerning the unity of the baptismal liturgy with its dual emphasis on water baptism and Spirit baptism!

NOTES

1. James Dunn, "Spirit-Baptism and Pentecostalism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (November 1970): 397.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 397. Gregory Dix has shown that Roman Catholic medieval theologians, such as Alexander of Hales, declared that confirmation was not a sacrament. Dix writes: "But if we are to find the source of this tragic aberration we must look behind the Reformation, into the history of the Mediaeval Latin Church." He believes Western Christianity had driven a wedge between baptism and confirmation that had the effect of making it appear that confirmation was superfluous (*The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism* [Westminster: Dacre Press, 1946], p. 39).
3. *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 207.
4. *The Spirit of Life*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 167-71.
5. Cf. Gerard Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation, Anointing with the Spirit*, for a historical survey and theological examination of the rite of confirmation with a concluding discussion of the ecumenical dialogue currently in process (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1985). For a discussion of the new liturgical considerations within the Episcopal Church, see *Liturgy for Living* by Charles P. Price and Louis Weil and a group of editorial advisors under the direction of the Church's Teaching Series Committee. This book reports that it is "an Episcopal commonplace that confirmation is the rite which 'bestows the Spirit' and shows how that confirmation has always had an ambiguous status within the Anglican and Episcopal tradition and that it still retains that uncertain character in the *New Prayer Book* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979, pp. 115-31). Austin P. Milner, *The Theology of Confirmation*, provides a detailed discussion of the history of confirmation with a view toward contributing to a better understanding of its meaning in the light of the contemporary debate which began in the 1940s.
6. Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 18-27.
7. G.W.H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1967), pp. 150, 158.
8. "For our bodies have received the unity which brings us to immortality by means of the washing [of baptism]; our souls receive it by means of [the gift of] the Spirit. Thus both of those are needed, for together they advance man's progress toward the life of God." *Adversus Haereses* III.xvii.2, cited in *The Early Christian Fathers*, Henry Bettenson, ed. and trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 94; cf. C.A. Hall, *Confirmation* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), p. 65. For a detailed discussion of this distinction between the act of water baptism itself and the imposition of hands as the bestowal of the Spirit in the early Church Fathers, see Paul Bassett, *Exploring Christian Holiness* (Kansas City, Mo., 1985), II, pp. 23-87. Bassett writes: "There seems to be sufficient, if not conclusive, evidence that Irenaeus sees some sort of perfection as having been given by the work of the Spirit at the outset of the Christian life, but given to the one already declared a believer" (*ibid.*, p. 49).
9. Tertullian, *On Baptism* 6; cf. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*, p. 122.
10. Cyprian, *Letter* 73, 9.2; cited in *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, G.W. Clarke, trans. (New York: Newman Press, 1989), p. 59.
11. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*, p. 186.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
13. Cf. Hall, p. 30-31.
14. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*, p. 157.
15. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*, p. 21; cf. Gregory Dix who sees Rabanus Maurus as standing between the original view of the laying on of hands as a sealing of the Spirit and the new view of the rite as a strengthening and confirming (*The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism* [Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945], p.26).
16. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*, p. 21.

