

Laurence W. Wood

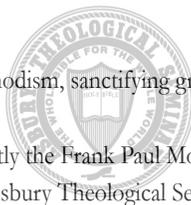
John Wesley's Mission of Spreading Scriptural Holiness: A Case Study in World Mission and Evangelism

Abstract

A manual of discipline, called *The Large Minutes*, was given to all Methodist preachers when they joined John Wesley's annual conference, containing this explanation: "God's design in raising up the people called 'Methodists'" was "to spread scriptural holiness over the land." This paper will trace a narrow slice of the larger developing story of how John Wesley arrived at his distinction between justifying faith and full sanctifying grace. It will also serve as a case study to show that the call to justification by faith and a subsequent experience of sanctification by faith became the theme of his evangelistic preaching. This paper will conclude with some observations about the importance of Wesley's holiness message for the founding of Asbury Theological Seminary and the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism.

Keywords: John Wesley, Methodism, sanctifying grace, holiness, John Fletcher

Laurence W. Wood is currently the Frank Paul Morris Professor of Systematic Theology/Wesley Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.



Introduction

Lord, if I on Thee believe,
The Second Gift impart,
With th' Indwelling Spirit give
A new, a loving Heart:
If with Love Thy Heart is stor'd,
If now o'er me Thy Bowels move,
Help me, Saviour, speak the Word,

And perfect me in Love.¹

--Charles Wesley

Rejoice, rejoice ye Fallen Race,
The Day of Pentecost is come!
Expect the Sure-descending Grace,
Open your Hearts to make him Room.

Assembled here with one Accord,
Calmly we wait the Promis'd Grace,
The Purchase of our Dying LORD —
Come, Holy Ghost, and fill the Place!

Wisdom and Strength to Thee belongs,
Sweetly within our Bosoms move,
Now let us speak with Other Tongues
The New, Strange Language of Thy Love.²

--Charles Wesley

A manual of discipline, called *The Large Minutes*, was given to all Methodist preachers when they joined John Wesley's annual conference, containing this explanation: "God's design in raising up the people called 'Methodists'" was "to spread scriptural holiness over the land."³ This paper will trace a narrow slice of the larger developing story of how John Wesley arrived at his distinction between justifying faith and full sanctifying grace. It will also serve as a case study to show that the call to justification by faith and a subsequent experience of sanctification by faith became the theme of his evangelistic preaching. This paper will conclude with some observations about the importance of Wesley's holiness message for the founding of Asbury Theological Seminary and the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism.



William Law, “A Parent” of Methodism

In December 1726⁴ John Wesley read William Law’s book, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* (1726). He and his brother Charles literally consumed it, and it became their often-quoted textbook on holiness. John Wesley said that William Law “convinced me more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being *half a Christian*.⁵ He came to understand “true religion [is]... God’s dwelling and reigning in the soul.” By religion, John Wesley meant the experience of holiness, and not a system of beliefs.⁶

Charles Wesley accepted his older brother’s guidance in theology, and he too read William Law’s book on perfection, admitting, “all I knew of religion was through him [William Law].”⁷ Again, notice religion means holiness of heart and life, not doctrine.

In 1729 William Law recommended to those who were “desirous of perfection, should unite themselves into little societies” and engage in “voluntary poverty, virginity, retirement, and devotion, living upon bare necessaries.”⁸ It is likely that this recommendation inspired Charles Wesley the very same year to start a religious society of three persons. After serving as his father’s curate, John Wesley returned to Oxford in 1729 and organized this society around his leadership with Charles Wesley’s full approval.

William Law said that he had served “as a kind of oracle” to John Wesley, and John Wesley acknowledged that there was some truth to William Law being “a parent” of Methodism.⁹ Within a few months after his first visit to William Law in July 1732,¹⁰ John Wesley preached a sermon at St. Mary’s Church, Oxford University, entitled “Circumcision of Heart,” which was the mirror image of Law’s definition of Christian perfection.¹¹ Under the tutelage of William Law, the Wesley brothers believed that anything short of Christian perfection was only being a half-Christian which for them was actually not being a Christian at all. William Law continued to serve as a mentor to the Wesley brothers between 1732 and 1735. William Law once expressed the transparency of their relationship in a letter to John Wesley: “You sought my acquaintance, you came to me as you pleased, and on what occasions you pleased, and to say to me what you pleased.”¹² Law also mentioned; “you have had a great many conversations with me.”¹³

The Wesley brothers sailed with Gen. James Oglethorpe to Georgia on October 14, 1735, on board the *Simmonds*,¹⁴ hoping that it would be the means of their own perfection. They had learned from Law there was no salvation for ourselves unless we are involved in saving others.¹⁵ This is why John Wesley said: “My chief motive [for going as a missionary to Georgia]... is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it

to the heathens.”¹⁶ When Wesley talked about the need to save his own soul, he had not yet developed the time-lapse between justifying faith and sanctifying grace. So when Wesley talked about being “saved” as a motive for being a missionary, he was using Law’s equation of Christian perfection with being “saved by putting off this old man, and being renewed in holiness and purity of life.”¹⁷

Aboard the *Simmons*, William Law’s *Treatise on Christian Perfection* served as their textbook, which they frequently consulted and read to others on the ship.¹⁸ Because Law emphasized that Christian perfection was achieved through a “resolution to attend only to the *one thing needful*,”¹⁹ John Wesley often made spiritual resolutions on the ship.²⁰ However, John Wesley’s confidence in William Law’s High Church liturgical doctrines and his will-mysticism was sorely tested when he met a Moravian group of immigrants from Herrnhut, Germany. In the midst of a life-threatening storm with water surging over the ship, John Wesley was terrified, but he noticed that these Moravians were calm because they possessed a personal assurance of faith in God and were unafraid to die.²¹

The Wesley brothers arrived in Georgia on Feb. 5, 1736, and two days later John Wesley talked with a Moravian missionary, Augustus Spangenburg, who confronted him with the need to experience an assurance of a personal faith in Christ. John Wesley said that he had an opportunity from February 14, 1735, to December 2, 1737, to engage in conversation with the Moravians two and three times a day.

While returning to England, he again experienced a life-threatening storm. John Wesley was terrified, but resolved that he would begin preaching the doctrine of saving faith to everyone on board the ship.²² He said: “I was strongly convinced that... the gaining a true, living faith was the ‘one thing needful’ for me.”²³ Here Wesley equated the Moravian understanding of “living faith” with William Law’s language of “one thing needful.” Law italicized this phrase nine times as a reference to Christian perfection,²⁴ and John Wesley put it in quotation marks to indicate its specific meaning. Wesley had earlier written a sermon in May, 1734 entitled, “One Thing Needful,” which is defined in the same way as William Law defined it: “to love the Lord his God with all his heart,” “the recovery of the image of God,” “to be made perfectly whole,” and “the most entire renovation of our nature.” “The one thing needful,” Wesley said, is “perfection” and “to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.”²⁵ He preached this sermon in Georgia, and Charles also preached it in Boston²⁶ and other occasions.

John Wesley returned to England from Georgia on Feb. 1, 1738, and what had he learned about himself in the meantime? This will sound very unusual for a missionary to say: “I went to Georgia to convert the Indians, but Oh! who will

convert me?”²⁷ Again, it is important to recognize that the word “convert” was not a reference to justifying faith as distinct from full sanctifying grace because Wesley believed that being a Christian was being a full Christian wholly devoted to God, not a half-Christian. Wesley had already, at this point, equated Law’s idea of Christian perfection with the Moravian idea of a living faith, as Richard Heitzenrater has also pointed out.²⁸

The Missing Ingredient in William Law—the Full Assurance of Faith

A week after his return from Georgia, John Wesley met the Moravian Peter Böhler who had just arrived in England from Herrnhut for a brief stay on his way as missionary to South Carolina. John Wesley noted in his diary: “God prepared [Peter Böhler] for me as soon as I came to London.”²⁹ When Böhler told John Wesley that faith is “‘dominion over sin and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness,’” he “looked upon it as a new gospel.”³⁰ What further astounded Wesley was the claim that the full assurance of faith could be received “instantaneously.” But when he turned his attention to the book of Acts, “to my utter astonishment, found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions” of individuals who were in an instant delivered “from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost.”³¹

The Wesley brothers replaced the fifty-two year-old William Law with the twenty-six year-old Peter Böhler as their mentor. Law had not been able to help them to break through the faith-barrier. Interestingly enough, John Wesley introduced Böhler to William Law, but this interview was not productive in bringing the two men together in a common understanding of how salvation is attained.³²

In a letter to William Law on May 14, 1738, John Wesley complained that “for two years... I have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises” without any success. John Wesley admitted that the only faith that he personally had up to that point was a “speculative, notional, airy shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart.” Compared to the intellectual resolutions of will-mysticism of trying to be holy, John Wesley said to Law: “What is this to the living, justifying faith in the blood of Jesus? The faith that cleanseth from sin, that gives us to have free access to the Father, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us; and the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?”³³ This letter shows that Wesley was disappointed that, while William Law had advised him on many occasions and had properly defined Christian perfection, he had failed to help him to know how to attain it as a personal experience. Now that he had met Peter Böhler, this letter shows that Wesley came to believe that “justifying faith” is

the same as being “cleansed from sin” (= Christian perfection), entailing freedom from fear and doubt, the full assurance of faith, and being cleansed from all sin in an instant moment of personal faith rather than through the protracted, ritualistic, and self-defeating process of perfection proposed in the will-mysticism of William Law.³⁴

On the very same day that John Wesley had written to William Law (May 14, 1738), he preached a sermon on “Salvation by Faith” at St. Ann’s Church on Aldersgate Street.³⁵ This was two weeks before his Aldersgate experience of personal faith. This sermon shows that John Wesley linked Law’s idea of Christian perfection with the Moravian concept of justification by faith, defining “justification” to mean “salvation from sin” and it frees believers from “from all their sins: from original and actual.” In agreement with William Law,³⁶ John Wesley also equated being “born again of the Spirit” with Christian perfection and being cleansed from all sin,³⁷ although John Wesley subsequently made a distinction between being born of God in the lower sense of justifying faith and being born of God in the highest sense of Christian perfection, and twenty two years later John Wesley further limited the term of being born of God to the initial moment of justifying faith in 1760 with his sermon, “The New Birth.”³⁸ However, Charles always continued in his hymns to equate being born of God and “the second birth” with Christian perfection, as Charles Wesley scholars like Earnest Rattenbury³⁹ and John Tyson have also shown.⁴⁰

The conversion experiences of Charles and John Wesley were initially assumed by them to be their moment of Christian perfection. The immediate self-interpretation of John Wesley’s own personal Aldersgate experience of faith was in terms of Christian perfection: “I have *constant peace*; --not one uneasy thought. And I have *freedom from sin*; --not one unholy desire.”⁴¹ When he was tempted to doubt, he felt reassured that he had a “true heart in full assurance of faith.”⁴²

The self-understanding of Charles Wesley’s moment of justifying faith as entailing Christian perfection is confirmed in that he preached his brother’s sermon, “Salvation by Faith” on September 3, 1738, which identified justification with entire sanctification.⁴³ It is also confirmed by the fact that he interpreted his moment of belief to be the coming of the Holy Spirit to take up his abode in his heart, and as John Tyson has shown, Charles Wesley’s “Hymns for Whitsunday” interpreted the Pentecostal sending of the Spirit as synonymous with Christian perfection.⁴⁴ So when Charles and John Wesley were taught by Peter Böhler that justification is the full assurance of faith, it was only natural that they would filter their idea of Christian perfection through the notion of an instantaneous faith.

Two Sources of John Wesley's Idea of Pentecostal Holiness

Richard Heitzenrater has pointed out that John Wesley's sermons had a stronger pneumatological focus after his Aldersgate experience.⁴⁵ The reason for this new emphasis is not what he learned from Peter Böhler, but comes from two other sources—one an High Anglican source and one a Moravian source.

The High Anglican source was John Heylyn; the first rector of St. Mary-le-Strand (1724–59) who became prebendary of Westminster Abbey (1743–59), a much-admired minister and theologian⁴⁶ whose writings had already exercised a strong influence on John Wesley when he was in Georgia.⁴⁷ On Pentecost Sunday on May 21, 1738, which was three days before his Aldersgate experience, John Wesley with some friends “sang a hymn to the Holy Ghost” to Charles Wesley who was lying in a sick-bed. Afterwards, John Wesley went to hear Heylyn preach. John Wesley recorded in his journal that Heylyn did “preach a truly Christian sermon on ‘They were all filled with the Holy Ghost’—and so, said he, may *all you* be.”⁴⁸ Because the curate was ill, Heylyn, who already knew John Wesley, asked him to assist in Holy Communion.

In this sermon on Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2:2-3), John Wesley heard Heylyn distinguish between pre-Pentecostal and Pentecostal believers. Heylyn said the sanctifying baptism of the Spirit transformed the disciples after Pentecost from weak to strong believers in Christ. This description is similar to the way that John Wesley was later to explain the weakness of the disciples prior to Pentecost because, Wesley said, the sanctifying Spirit had not yet descended on them at Pentecost.⁴⁹ Heylyn directed his hearers “to be baptized with the Holy Ghost” through earnest prayer as the disciples on the day of Pentecost. He said that a Christian believer is sanctified through the “baptism with the Spirit,” “purging away... carnal desires,” producing “perfect purity.”⁵⁰ As noted by John Wesley in his journal, Heylyn encouraged believers today to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He showed that Pentecost was not a single past event, but it marked the beginning of the very possibility of a personal Pentecost for all subsequent believers. Heylyn said believers only need to do today what the disciples did on the day of Pentecost—wait in prayer.

John Fletcher,⁵¹ who was Wesley's designated successor, and Thomas Coke,⁵² who became Wesley's right hand assistant and bishop of American Methodism, cited extensively from this sermon as an explanation of the Methodist idea of Pentecostal holiness. What was missing in Heylyn's sermon was an emphasis on the full assurance of faith that the Wesley brothers had learned from their Moravian friends.

At the same time John Wesley was listening to Heylyn's Pentecost sermon, the bed-ridden Charles Wesley received his own personal Pentecost at the house of

a Moravian layman, Mr. Bray. Charles Wesley had already learned from William Law that Christian perfection was “to “make us like himself, to fill us with his *Spirit*”²⁵³ and that the only way we can practice the perfect love of God was through being “full of the Spirit of Christ.”²⁵⁴ So when the Moravians talked about an instantaneous moment of justifying faith, it was understandable that the High Churchman Charles Wesley would link it to Christian perfection.

This is why he described his expectation of saving faith (from all sin) in reference to Jesus’ promise: “At nine my brother and some friends came, and sang an hymn to the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half an hour they went: I betook myself to prayer; the substance as follows: ‘O Jesus, Thou hast said, ‘I will come unto you’; Thou hast said, ‘I will send the Comforter unto you’; Thou hast said, ‘My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you.’ Thou art God who canst not lie; I wholly rely upon Thy most true promise: accomplish it in Thy time and manner.”²⁵⁵ Immediately after this prayer, he heard a woman in the house speak, “Arise, and believe.” At that moment, he said: “I felt a strange... palpitation of heart. I said... ‘I believe, I believe.”²⁵⁶ He described this experience to mean: “I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ.”²⁵⁷

As John Wesley was leaving the church service following Heylyn’s Pentecost sermon, someone brought him “the surprising news, that my brother had found rest to his soul.”²⁵⁸ Then the very next day, on May 22, 1738, Charles expressed the hope that his brother John would also have his personal Pentecost. Charles said: “My brother coming, we joined in intercession for him. In the midst of prayer, I almost believed the Holy Ghost was coming upon him.”²⁵⁹ Rather, it was two days later on May 24, 1738, that John Wesley “felt his heart strangely warmed” and believed. Both of these young men now believed that they had received Christian perfection through an instantaneous moment of the full assurance of faith.

John Wesley’s belief that he had received Christian perfection at Aldersgate was short-lived because two days later he experienced again the old feelings of doubt and fear. This is why he went to Herrnhut on June 13, 1738 for a visit hoping that “those holy men ... would be a means, under God, of so stabilishing my soul.”²⁶⁰

If William Law had taught John Wesley the meaning of Christian perfection and if Peter Böhler had taught him the instantaneous moment of faith’s assurance, it was another Moravian who taught him to see more clearly that sanctifying grace is subsequent in time to justifying faith. On August 3, 1738, John Wesley met a lay preacher at Herrnhut by the name of Christian David. Throughout the following week, John Wesley heard him preach multiple times, and held extended

conversations with him.⁶¹ John Wesley gave an extensive report in his journal of the teachings of Christian David showing that the distinction between justifying faith and being cleansed from all sin (full sanctifying grace) is patterned on the basis of the disciple's pre-Pentecost and Pentecost experience. Christian David said the full assurance of faith comes through "the indwelling of the Spirit." He said the pre-Pentecost disciples of Jesus lacked this full assurance, although they were justified and forgiven before Pentecost. Because of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Christian David said one could, like the disciples, be cleansed from all sin.⁶² The disciples' experience is thus cited as a pattern for all subsequent believers. John Wesley recorded this important explanation. "The state the apostles were in from our Lord's death (and indeed for some time before) till the descent of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost" included a degree of faith. Christian David compared "being justified" with the experience of the disciples of the earthly Jesus prior to Pentecost, whereas the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost meant they were "fully assured" and "cleansed from all sin."⁶³

John Wesley returned to England on September 16, 1738. Upon his return, he met that same evening with Charles. He had written Charles from Herrnhut the day after his conversation with Christian David, and now he was able to give him a first-hand report of what he had learned from the leaders of the Herrnhut community. For the first time the Wesley brothers began to distinguish clearly between justifying faith and a subsequent experience of Christian perfection, using the pattern of the disciples' experience before and after Pentecost as the basis of the distinction between justification and sanctification. This time-sensitive distinction between justification and sanctification was not an unnatural extension of their own Anglican theology, as reflected in the Pentecost sermon of John Heylyn, as well as in the Anglican liturgical distinction between water baptism (based on Easter) and confirmation (based on Pentecost).

In his journal for October 14, 1738,⁶⁴ and in a letter to his brother Samuel on October 30, 1738, Wesley explained that Christian perfection means being delivered from all fear and doubt, freed from all sin, the seal of the Spirit, the indwelling Spirit, and receiving the fullness of faith. He explained to his older brother Samuel that he was justified ("accepted in the Beloved") and sins no longer "reigned over me" as a result of his Aldersgate faith-experience but he did not yet "feel" God's "love shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them."⁶⁵ And hence he said that he was only a "Christian in that imperfect sense" because he did not have "the indwelling of the Spirit."⁶⁶

Three months later in his diary for January 25, 1739, he reported that he "baptized John Smith... and four other adults at Islington. Of the adults I have

known baptized lately, one only was at that time born again, in the full sense of the word; that is, found a thorough, inward change, by the love of God filling her heart. Most of them were only born again in a lower sense; that is, received the remission of their sins. And some (as it has since too plainly appeared) neither in one sense nor the other.” This journal entry indicates that John Wesley was already learning what he believed to be Scriptural—that a time-lapse normally occurs between justification and sanctification.

The first time full sanctifying grace was ever defined in an explicit manner as subsequent in time to the moment of justifying faith appeared in the published works of John and Charles Wesley’s *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1739. One of the hymns was entitled “JUSTIFIED *but not* SANCTIFIED.”⁶⁷ In their preface to the London edition of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740), the Wesley brothers said “we know, a cloud of witnesses, who have received *in one moment*, either a clear sense of the forgiveness of their sins, or the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit,” but they said they did not know “a single instance” where anyone ever received both at the same time—forgiveness of sins and the abiding witness of the Spirit (= “a clean heart”).⁶⁸

Immediately following this observation, the Wesley brothers explained their first-ever understanding of the order of salvation describing the transition from justification to sanctification: “Indeed how God *may* work we cannot tell. But the general manner where he *does* work is this... Those who once trusted in themselves” and “see the wrath of God hanging over their heads” will “cry unto the Lord, and he shows he hath taken away their sins.” “Knowing they are justified... they have peace with God.” Following this moment of justification, the Wesley brothers said “in this peace they remain for days, or weeks, or months, and commonly suppose they shall not know war any more, till some of their old enemies, their bosom sins, or, the sin which did most easily beset them (perhaps anger or desire) assault them again... Then arises fear... and often doubt... their sins were forgiven... Under these clouds... they go *mourning* all the day long... But it is seldom long before their Lord answers for himself, sending the Holy Ghost, *to comfort* them, to bear witness continually with their spirit, that they are the children of God.”⁶⁹ Being aware of “the depths of pride,” they “hunger... after a full renewal in his image, in ‘righteousness,’ and all true holiness. Then God... giveth them a single eye and a clean heart. He stamps upon them his own image and superscription. He createth them anew in Christ Jesus. He cometh unto them with his Son and blessed Spirit, and fixing his abode in their souls, bringeth them into the ‘rest which remaineth for the people of God’ [=Christian perfection].”⁷⁰

The identification of the Pentecost-bestowal of the Spirit with Christian perfection is affirmed in their hymns, using such phrases as, “The Spirit

of Adoption, “baptize me now with fire,” “O that the Comforter would come,” “Come, Holy Ghost, all Quick’ning fire,” “the indwelling Spirit,” etc. In his journal for Friday, September 26, 1750, Charles Wesley defined “Christian perfection, that is, utter dominion over sin; constant peace, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost; the full assurance of faith, righteousness, and true holiness.”⁷¹ He once said to John Fletcher: “Christian perfection is nothing but the full kingdom in the Holy Ghost.”⁷²

In a hymn in the London, 1740, edition, entitled “Groaning for the Spirit of Adoption,” John and Charles Wesley identified the Pentecost-bestowal of the Spirit of adoption with Christian perfection:

O that the Comforter would come,
Nor visit, as a transient Guest,
But fix in me His constant Home,
And take Possession of my Breast,
And make my Soul his lov’d Abode,
The Temple of Indwelling God.

Come, Holy Ghost, my Heart inspire,
Attest that I am born again!
Come, and baptize me now with Fire,
Or all Thy former Gifts are vain.
I cannot rest in Sin Forgiven;
Where is the Earnest of *my* Heaven!

Where Thy Indubitable Seal
That ascertains the Kingdom mine,
The Powerful stamp I long to feel,
The Signature of Love Divine:
O shed it in my Heart abroad,
Fullness of Love,—of Heaven—of God!⁷³

John Wesley also explained this Pentecostal basis of holiness as distinct from justification in his debate with Zinzendorf on September 3, 1741 at Gray’s Walk Inn in London when he argued that there was a difference between the justifying faith of the disciples before Pentecost and their entire sanctification after Pentecost when they were filled with the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ His point was the justifying faith of the disciples before Pentecost and the entire sanctification after Pentecost is a pattern for believers for all times.

In 1741, he wrote his sermon on “Christian Perfection” containing some of the same emphases found in John Heylyn’s Pentecost sermon and in the soteriology of Christian David. John Wesley said the possibility of being cleansed from all sin and made perfect in love became a possibility for the world only when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Like John

Heylyn, John Wesley explained “the wide difference” between a pre-Pentecost and Pentecost experience in terms of sanctifying grace.⁷⁵

Attached to this sermon is the hymn by Charles Wesley, “The Promise of Sanctification,” which highlights the instantaneous sanctifying work of the Spirit of Pentecost to occur “now.” Here are two verses:

Thy sanctifying Spirit pour
 To quench my Thirst, and wash me clean:
 Now, Father, let the Gracious Shower
 Descend, and make me pure from Sin.

Within me Thy Good Spirit place,
 Spirit of Health, and Love, and Power,
 Plant in me Thy Victorious Grace,
 And Sin shall never enter more.⁷⁶

In 1742 in “The Principles of a Methodist, John Wesley equated the “indwelling of the Spirit” with Christian perfection, and not justification.⁷⁷

In 1744, John Wesley preached before St. Mary’s Church at Oxford University on “Scriptural Christianity” on Acts 4:31⁷⁸: “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” This was a sermon on sanctification through being filled with the Spirit similar to the one he had heard John Heylyn preach on May 21, 1738, which he had called “a truly Christian sermon.” In the introduction, John Wesley linked the day of Pentecost with subsequent “fresh”⁷⁹ infillings of the Spirit in the book of Acts, in contrast with the initial moment of justification. He said the purpose of being filled with the Spirit was “to give them... ‘the mind which was in Christ’... to fill them with ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering’... ‘to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts’ [= Christian perfection].” He asked the professors: “Are you ‘filled with the Holy Ghost?’ with all those ‘fruits of the Spirit’, which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God? Full of love and zeal to set up his kingdom on earth?”⁸⁰

In his essay, “Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” (1745) John Wesley defined “the baptism with the Spirit” as the “inward baptism” which had a deeper meaning than “water baptism.” He said: “Would to God that ye would... ‘repent and believe the gospel!’ Not repent alone, (for then you know only the baptism of John,) but believe, and be ‘baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire’... even till the love of God inflame your heart, and consume all your vile affections!” Wesley then said the baptism with the Spirit bestows “all holiness” and “perfect love.”⁸¹

In 1747 Charles Wesley wrote a Pentecost hymn which was to become one of the most widely sung of Christian hymns of all times. The congregation

sang it at the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton on April 29, 2011 in Westminster Abbey. It is the best holiness hymn that Charles Wesley ever wrote, affirming that believers can “suddenly” in an instant moment through the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit be empowered to love God perfectly.

Love Divine, all Loves excelling,
Joy of Heaven to Earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble Dwelling,
All thy faithful Mercies crown;
Jesu, Thou art all Compassion,
Pure unbounded Love Thou art,
Visit us with thy Salvation,
Enter every trembling Heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled Breast,
Let us all in Thee inherit,
Let us find that Second Rest:
Take away our *Power* of Sinning,
Alpha and Omega be,
End of Faith as its Beginning,
Set our Hearts at Liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy Life receive,
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy Temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as thy Hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect Love.

Finish then thy New Creation,
Pure and sinless let us be,
Let us see thy great Salvation,
Perfectly restor'd in Thee;
Chang'd from Glory into Glory,
Till in Heaven we take our Place,
Till we cast our Crowns before Thee,
Lost in Wonder, Love, and Praise!⁸²

In 1755 Wesley said in *The Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* that the disciples before Pentecost were justified. Based on John 14:23-27, Wesley said that “the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name,” entailed “such a large manifestation of the Divine presence and love [Christian perfection], that the former in justification is as nothing in comparison of it.”⁸³ Continuing his commentary on this high priestly prayer of Jesus to send the Holy

Spirit, John Wesley said that Jesus's prayer in John 17:17 to "sanctify them through thy word" means to "perfect them in holiness."⁸⁴

In his *Explanatory Notes* on Acts 2:17, Wesley said that the day of Pentecost was not intended to be the only day of Pentecost but rather the Spirit was to be poured out "upon all flesh." This is why Wesley said the promise, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost," is a promise for "all true believers to the end of the world."⁸⁵ This observation corresponds to what John Wesley heard Heylyn say in his Pentecost sermon—"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost"—and so, said he, may *all you* be."

In his *Explanatory Notes* on Acts 2:38, John Wesley defined the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to mean "the constant fruits of faith, even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,"⁸⁶ By the "constant fruits of faith" Wesley elsewhere explained that the Holy Spirit "purifieth the heart from every unholy desire and temper" [= Christian perfection] that "the body of sin might be destroyed."⁸⁷ His use of the words "constant fruit," "constant love, joy, and peace," and "constant peace" in his sermons and journal denoted full sanctifying grace.⁸⁸

As noted above, this connection between the baptism with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost with full sanctifying grace is consistent with the same interpretation provided by John Heylyn in his Pentecost sermon. John Wesley also acknowledged the substantial influence of John Heylyn's *Theological Lectures* (which contained his Pentecost sermon) for his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.⁸⁹ John Wesley clearly considered himself in agreement with Heylyn's theology.

In his *Explanatory Notes*, Wesley noted that the Samaritan and Ephesian Pentecostal reception of the Spirit meant their "sanctification." John Fletcher showed that John Wesley intended by "sanctification" to mean "[full] sanctification."⁹⁰ Indeed as it is commonly recognized, when Wesley used the term "sanctification" he used it in the sense of entire sanctification, as Harald Lindström has shown.⁹¹

In "An Extract of a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law" in 1756, Wesley said: "That we 'must be baptized with the Holy Ghost,' implies this and no more, that we cannot be 'renewed in righteousness and true holiness' any otherwise than by being over-shadowed, quickened, and animated by that blessed Spirit."⁹² "To be renewed in the image of God in righteousness, and true holiness" is Wesley's definition of full sanctification.⁹³

Wesley always connected the language of "the baptism with the Holy Ghost," not to justifying faith or forgiveness of sins, but to holiness, even as he had connected "the indwelling of the Spirit" with perfection, and not justification, as for example in his "Principles of a Methodist" (1742).⁹⁴

John Wesley's Day of Pentecost Revival

Outler pointed out that when Wesley preached in his chapels he preached for thirty minutes and “his constant doctrine was salvation by faith, preceded by repentance, and followed by holiness.”⁹⁵ His journals provide frequent accounts of this two-fold emphasis on justification and sanctification, especially after a holiness revival spontaneously developed in 1760. Here is one account for Wednesday, August 4, 1762:

I rode to Liverpool, where also was such a work of God as had never been known there before. We had a surprising congregation in the evening, and, as it seemed, all athirst for God... A little before I came, nine were justified in one hour. The next morning I spoke severally with those who believed they were sanctified. They were fifty-one in all: twenty-one men, twenty-one widows or married women, and nine young women or children. In one of these the change was wrought three weeks after she was justified; in three, seven days after it; in one, five days; and in Sus[annah] Lutwich, aged fourteen, two days only. I asked Hannah Blakeley, aged eleven, “What do you want now?” She said, with amazing energy, the tears running down her cheeks, “Nothing in this world; nothing but more of my Jesus!”⁹⁶

John Wesley described this holiness revival in October 28, 1762 in terms of a new Pentecost:

Many years ago my brother [Charles] frequently said, ‘Your day of Pentecost is not fully come. But I doubt not it will, and you will then hear of persons sanctified as frequently as you do now of persons justified.’ Any unprejudiced reader may observe that it was now fully come. And accordingly, we did hear of persons sanctified in London and most other parts of England, and in Dublin and many other parts of Ireland, as frequently as of persons justified, although instances of the latter were far more frequent than they had been for twenty years before.⁹⁷

John Fletcher's Attempt to make John Wesley Consistent with His Own Theology of Pentecost

In 1770 the link between Pentecost and holiness became a theme of special importance for John Wesley's designated successor, John Fletcher, but in private correspondence with Joseph Benson (his understudy) Fletcher noted John Wesley had apparently recently modified some of his language for Christian perfection. Fletcher did not want anyone else to see this private letter—except

he would allow Charles Wesley to see it. John Fletcher was disappointed that John Wesley seemed to be allowing phrases such as, seal of the Spirit, Spirit of adoption, and baptism with the Spirit being used to describe justifying faith instead of Christian perfection.⁹⁸ John Wesley communicated this shift in his thinking to Joseph Benson, suggesting that Benson read his later sermons, “Sin in Believers” and “The Repentance of Believers.”⁹⁹ Benson had written an essay, “The Baptism of the Holy Ghost,” which John Wesley found objectionable and hence his letter of caution to Benson.¹⁰⁰

It is apparent in part why this shift came in Wesley’s theology because he was worried that the work of the Spirit in justifying faith would be minimized, especially following the holiness revival when so many were being sanctified subsequently to justifying faith. Wesley had once expressed his concern about “depreciating justification, in order to exalt the state of full sanctification?”¹⁰¹ John Fletcher began immediately to write two treatises on this topic, *An Equal Check to Antinomianism* and *The Last Check to Antinomianism*. His hope, as he explained it to Charles Wesley, would be to make John Wesley consistent in his theology of holiness.¹⁰² When Fletcher’s first treatise was given to John Wesley for his editing and corrections, he found it convincing, saying Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations, which ended with the baptism of the Spirit coming on the day of Pentecost, was the best explanation ever given, saying that “God has raised him up for this very thing.”¹⁰³

His second treatise on Christian perfection further developed and emphasized the link between the baptism with the Spirit and Christian perfection. When this second treatise was still in manuscript form in 1775, John Wesley did his usual editing and correcting of Fletcher’s writings. After reading it, John Wesley told him there was “a slight difference” between them on the use of the phrase, receiving the Spirit, for Christian perfection.

It seems our views of Christian Perfection are a little different, though not opposite. It is certain every babe in Christ has received the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God. But he has not obtained Christian perfection. Perhaps you have not considered St. John’s threefold distinction of Christian believers: little children, young men, and fathers. All of these had received the Holy Ghost; but only the fathers were perfected in love.¹⁰⁴

Fletcher made the requested change and defined Christian perfection to mean the Spirit “is received in its fullness,”¹⁰⁵ John Wesley then said to Fletcher that he did not now perceive there is any difference between them.¹⁰⁶ In this treatise,

Fletcher linked the baptism with the Spirit to Christian perfection numerous times without one word of disagreement from John Wesley. John Wesley said Fletcher had written with more clear understanding on this theme of “pardon and holiness” than “scarcely any one has done before since the Apostles.”¹⁰⁷ Using Peter’s description of Jesus in Acts 2:24, Wesley says of Fletcher that God “raised him up” to make the idea of the history of salvation culminating in the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost clearer than it ever had been previously understood in the history of the Church.¹⁰⁸ Wesley noted that Fletcher’s intellectual abilities were superior to anyone whom he knew.¹⁰⁹ Wesley admired “the purity of the language, “the strength and clearness of the argument,” and “the mildness and sweetness of the spirit” which typified Fletcher’s writings.¹¹⁰ Wesley never said one negative word about Fletcher’s published writings, only praise.

Whatever differences might have existed privately between John Wesley and Fletcher in the 1760s, it is clear that they were resolved, so that in 1777, Fletcher said: “My friend [John Wesley]... chiefly rests the doctrine of Christian perfection on being *baptized and filled with the Spirit*,” noting “this is Mr. Wesley’s sentiment.”¹¹¹ An indication of Wesley’s agreement with Fletcher is that he allowed Fletcher’s frequent use of the phrase “the baptism with the Spirit” to remain in his manuscript before it was published and he affirmed the treatise without a word of disagreement, which is altogether unlike Wesley if he disagreed.

As mentioned above, John Wesley had noted the slight difference between them about babes in Christ, young men, and fathers in the early draft of Fletcher’s manuscript on Christian perfection. John Wesley wanted to make sure the work of the Holy Spirit was linked to *babes in Christ* and *young men*, although only *fathers* were perfected in love. Shortly after John Wesley published this manuscript for Fletcher, he sent a letter to Fletcher indicating his agreement that Pentecost ought to be linked primarily to those who were perfected in love: “The generality of believers in *our* Church (yea, and in the Church of Corinth, Ephesus, and the rest, even in the Apostolic age) are certainly no more than babes in Christ; not young men, and much less fathers. But we have some [fathers], and we should certainly pray and expect that our Pentecost may fully come [when there will be many fathers].”¹¹² This link between perfect love and Pentecost is precisely the point that Fletcher made in his treatise with Wesley’s approval.

Wesley’s later sermons also confirmed that John Wesley had re-asserted his earlier views about the Pentecostal basis of Christian perfection, as we shall see below.

Charles Wesley, along with John Wesley, edited Fletcher’s writings, and Charles volunteered to proofread the copy text once the printer had set it up.¹¹³

Fletcher and Charles were very dear friends, and when Fletcher was writing his treatise on Christian perfection, he exchanged numerous letters with Charles, seeking his advice. In one letter, Fletcher said to Charles that he was attempting to make his brother John altogether consistent in his statements about the relation between the baptism with the Spirit and Christian perfection, and to bring his brother into full agreement with Charles's Pentecost hymns.¹¹⁴ In another letter, he encouraged Charles to have another Pentecost day like the original one he had on May 21, 1738, noting that there were several Pentecost days in the book of Acts. Such repetitions of Pentecost, he said, would establish within the believer the habit of Christian perfection.¹¹⁵ The friendship between Fletcher and Charles was deep, and Charles fully approved of Fletcher's writings. He once said to him: "You have had my imprimatur from the beginning."¹¹⁶

So impressed was John Wesley with Fletcher that he offered to make him an equal partner as the co-leader of Methodism, or he said he would be willing to serve under Fletcher.¹¹⁷ He also urged him on several occasions at least to be willing to be his successor. Fletcher chose to remain as the Vicar of Madeley, Church of England, but this afforded him the opportunity to write many books explaining John and Charles Wesley's doctrine of holiness and universal grace.

Ever since Fletcher's treatise on Christian perfection, which prominently highlighted the baptism with the Spirit as the means of entire sanctification, this connection became standard Methodist doctrine. Here is a typical understanding of this connection:

Should you ask, how many baptisms, or effusions of the sanctifying Spirit are necessary to cleanse a believer from all sin, and to kindle his soul into perfect love: I reply that the effect of a sanctifying truth depending upon the *ardour* of the faith with which that truth is embraced, and upon the power of the Spirit with which it is applied, I should betray a want of modesty, if I brought the operations of the Holy Ghost, and the energy of faith, under a rule which is not expressly laid down in the Scriptures... If one powerful baptism of the Spirit *seal you unto the day of redemption*, and *cleanse you from all [moral] filthiness*, so much the better. If two, or more be necessary, the Lord can repeat them.¹¹⁸

In 1781, John Wesley published an essay in *The Arminian Magazine* entitled, "Thoughts on Christian Perfection" written by one of his most promising young scholars, Joseph Benson, who would also become the president of the British Methodist Conference on two separate occasions after Wesley's death. The purpose of this essay was to encourage those who had been perfected in love to continue

to grow yet more and more in love. With Wesley's approval which he published, Benson wrote: "God *may*, and . . . *does, instantaneously* so baptize a soul with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as to purify it from all dross, and refine it like gold, so that it is *renewed in love, in pure and perfect love.*"¹¹⁹

In his sermon "On Zeal" preached on May 6, 1781, John Wesley said, "the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost" meant "the love of God... which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival." It means "love enthroned in the heart"¹²⁰ and one possesses "all holy tempers."¹²⁰

On June 3, 1781 (Pentecost Sunday), John Wesley wrote in his journal: "I preached on 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost;' and showed in what sense this belongs to us and our children." The phrase, "to us and our children," is a paraphrase of Acts 2:39 where Peter says the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit is "to you and your children,"¹²¹ showing that Wesley believed that Pentecost should be personalized for everyone today. Wesley's "later preaching was primarily extempore,"¹²² and this sermon on being filled with the Spirit was one of them.

Two months after Wesley had preached this Pentecost sermon on being "filled with the Spirit," Fletcher preached on the same theme at the Leeds Conference with Wesley's full commendation. On Wednesday, August 8, 1781, Wesley wrote: "I desired Mr. Fletcher to preach. I do not wonder he should be so popular, not only because he preaches with all his might, but because the power of God attends both his preaching and prayer."¹²³ From a letter written by John Pescod to his wife, and who was one of Wesley's preachers attending this conference, we know the subject of this sermon was holiness and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁴

Outler says that John Wesley published an untitled sermon in July and August 1783, in the *Arminian Magazine* ("The General Spread of the Gospel"), with the text transposed (Isaiah 11:9 was printed as Isaiah 9:11).¹²⁵ This sermon was an extension of his earlier sermon on "Scriptural Christianity" (1744). He said that the kingdom of God is now being realized in the world in an unprecedented fashion through the holiness preaching of Methodism. He cited the Old Testament promise concerning the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. He said this promise of the restored kingdom of God refers to the "experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness."¹²⁶ He observed that the initial fulfillment of this Old Testament promise came on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were "filled with the Holy Spirit." Their lives were characterized by "gladness and singleness of heart," and being "all of one heart and of one soul." Pentecost was the fulfillment of the promise that God would circumcise the hearts of his people to enable them to love God perfectly.¹²⁷ John Wesley identified the Methodist revival as "only the beginning of a far greater work; the dawn of 'the latter day glory,'"¹²⁸

which will lead to “the grand ‘Pentecost’”¹²⁹ which will spread to the whole world so that “all the inhabitants of the earth” will “receive those glorious promises made to the Christian Church.”¹³⁰

Wesley identified the earliest beginning of this “grand Pentecost” with his group of Oxford Methodists. He predicted (“prophesied”) that this reign of Christ in his kingdom on the earth will occur because of “the grand stumbling-block being thus happily removed out of the way, namely, the lives of the Christians.” As a result of Christians being filled with the Holy Spirit and reflecting the image of Christ by their love for God and for each other, their witness will catch the attention of everyone because “their words will be clothed with divine energy, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power” and those who “fear God will soon take knowledge of the Spirit whereby the Christians speak.”¹³¹

This “grand ‘Pentecost’” means the final fulfillment of the first Pentecost. It means the kingdom of God, first contained in God’s promise to Abraham that his children will form an everlasting kingdom, is becoming an actuality. It is a kingdom of the heart, of “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”¹³² What Wesley describes here is not a reference to heaven, but to a time on this earth when the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit will perfect all believers in God’s love.

Wesley concluded his sermon with this prophecy:

All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes that he is already renewing the face of the earth. And we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun, he will carry on unto the day of his Lord Jesus, that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit until he has fulfilled all his promises: until he hath put a period to sin and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, “Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever!”¹³³

After her husband’s death, Mary Bosanquet Fletcher occasionally preached with John Wesley at designated locations. In one of her sermons, she referred to this sermon, calling her hearers to experience a personal Pentecost before there could be a “grand Pentecost.” If Charles Wesley had expected a day of Pentecost among the Methodists when many would be sanctified (as noted above), and if John Wesley had predicted a grand Pentecost when the whole world would come to love God with a perfect heart, Mary Bosanquet Fletcher (who was a like a daughter to John Wesley) reminded her hearers that such a revival must start with individuals before it would spread to the world. She said: “We often talk of the time

when *righteousness is to overspread the earth*, but this millennium must overspread our own hearts, if we would see the face of God with joy.” This millennium, she said, must begin with a personal Pentecost and with a personal entrance into the “spiritual Canaan [of perfect love], that *baptism of the Spirit*, to which every believer is expressly called.”¹³⁴ This call for believers to have a personal Pentecost corresponds to what John Wesley said to Fletcher about the hope for a Pentecost when there would be many “fathers” perfected in love (as noted above).

One month after preaching this sermon on “The General Spread of the Gospel,” John Wesley published another sermon entitled, “The Mystery of Iniquity.” He said before Pentecost the believers were few in number (only 120) and they were “imperfectly healed.” He said: “How exceeding small was the number of those whose souls were healed by the Son of God himself [before Pentecost]! ‘When Peter stood up in the midst of them, the number of names were about a hundred and twenty’ (Acts 1:15). And even these were but imperfectly healed; the chief of them being a little before so weak in faith that, though they did not, like Peter, forswear their Master, yet ‘they all forsook him and fled’: A plain proof that the sanctifying ‘Spirit was not’ then ‘given,’ because ‘Jesus was not glorified.’”¹³⁵

John Wesley Preached on the Baptism with the Spirit

As noted above, John Fletcher preached on the baptism with the Spirit at John Wesley’s annual conference in 1781. In 1783 Adam Clarke heard John Wesley preach on “the baptism with the Holy Spirit” at the conference at Bristol. According to Clarke’s autobiography, while he was attending the Bristol conference, early in the morning on August 3, 1783, he heard “Mr. Bradburn preach on Christian perfection, from I John iv.19.” Then at 10:00 a.m. he heard Wesley preach on the text from Acts. 1:5, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.” Again later on during the day, he heard Wesley preach on the text, “Let us go on to perfection,” (Heb. 6:1).¹³⁶ It was to be expected that the conference sermons would highlight Christian perfection, which was the distinctive doctrine of Methodism.

Clarke further noted that when Wesley came into his district of Norwich in October 1783, he again heard Wesley preach a sermon on the text, “They were all baptized with the Holy Ghost.”¹³⁷ Within the space of a few months, Clarke heard Wesley preach two sermons on the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

In his autobiography, Clarke said for “most of these sermons” that Wesley preached during October 1783 he had “preserved either the *skeletons*, or the leading thoughts.”¹³⁸ I have been unable to locate these notes among Adam Clarke’s archival collections at Duke University Library or the John Rylands University Library, but it is clear enough what the content of his sermon would have been

based on his earlier statement about the baptism with the Spirit. As noted above, in “Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” (1745), he defined the baptism of the Spirit as distinct from repentance as signified in water baptism, linking the baptism of the Spirit with “all holiness” and “perfect love.” In 1781, John Wesley published Benson’s essay on Christian perfection affirming that “God may, and... does, instantaneously so baptize a soul with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as to purify it from all dross, and refine it like gold, so that it is renewed in love, in pure and perfect love.” He approved Fletcher’s treatise on Christian perfection, saying that he perceived no difference in their theology after Fletcher had made the recommended changes allowing that justified believers had already received the Spirit in some measure. This essay used the phrase, baptism with the Spirit, on numerous occasions as the means of Christian perfection with John Wesley’s approval. Wesley said to Fletcher on March 22, 1775, “I know not whether your last tract [*The Last Check* where Fletcher featured Christian perfection as received through the baptism with the Holy Spirit] was not as convincing as anything you have written.”¹³⁹ Shortly after John Wesley published this treatise for Fletcher in London using his printer R. Hawes (City Road, Chapel: R. Hawes, 1775).¹⁴⁰ John Wesley affirmed in a letter to John Fletcher that Pentecost should be linked to those who have been made perfect in love (as noted above). The Wesley brothers reprinted this volume in 1783 with a note that it was “sold at the New-Chapel, and at Mr. Wesley’s preaching-houses.”¹⁴¹ John Wesley’s widespread circulation of Fletcher’s treatise on Christian perfection also shows that John Wesley approved Fletcher’s link of Christian perfection with the baptism with the Spirit. We also know that Adam Clarke used the language of the baptism with the Spirit for Christian perfection.¹⁴² If John Wesley disagreed with this language, Adam Clarke would surely have noted it.

In 1787, Wesley said: “Some indeed have been inclined to interpret this [sacrament of “one baptism”] in a figurative sense, as if it referred to that baptism of the Holy Ghost which the apostles received at the day of Pentecost, and which *in a lower degree* [italics mine] is given to all believers.”¹⁴³ This show that John Wesley wanted to insure that those “in a lower degree” (which is a phrase he consistently used to describe those in a justified state) are affirmed as having received the Holy Spirit in some measure, but also recognizing that the baptism of the Spirit in the fullest sense describes the fully sanctified believer.

Wesley’s Canonical Hermeneutic

John Wesley’s assumed what is called today “canonical hermeneutics.” He saw the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises in terms of “typological correspondence” and “reenactment.”¹⁴⁴ This is different from

an allegorical method because typological correspondence assumes the real intent of the original Old Testament texts and sees their New Testament fulfillment as the overflow of its original meaning. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost is a good example of this canonical hermeneutic at work. He showed that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the new covenant counterpart to the Israelite crossing of the Red Sea. This connection between the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and Jesus' resurrection from the dead is expressed in Peter's words, "mighty works and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22). These words always served as a traditional formula to designate the Exodus event (Deut. 6:20-24; 26:5-10; Joshua 24:17; Deut. 4:34; 7:19; 11:3; 29:3; Jer. 32:20-21; Acts 7:36). For Peter, this formula signified that the significance of the crossing of the Red Sea was reenacted in Jesus' Resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:22-24). Peter also equates Jesus' Resurrection with "having loosed the pangs of death" (Acts 2:24). This word "loosed" (*lmsas*) is related to the idea of Israel's being freed from Egyptian captivity. *lmw* is the root word for *lmtrow* (ransom), the word used in the Septuagint for Israel's deliverance from Egypt. *luw* is also used in Rev. 1:5-6 as an allusion to the Exodus which serves as the paradigm of Jesus' resurrection from the dead: "to him who loves us and has freed (*lmsanti*) us from our sins by his blood [Exodus theme] and made us a kingdom [Conquest theme]; priests to his God and Father." Peter thus alludes to the Israelites being set free from the captivity of Egypt in describing the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead as the liberating event (the new Exodus) from the bondage of sin.

Peter also recalls the Conquest theme in alluding to the restoration of the kingdom (cf. Rev. 1:5), not in the political sense that David's kingdom would be literally restored in the Promised Land, but the reign of God's kingdom prophesied by Joel and the prophets was now fulfilled in the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit of the exalted Christ (Acts 2:33) upon all believers. Jesus being "exalted at the right hand of God" and our "having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" is the new Conquest (Acts 2:33). This great thing that happened on the day of Pentecost meant that the exalted Christ reigns in the hearts of believers, not in a political and earthly kingdom. This means the Church is made up of those who have formed a friendship (*koinwnia*, Acts 2:42) with God. That, after all, was the original thing God had planned for Abraham and his descendants. Friendship is the meaning of sanctification; it is an affection for the people of God; and it is loving God with all the heart, mind, and soul. This is why Jesus before Pentecost had told his disciples that his desire was for them to be more than servants; he wanted them to be his friends (John 15:15). The exalted Christ reigning in the hearts of his people through the indwelling Holy Spirit is the ultimate meaning of friendship with God.

God's desire for friendship with humanity is why he entered into a covenant with Abraham in order to give his descendants the land of Canaan. This was to be a hallowed land where the Lord would be their God (Genesis 17:8). This Promised Land was to serve two purposes. One was to give Abraham's descendants a place to live. To be a nation requires territory. Canaan was to be their establishment. More importantly, Canaan was to represent the place where God lived. Moses says Canaan is "the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thy abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Ex. 15:17). In their wanderings through the wilderness, worship had been limited to the altar before the tabernacle (the tent of meeting), but as Yehezkel Kaufmann put it: "When the people became rooted in the land, this restriction became obsolete; the sanctity of the land overshadowed that of the tent, and throughout the towns and settlements of Israel sanctuaries arose."¹⁴⁵ Since Canaan was the land of the Lord, there was an absolute prohibition against idolatry. Idolatry might have been tolerated beyond the Jordan (Josh. 22:9-34), but not in Canaan Land. Canaan Land was a holy place and was the dwelling place of a holy God. Hence the people were to be holy. The sole condition for remaining in the Land of Canaan, "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deut. 6:3) was loving God with all their heart, mind, and soul. Otherwise, they would be driven out of the land and the Lord "will destroy you from the face of the land" (Deut 6:15).

John and Charles Wesley interpreted the land of Canaan as a symbol of the Christian life of perfect love available here and now. In his sermon on "Christian Perfection" (as noted above), John quoted Charles' hymns on "The Promise of Sanctification," which included this verse:

O that I now, from Sin released,
Thy Word might to the utmost prove!
Enter into the Promised Rest,
The *Canaan* of Thy Perfect Love!¹⁴⁶

In a letter to Miss Furdy, (June 11, 1757, John Wesley wrote: "The land flowing with milk and honey, the Canaan of his perfect love, is open. Believe, and enter in!"

John Wesley cited Charles' hymns in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* that captures the imagery of Canaan Land, Pentecost, and Christian perfection, such as "Thy sanctifying Spirit pour... and make me *pure from sin*," and "Enter into thy promised rest, The Canaan of thy *perfect love*!"¹⁴⁷ One of the hymns used the biblical reference of the promise of rest in the Land of Canaan, which the Hebrew

writer shows is only a prefiguration of the “rest, which belongs to the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9).

Lord, I believe a rest remain
To all Thy people known;
A rest where *pure enjoyment* reigns,
And Thou are *loved alone*.

A rest where *all our* soul's *desire*
Is fixed on things above;
Where doubt, and pain, and fear expire,
Cast out by *perfect love*.

From *every evil motion* freed
(The Son hath made us free),
On all the powers of hell we tread,
In glorious liberty.

Safe in the way of life, above
Death, earth, and hell we rise;
We find, when *perfected in love*,
Our long-sought paradise.

O that I now the rest might know,
Believe, and enter in!
Now, Saviour, *now* the power bestow,
And let me cease from sin!

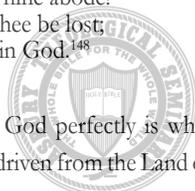
Remove this hardness from my heart,
This *unbelief* remove;
To me the rest of *faith* impart,
The Sabbath of Thy love.

Come, O my Saviour, come away!
Into my soul descend!
No longer from thy creature stay,
My Author and my End.

The bless Thou hast for me prepared
No longer be delay'd;
Come, my exceeding great reward,
For whom I first was made.

Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
And seal me Thine abode!
Let all I am in Thee be lost,
Let all be lost in God.¹⁴⁸

The failure to love God perfectly is what marked the downfall of the kingdom of Israel. They were driven from the Land of Canaan because they failed to



love God with all their hearts, mind, and soul (Deut. 30:6). Moses had promised that the kingdom would be restored once they had been driven from the land because of their lack of perfect love for God, and once it was restored they would never be driven into exile again because their hearts would be circumcised so that they would be enabled to love God with all their heart, mind, and soul (Deut. 30:5-6). The promise of the restored kingdom was that they would then have the “power” to live victoriously and so remain in the land forever. This sanctification of Israel was the theme of the prophets, and the prophets believed that their sanctification would come through the gift of the Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-27). Peter reported in his sermon that the true meaning of the restored kingdom predicted by the Prophet Joel was now fulfilled.

Some contemporary New Testament scholars think Pentecost is not about sanctification or love because the words are not explicitly used in Acts 2. These scholars fail to appreciate the “typological correspondence” involved in the promise-fulfillment schema important for a canonical hermeneutics. A strictly historical-critical analysis of the text without the larger canonical context can only provide an incomplete biblical exegesis. The focus of Acts 2 on phenomena, as John Wesley pointed out in his sermon on “Scriptural Christianity,” is not the significance of Pentecost because the gifts of the Spirit were already being exercised in the earthly life of Jesus as a sign of his being the messiah, but rather the meaning of Pentecost is the bestowal of the whole fruit of the Spirit and being made in the image of Christ through being filled with the Spirit. The phenomena, as wind, fire, and tongues, were the evidences that the restored kingdom had now occurred with a new place for God’s abode, not in a geographical location somewhere, but within believers whose hearts are circumcised by the Holy Spirit enabling them to love God with all their hearts and their neighbor as themselves.

This is why John Wesley spoke about the prophetic message that God in the latter days would pour out God’s Spirit for the sanctification of God’s people.

Thus hath the Lord fulfilled the things he spake by his holy Prophets, which have been since the world began;—by Moses in particular, saying, [Deut. 30. 6] “I will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,”... and most remarkably by Ezekiel, in those words: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all *your* filthiness, and from *all* your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them... Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your

uncleannesses... Thus saith the Lord your God, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities... the heathen shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places; ... I the Lord have spoken it, ... and I will do it.¹⁴⁹

Based on the promise of the restored kingdom in Ezek. 35 26-28: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. *My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.* You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God,” Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn on “The Promise of Sanctification”:

The hatred of my carnal mind
Out of my flesh at once remove;
Give me a tender heart, resign'd,
And pure, and fill'd with faith and love.

Within me thy good Spirit place,
Spirit of health, and love, and power;
Plant in me thy victorious grace
And sin shall never enter more.

Cause me to walk in Christ my Way,
And I thy statutes shall fulfill;
In every point thy law obey,
And perfectly perform thy will.

O that I now, from sin released,
Thy word might to the utmost prove!
Enter into the promised rest,
The Canaan of thy perfect love!¹⁵⁰

The restored kingdom (which Peter said happened on the day of Pentecost as prophesied by Joel) is the New Israel whose heart was circumcised enabling them to love God perfectly and thus being permanently secured with no more threats of exile, as Moses had prophesied (Deut. 30:5-6). Christian perfection is none other than the cleansing (circumcision) of the heart by the Holy Spirit, which Peter said happened to the disciples on the day of Pentecost in his address to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:8-9. Using the *language of Pentecost*, Paul said to the Romans (6:1-3) “the love of God is *poured out* in our hearts through the Holy Spirit *who is given to us.*” Both of these passages show that the inner dynamic of the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was for circumcision of the heart issuing in a heart of love.

Asbury Seminary and Henry Clay Morrison

The Fourth Article of Incorporation, Section D, of Asbury Theological Seminary says: “It will be the object of this Seminary to prepare and send forth a well-trained, sanctified, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministry.” The words “sanctified” and “Spirit-filled” are used interchangeably to denote the seminary’s adherence to the Wesley brothers’ theology of Christian perfection. Henry Clay Morrison was the seminary’s founder and first president. Morrison attended Vanderbilt University Divinity School when its dean was Thomas O. Summers who embraced a “flawless Orthodoxy,”¹⁵¹ His biographer/personal friend said that Summers “held in theology to the strong views of Wesley and Fletcher concerning Christian holiness.”¹⁵² Illustrating this commitment to traditional Wesleyan theology, Summers published a revised version of *The Memoir of the Life and Ministry of William Bramwell*, who was one of Wesley’s preachers and known for his piety. The baptism with the Spirit as the means of entire sanctification was featured in this biography. The baptism with the Spirit was to become a prominent theme in Morrison’s preaching as an evangelist, and he may well have learned about this Pentecost emphasis from Thomas Summers at Vanderbilt. Some of the language of Morrison’s personal testimony to being baptized with the Spirit was similar to the testimony of John Fletcher about the numbers of times he had experienced the baptism of the Spirit before full sanctification had become a habit of his own life.¹⁵³

Although Morrison only attended Vanderbilt for just one year (1874),¹⁵⁴ he was one of the best well-known Methodist preachers in America having preached in more Methodist churches than possibly any other minister.¹⁵⁵ For his accomplishments, Vanderbilt awarded him the honorary Doctorate of Divinity degree.¹⁵⁶ Morrison was particularly known for his holiness preaching with an emphasis on the baptism with the Spirit. In a widely circulated pamphlet, Morrison provided an account of his testimony of entire sanctification, entitled “My Pentecost.” He had been preaching the doctrine of entire sanctification for some years, but he himself desired to be filled with the Holy Spirit of perfect love, when suddenly he was overcome with divine power. He was holding a series of “protracted meetings” with another minister, and as they discussed together the results of the revival, Morrison exclaimed:

“Dr. Young, the power of God is all over this hill,” and throwing up my hands I said, “Doctor, I feel the power of God here in this room right now.” At that instant the Holy Ghost fell upon me. I fell over on the divan utterly helpless. It seemed as if a great hand had taken hold upon my heart, and was pulling it out of my body. Dr. Young ran across the room and caught me in his arms, and called aloud, but I could not

answer. Several moments must have passed, when it seemed to me as if a ball of fire fell on my face, the sensation at my heart ceased, and I cried out, “Glory to God!” Dr. Young dropped me, and I walked the floor feeling as light as a feather. The Doctor said, “Morrison, what do you mean? You frightened me fearfully. I thought you were dying.” “It was the Lord working with me,” I answered. I had received my Pentecost. It was without doubt the Baptism with the Holy Ghost, and I felt my heart was cleansed from all sin.¹⁵⁷

If this emotional response sounds a bit beyond the pale, let me cite from John Wesley’s own journal of a not too-dissimilar experience when he and other members of the Holy Club at Oxford had assembled together in prayer at 3:00 o’clock in the morning for a Watch Night service. George Whitefield was also part of this group. This was before Whitefield was inclined to Calvinism. Whitefield at that time spoke of his “love of Christian perfection.”¹⁵⁸ John Fletcher said that during Whitefield’s Oxford days with the Wesley brothers that he interpreted the “baptism with the Spirit” as the means of Christian perfection, but in his post-Oxford days he did not.¹⁵⁹ Fletcher knew Whitefield very well, as he once asked Fletcher to be his curate.¹⁶⁰ It is important to be aware of this personal information about Whitefield, as we will examine what happened during this Watch Night service. It is also to be aware that this service was only three months after John Wesley had returned from Herrnhut where he was encouraged to speak explicitly of Christian perfection in Pentecostal terms.