17. *The Rite of Confirmation, Anointing with the Spirit* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1985), p. ix.
18. Dix, *The Theology of Confirmation*, p. 25.
19. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), LVII, 211 (ST 3a.72.8).
20. *Ibid.*, XLVII, 29 (ST 2a2ae.184.3); XLVII, 21 (ST 2a2ae.184.1); XXXIV, 59-61 (ST 2a2ae.8).
21. *Ibid.*, LVII, 201 (ST 3a.72.4); LVII, 193 (ST 3a.72.2).
22. *Confirmation: History, Doctrine, and Practice*, Kendig Brubaker Cully, ed. (Greenwich, Conn., 1962), pp. 22-23.
23. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), II, 211.
24. Peter J. Jagger, *Christian Initiation 1582-1969, Rites of Baptism and Confirmation Since the Reformation Period* (London: SPCK, 1970), p. 32.
25. Calvin writes: "But the Papists are worthy of no pardon, who being not content with the ancient rite, durst thrust in rotten and filthy anointings, that it might be not only a confirmation of baptism, but also a more worthy sacrament, whereby they imagine that the faithful are made perfect who were before only half perfect—whereby those are armed against the battle, who before had their sin only forgiven them. For they have not been afraid to spew out these horrible blasphemies" (*Commentary on the Book of Acts* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949]), II, p. 211.
26. John C. Soltman, *The 1964 Revision of the Book of Worship of the Methodist Church*, a Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master of sacred theology at Union College of British Columbia, April, 1965, p. 201; Gayle Carlton Felton, *This Gift of Water* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), p. 23; Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), pp. 170, 276.
27. "A Roman Catechism, Faithfully Drawn Out of the Allowed Writings of the Church of Rome. With a Reply Thereto," *The Works of John Wesley* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), X, p. 117.
28. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, p. 280.
29. Wesley, "Salvation by Faith," *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, II, pp. 41-42;
30. Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, p. 110.
31. *Sermons on Several Occasions* (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1853), II, p. 515.
32. Wesley, "A Plain Account," p. 55.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
36. "Christian Perfection," *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, II, p. 162; cf. Harold Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification*, who also shows that Wesley intended in this context to equate full sanctification with the meaning of Pentecost (p. 106). So also Lycurgus M. Starkey, Jr., *The Work of the Holy Spirit, A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 33.
37. "Scriptural Christianity," *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, pp. 104-105.
38. *Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian*, A.J. Mason, ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1921), pp. 157-62.
39. "The Scripture Way of Salvation," *The Standard Sermons*, II, p. 447.
40. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, p. 6.
41. *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1871), XII, p. 358.
42. Luke Tyermann, *Wesley's Designated Successor: The Life, Letters, and Literary Labours of the Rev. John William Fletcher* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), p. 7.
43. *The Works of Fletcher*, III, pp. 177-78.

44. Ibid., II, pp. 356-57.
45. *The Letters of John Wesley*, VI, p. 137; cf. Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 310.
46. *The Letters of John Wesley*, VI, p. 11.
47. *The Works of John Fletcher*, I, pp. 576, 578, 580.
48. *A Treatise on Justification, Extracted from Mr. John Goodwin*, by John Wesley (Bristol: William Pine, 1765).
49. John Goodwin, like other Puritan Divines, attributed the witness of the Spirit to a post-conversion experience. "A being filled with the Spirit" means not only that one is enabled to love God with all one's heart, and enjoying a larger communion with Christ whom they "entirely love" (p. 448), but they enjoy a conscious assurance of their acceptance with the Father. The "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," does not mean that all Christians have this inner witness, but rather it means that the "Spirit being once received . . . will advance his presence to such a fullness of degree, that they shall be able by means of that strong testimony to cry, Abba, Father." *A Being Filled with the Spirit* (London, 1670; reprinted, Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1867), pp. 448, 450. Reminiscent of Wesley's insistence that we should expect to receive the fullness of sanctification, Goodwin writes that we must be "clear and thoroughly satisfied about the possibility of the thing" of being filled with the Spirit. We must also "resolve that nothing shall interpose, as far as we are able to prevent and hinder it, between our desire and the thing desired" (p. 224). He also insisted that believers should "give testimony, both of the presence of the Spirit of God in them, and likewise of the goodness of this Spirit" (p. 305).
50. Goodwin writes: "It is a matter of duty lying upon all men, especially those who do profess Christianity, to be filled with the Spirit" (p. 16). He argues that it is imperative for Christians to be satisfied with nothing less than the greatest measure of the Spirit. If it is our duty to have the Spirit, then it is our duty to have the Spirit "in the highest degree, and with the greatest perfection. If it be our duty to love simply, then certainly to love him to a greater degree, yea, to the greatest degree of all, is our duty also—namely, to love him 'with all our hearts, souls, mind, and strength,' Mark xii.30. So likewise, if it be our duty to love our neighbor, then it is our duty also to love him 'with a pure heart fervently,' 1 Peter 1.22. . . . So that this scripture doth prove plainly enough the truth of the doctrine in hand—viz., that it is the duty of all Christians to be filled with the Spirit" (p. 17). He further shows that "a being filled with the Spirit" means enjoying "a free, and full, and large communion with God" (p. 440). Some have "a free communion" with God, but only those filled with the Spirit have "a full" communion (p. 457). His exposition of 1 John 4:18—"perfect love casts out fear"—concludes that the meaning of "a being filled with the Spirit" is that we are enabled to have perfect communion with God through "the sanctifying presence of the Holy Ghost" (p. 444-48). His explanation of the various kinds of perfection is a precursor to Wesley's distinction between absolute, angelic, and Christian perfection. Goodwin writes: "By perfect love here he cannot mean love which is absolutely and completely perfect, which is not capable of any more intenseness or further enlargement; for there is no such love of God to be found amongst men that dwell in houses of clay, no, not among the greatest of the saints; yea, it is a question whether the love of the angels themselves be perfect in this sense or not. The word perfect and, *perfection* are most frequently used when applied to men, or any other creature, not in a strict or absolute, but a limited and diminutive sense. Things are said to be perfect when they are grown to any good degree of perfection. . . . so love to God, when it is grown to a considerable strength in a man, that it yieldeth forth fruit in abundance, then it is called perfect love. . . . Indeed, when applied to God, it is to be taken in the strictest sense, but when applied to the creature, in a lower sense" (p. 446).
51. Ibid., p. 307.
52. Albert C. Outler, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longen, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), pp. 123, 147.