This service occurred on January 1, 1739. Here is what Wesley recorded in his journal:

Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and my brother Charles were present at our love-feast in Fetter-Lane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, “We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.”¹⁶¹

Whitefield also recorded this event in his journal. He said: “It was a Pentecost season indeed.” He said: “Sometimes whole nights were spent in prayer. Often have we been filled as with new wine. And often have I seen them overwhelmed with the Divine Presence, and crying out, ‘Will God, indeed, dwell with men upon earth! —How dreadful is this place! —This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of Heaven.’”¹⁶²

About a month later, John Wesley said to George Whitefield: “The society at Mr. Crouch’s does not meet till eight; so that I expound before I go to him near St. James Square, where one woman has been lately filled with the Holy Ghost, and overflows with joy and love.”¹⁶³ John Wesley’s and George Whitefield’s description of their Fetter Lane experience as a “Pentecost season” of “exceeding joy,” “amazement at the presence of his Majesty,” and “overwhelmed with the Divine Presence,” corresponds with Wesley’s report of the woman in one of those meetings who was “filled with the Holy Ghost, and overflows with joy and love [= Christian perfection].”

Putting these accounts together in context, this Fetter Lane experience would surely seem to be one of those instances that Fletcher was talking about when he asked “how many “baptisms, or effusions of the sanctifying Spirit are necessary to cleanse a believer from all sin?... If one powerful baptism of the Spirit ‘seal you unto the day of redemption, and cleanse you from all [moral] filthiness,’ so much the better. If two or more be necessary, the Lord can repeat them.” Fletcher believed that Charles and John Wesley’s initial conversion experiences were one of those moments of entire sanctification that needed to be repeated again and again. Here is what Fletcher said to Charles Wesley:

But new baptisms are necessary from time to time. Compare Acts 2 and Acts 4. The more the magnet rubs the needle the more magnetized it becomes. Why did you not follow the Lord for another Baptism, and by his Spirit dwelling within you, when he once gave you an earnest of that happy day of Pentecost that you have not forgotten? Well then, Jonah, sleeper, why do you not cry to your God for the Spirit of Resurrection and of life which must enter again in the witnesses who are dead, or sleeping [an allusion to Charles’ sermon, “Awake thou, that Sleepest]”¹⁶⁴

The E. S. J. School of World Mission and Evangelism and E. Stanley Jones

E. Stanley Jones is not an unknown name in our midst, but I suspect that we have paid too little attention to his preaching on the baptism with the Spirit. President Emeritus Maxie Dunnam testified once in Estes Chapel of his own moment of sanctification through the baptism with the Spirit while attending one of E. Stanley Jones’ Ashram meetings. The late Professor Emeritus E. Stanley Jones Professor of Mission, J. T. Seamands, was one of two other persons along with E. Stanley Jones who served on the executive committee of the Ashram movement.¹⁶⁵

When I was a student at both Asbury institutions, I heard E. Stanley Jones on several occasions preach on this theme. This subject is accentuated in his

devotional books, which my wife and I read daily. His testimony of his sanctifying experience occurs in his autobiography, *A Song of Ascents*. He was reading the classic book on the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness, *The Christian Secret of a Happy Life*, by Hannah Whitall Smith “when suddenly I was filled—filled with the Holy Spirit. Wave after wave of the Spirit seemed to be going through me as a cleansing fire. I could only walk the floor with the tears of joy flowing down my cheeks. I could do nothing but praise him—and did. I knew this was no passing emotion; the Holy Spirit had come to abide with me forever.”¹⁶⁶ Jones writes: “The Holy Spirit brought me purity, and he brought me power, for he brought me himself. I need and want no more.” “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain [Pattern], this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit [Giver].” (John 1:33, RSV). So Jesus is not only the Giver of the Holy Spirit; he is the pattern of the gift. If you surrender to the Holy Spirit, he will make you into his image, a Christ-like type of person.”¹⁶⁷ Jones believed that “Modern Christianity... lacks power and it lacks full conviction because it lacks the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁸

Concluding Comment

Without the baptism with the Spirit renewing us in righteousness and true holiness, then the doctrine of Christian perfection may be reduced to a “speculative, notional, airy shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart,” as John Wesley complained of William Law’s will mysticism. Only the Pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit of Christ can enable us to love God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves and to evangelize the world so that righteousness will cover the earth as waters cover the sea. Henry Clay Morrison and E. Stanley Jones felt the optimism of world mission and evangelism because they believed in the baptism with the Holy Spirit. May the optimism of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit of these two patriarchs continue to inspire the mission of Asbury Theological Seminary.

End Notes

¹ John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (Bristol: Farley, 1742), 220, “A Prayer for Holiness,” v. 7.

² *Ibid.*, 165-66, “Hymn for the Day of PENTECOST,” vv. 1, 7, 10.

³ *The Methodist Societies*, ed. Henry D. Rack in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976–), 10:845 “The Large Minutes.”

⁴ *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1909), 1:467n2.

⁵ John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," *Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises II* in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 13:137.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *The Early Journal of Charles Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1909), 84; Thomas Jackson, *The Life of Charles Wesley* (New York: G. Lane & P. P. Sandford, 1949), 78.

⁸ William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (London: printed for William Innys, 1729), 135-136.

⁹ John Wesley, Sermon 17, "On God's Vineyard," in *Sermons III*, ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 3:504.

¹⁰ Henry Moore, *The Life of John Wesley* (London: John Kershaw, 1824), 1:190. *Journals and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*. 18:245n46.

¹¹ Cf. "setter forth of strange doctrines" in William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1729)*, 138, with Wesley, "A setter forth of new doctrines," *Sermons*, "The Circumcision of Heart," ed. Outler, 1:401.

¹² *Letters I, 1721-1739, Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1980): 25:549, (Letter from William Law, May 22, 1738).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 25:543, (Letter from William Law, May 29, 1738).

¹⁴ *Journal and Dairies I (1735-1739), The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*: 18:137, (Tuesday, October, 14, 1735).

¹⁵ Law, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* (London: William and John Innys, 1726), 467-468.

¹⁶ *Letters I 1721-1739, Works of John Wesley*, 25:439. Oct 10, 1735.

¹⁷ Law, *Treatise on Christian Perfection* (1726), 219.

¹⁸ *Journals and Diaries, I (1735-1738), The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*: 18:317, (October 30-31 1785).

¹⁹ Law, *Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection*, 82.

²⁰ Cf. Geordan Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity: John Wesley and Georgia, 1735-1737," (PhD thesis, Manchester University, 2008), 71-72.

²¹ *Journals and Diaries I (1735-1738); The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 18:143, (Sunday Jan 25, 1735).

²² *Ibid.*, 18:210, (Jan 13, 1738).

²³ *Ibid.*, 18:247.



²⁴ William Law, *Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection*, 82.

²⁵ Outler, *Sermons*, “One Thing Needful.” Sermon 146. Sermon IV, 4:355-359.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:351, “Outler’s Introduction to the Sermon.”

²⁷ *Journal and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 18:214, (January 29, 1738).

²⁸ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989), 106-149.

²⁹ *Journal and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 18:247.

³⁰ *Ibid.*:18:248.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 18:234. April 22, 1738.

³² Thomas Jackson, *Memoirs of Charles Wesley* (London: John Mason, 1848), 55.

³³ John Wesley, *Letters I (1721-1739)*, ed. Frank Baker, 25:540-542, (To the Revd. William Law, May 14, 1738).

³⁴ William Law urged the pursuit of holiness in his concluding chapter: “I exhort the reader to labour after this Christian perfection.” He writes: “Here therefore I place my first argument for *Christian perfection*. I exhort thee to labour after it, because there is no choice of anything else for thee to labour after, there is nothing else that the reason of man can exhort thee to.” *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*, 512.

³⁵ E. H. Sugden, *Wesley’s Standard Sermons* London: The Epworth Press, 1921, 1:36.

³⁶ Law, *A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection*. 67.

³⁷ Outler, *Sermons*, 1:121-124, “Salvation by Faith.”

³⁸ In 1754 in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (New York: Carlton & Porter, nd) on John 3:3, John Wesley defined “born again” to mean “an entire change of heart,” and “inwardly changed from all sinfulness to all holiness.” He described Peter’s language of “being born again” to mean “purity of heart” and “pure from any spot of unholy desire, or inordinate passion” [= Christian perfection]. Six years later in his sermon on “The New Birth” he defines the new birth only as the beginning moment of justifying faith and not full sanctification, although Charles Wesley retained the language of the new birth as equivalent in meaning with the experience of Christian perfection.

³⁹ J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley’s Hymns* (London: Epworth Press, 1941), 303, 308.

⁴⁰ John Tyson, *Charles Wesley on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 219-220.

⁴¹ *Journals and Diaries I (1735-38), The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 18:253, (May 29, 1738).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.*, ed. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr and Kenneth G. C. Newport (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2008), 1:146.

⁴⁴ John Tyson, *Charles Wesley on Sanctification*, 195.

⁴⁵ Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 108-109. Cf. Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today, A Study of the Wesleyan Tradition in the Light of Current Theological Dialogue* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960). 102-104.

⁴⁶ Jackson, *Memoirs of Charles Wesley*, 64; *Journal of Charles Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (London: John Mason, 1849), 1:146.

⁴⁷ *Journals and Diaries I (1735-38), The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 18:241n15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 18:241, (May 19, 1738). Italics are Wesley's.

⁴⁹ Outler, *Sermons*, 2:454, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, "The Mystery of Iniquity."

⁵⁰ John Heylyn, "Discourse XV. On Whitsunday," *Theological Lectures at Westminster-Abbey* (London: Printed for J. and R. Tonson and S. Draper in the Strand, 1749), 119-120.

⁵¹ Fletcher, John Fletcher, "The Doctrine of the New Birth, as it is stated in these sheets, is directly or indirectly maintained by the most spiritual divines, especially in their sacred poems." *The Asbury Theological Journal*. 50.1 (Spring, 1998): 56; cited hereafter as *New Birth*.

⁵² Thomas Coke, *A Commentary on the New Testament* (London: G. Whitfield, 1803), 2:942-957.

⁵³ Law, *A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection* (1726), 463.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 520.

⁵⁵ *The Early Journal of Charles Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1909), 146.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 146-147.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 149.



⁵⁸ Thomas Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley* (New York: G. Lane & P. P. Sandford, 1842), 123.

⁵⁹ *The Early Journal of Charles Wesley*, 150.

⁶⁰ *Journals and Diaries I (1735-38)*, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 18:254, (June 7 – June 13, 1738).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 18:270, (August 8, 1738).

⁶² Christian David equated “full assurance” and being “cleansed from all sin.” Cf. *Ibid.*, 18:272, (August 10, 1738).

⁶³ The Moravians did not all agree about being “cleansed from all sin.” Christian David affirmed this doctrine, but John learned three years after his Aldersgate experience that Peter Böhler rejected it, as he told John Wesley on May 16, 1741. *Journals and Diaries II (1735-38)*, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 19:195.

⁶⁴ He wrote: “Yet, upon the whole, although I have not yet that joy in the Holy Ghost, nor that love of God shed abroad in my heart, nor the full assurance of faith, nor the (proper) witness of the Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God, much less am I, in the full and proper sense of the words, in Christ a new creature; I nevertheless trust that I have a measure of faith am ‘accepted in the Beloved.’” *Journal and Diaries II*, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 19:19, (October 14, 1738).

⁶⁵ *Letters I (1721-1739)*, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 25:575-578, (A letter to Samuel Wesley, October 30, 1738).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: Strahan, 1739), 150. Small capitals and italics are the Wesleys’.

⁶⁸ *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, (London: Strahan, 1740), ix.

⁶⁹ *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740), x.

⁷⁰ *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740), xi.

⁷¹ *The Journal of Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1980), 1:250. Cf. John Tyson, *Charles Wesley on Sanctification*, 177.

⁷² In a letter to Charles Wesley (July 4, 1774), *The Asbury Theological Journal* 53.1 (Spring 1998): 92. Cf. Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. de la Flechere* (London: J. Mason, 1838), 166.

⁷³ *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740), “Groaning for the Spirit of Adoption,” vv. 4-6, 132. Italics are the Wesleys’.

⁷⁴ John Wesley, *A Library of Protestant Thought*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 367ff.

⁷⁵ Outler, Sermons, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 2:110-111, "Christian Perfection."

⁷⁶ "Pleading the Promise of Sanctification," *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742), vv. 6, 11. 261-262.

⁷⁷ *John Wesley, The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies, "The Principles of a Methodist," in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works*, 9:64-65.

⁷⁸ John Wesley, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 1:159-180, "Scriptural Christianity."

⁷⁹ John Wesley, *The Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (New York: Carlton & Porter, nd) on Acts 4:31, p. 286.

⁸⁰ Following the introduction where Wesley defined the meaning of being filled with the Spirit, Albert Outler points out that Part I lists the order or sequence of salvation from "repentance" and "justification" to "full 'renewal of his soul in righteousness and true holiness,'" "saved both from passion and pride . . . from every temper which was not in Christ," and finally a witness to the "hope of that 'crown of glory,' that 'inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.'" He thus defined the day of Pentecost in terms of Christian perfection: "Such was Christianity in its rise." They "were all filled with the Holy Ghost . . . 'were of one heart and of one soul' . . . So did the love of him in whom they had believed constrain them to love one another." This interpretation of the sequence of the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost is the basis of John Fletcher (his designated successor) to also explain that they quickly moved from justification in the dispensation of the earthly Son of God to Christian perfection in the dispensation of the Spirit. (John Fletcher, *The Works of Rev. John Fletcher in Ten Vols., 1816, "A Portrait of St. Paul*, 8:177-320, esp. 319-20. Part II is an eschatological section regarding the spread of Christianity from the day of Pentecost when the church was "in one accord" until finally "the tares appear with the wheat" and "the mystery of iniquity" began to work and weaken the church. Part III foresees the goal of Pentecost realized when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" and "filled with peace and joy . . . united in one body . . . they all 'love as brethren; they are all of 'on one heart, and of one soul' . . . and every man loveth his neighbor as himself." **Part IV** is a practical application challenging the administrators, professors, and students to examine where this Pentecostal Christianity "now exists," "Which is the country, the inhabitants whereof are 'all filled with the Ghost'? Are all of 'one heart and of one soul'?... Who one and all have the love of God filling their hearts, and constraining them to love their neighbor as themselves? . . . Why then, let us confess we have never yet seen a Christian country upon earth." John Wesley then addresses the professors: "Are you 'filled with the Holy Ghost'? Are ye lively portraitures of him whom ye are appointed to represent among men? . . . an heart full of God?" To the professors, he asked: "Are you 'filled with the Holy Ghost'? With all those 'fruits of the Spirit' which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God? Full of love and zeal to set up his kingdom on earth?" This sermon begins with being filled with the Spirit, who was given "to fill them with 'love, joy, peace'" and "to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," then spreading throughout the world, and finally an eschatological hope of the day when all inhabitants of the world would be filled with the Spirit, concluding with a practical application

that Oxford University needs a Pentecost of its own, if only its administrators, professors, and students were filled with the Spirit with a “heart whole with God” and “full of love and zeal to set up the kingdom on earth.” He called upon them to be “patterns . . . in charity . . . in purity” reflecting a clean heart possessing all the tempers of Christ and fruits of the Spirit freed from pride.

⁸¹ Gerald Cragg, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 11:253, “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part II.”

⁸² Charles Wesley, *Hymns for Those That Seek, And Those That Have, Redemption in the Blood of Christ* (London: Strahan, 1747, 11-12. Italics are Wesley’s.

⁸³ *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, v. 23, 257.

⁸⁴ *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, 263. John Wesley reported in his biography of John Fletcher that this high priestly prayer of Jesus formed the basis of his “favourite subject,” “Be[ing] filled with the Holy Spirit.” John Wesley, *A Short Account of the Life and Death of the Rev. John Fletcher* (London: J. Paramore, 1786), 75-76.

⁸⁵ *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, 275.

⁸⁶ *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, 280.

⁸⁷ *The Marks of the New Birth* [1748], It should be noticed that this sermon still operated with the idea that the new birth equals Christian perfection. Not until 1760 did he limit the term, new birth, to the initial moment of justifying faith. Here is what Wesley said about “constant fruit”: “An immediate and constant fruit of this faith whereby we are born of God, a fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no, not for an hour, is power over sin;—power over outward sin of every kind; over every evil word and work; for wheresoever the blood of Christ is thus applied, it ‘purgeth the conscience from dead works;’—and over inward sin; for it purifieth the heart from every unholy desire and temper.” These “marks” include one who “loves God with all his heart,” his heart purified “from every unholy desire and temper,” who has the ‘full assurance of faith’ and is “perfect, as you Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Outler, *Sermons*, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 1:423, 427, 428, “The Marks of the New Birth.”

⁸⁸ Here are examples of the use of the word “constant” to denote full sanctification. John Wesley wrote: “I buried the remains of Thomas Salmon, a good and useful man. What was peculiar in his experience was, he did not know when he was justified; but he did know when he was renewed in love, that work being wrought in a most distinct manner. After this he continued about a year in *constant* [italics mine] love, joy, and peace; then, after an illness of a few days, he cheerfully went to God. *Journal and Diaries IV*, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 21:351, (Sunday, February 14, 1762). In a letter from one of his preachers about Martha Wood on August 16, 1777, John Wesley recorded this testimony: “For the first ten years, she was sometimes in transports of joy, carried almost beyond herself. But for these last ten years, she has had the *constant* [italics mine] witness that God has taken up all her heart. ‘He has filled me,’ said she, ‘with perfect love; and perfect love casts out fear. Jesus is mine. God, and heaven, and eternal glory, are mine. My heart, my very soul is lost, yea, swallowed up, in God.’” *Journal and Diaries V* (1765-

1775), in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 22:462. In his journal for March 1787 Mon. 19, Wesley wrote: "I left Bristol with much satisfaction, expecting to hear of a plentiful harvest there; and in the evening preached at Stroud. The House was unusually filled, both with people and with the power of God. Tuesday, 20. We had a large congregation at five. Afterwards I met the select society, many of them enjoying the pure love of God, and *constantly* [italics mine] walking in the light of his countenance. *Journal and Diaries VII (1787-1791)*, in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley* 22:9.

⁸⁹ *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, 4.

⁹⁰ John Fletcher, *The New Birth*, 45.

⁹¹ Cf. Harald G. Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1946), 127.

⁹² *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, Third Edition (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984), 9:495, "An Extract of a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Law."

⁹³ Henry Moore, *The Life of John Wesley*, 2:42.

⁹⁴ E.g., see "The Principles of a Methodist," in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 9:60.

⁹⁵ John Wesley, "Thoughts upon Methodism" (1786), in "The Methodist Societies: History Nature, and Design," in *The Bicentennial Works of John Wesley*, 9:528.

⁹⁶ *Journal and Diaries IV (1755-65)*, eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 21:383-84.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21:392, October 28, 1762.

⁹⁸ The original letter is housed in the Manuscript Department of the William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, and it is transcribed by M. Robert Fraser. Cf. Fraser, M. Robert. *Strains in the Understanding of Christian Perfection in Early British Methodism* (Ph. D. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1988), 489. Cited with the permission of M. Robert Fraser who discovered this document.

⁹⁹ Telford, *Letters* 5:214-215 (to Joseph Benson, December 28, 1770).

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. de la Flechere*, 150-155.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Henry Moore, *The Life of John Wesley*, 2:40.

¹⁰² *'Unexampled Labours,' Letters of the Revd John Fletcher to leaders in the Evangelical Revival*, ed., with an introduction by Peter Forsaith, with additional notes by Kenneth Loyer (London: Epworth, 2008), 287-288; A letter published for the first time in Luke Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, Luke Tyerman's *Wesley's Designated Successor* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1883), 182-183.

¹⁰³ Telford, *Letters* 6:136-137. Letter to Elizabeth Ritchie (January 17, 1775).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 6:146, (to John Fletcher, March 22, 1775).

¹⁰⁵ Fletcher, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher* (New York: W. Waugh and T. Mason, 1833), 2:630, “Last Check to Antinomianism.”

¹⁰⁶ Telford, *Letters*, 6:174-175, (to John Fletcher, August 18, 1775).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 6:79-80. Letter to Mrs. Bennis (May 2, 1