53. *Checks*, II, p. 617.
54. *Checks*, I, pp. 590-94.
55. *Checks*, II, p. 648.
56. *The Works of John Wesley*, XI, p. 306.
57. Cited in Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 464.
58. *The Works of John Wesley*, XI, p. 42; *The Letters of John Wesley*, VI, p. 11. Wesley had a "slight difference" (as Wesley put it) from Fletcher who used "received the Spirit" as a designation of Christian perfection. For Wesley insisted all believers have the Spirit. See Wood, *Pentecostal Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).
59. Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1980); Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987).
60. Dieter, *Holiness Revival*, p. 1.
61. Cf. "Introduction," *Phoebe Palmer, Selected Writings*, Thomas C. Oden, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), pp. 10ff.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
63. Dieter, *Holiness Revival*, p. 104.
64. William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 342.
65. Karl Rahner, *A New Baptism in the Spirit: Confirmation Today* (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1965), pp. 19-20.
66. Austin P. Milner, *Theology of Confirmation* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 7; Rahner, *A New Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Confirmation Today* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1975).
67. Oden, p. 17.
68. *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1946), p. 39. Dix is pointing out here that without confirmation the life of holiness which confirmation represents is not sufficiently enforced upon believers. He complains that some Medieval theologians simply saw confirmation as a strengthening of the Christian life instead of relating it to the sealing of the Christian life in perfecting grace (*ibid.*, pp. 30, 32).
69. F.X. Durrwell, *The Resurrection*, Rosemary Sheed, trans. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 17-18, 187.
70. Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," pp. 110-11.
71. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I:160.
72. Dunn, "Spirit-Baptism and Pentecostalism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (November 1970): 397.
73. Dix, *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism*, pp. 33ff.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
75. John Soltman, *The 1964 Revision of the Book of Worship*, p. 12.
76. Felton, *This Gift of Water*, pp. 111-71, especially p. 165; cf. Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, p. 88.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
79. Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, p. 88.
80. Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation*, pp. 88-91.
81. Dix, *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism*, p. 42.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
83. Paul M. Bassett and William M. Greathouse, *Exploring Christian Holiness* (Kansas City, Mo.: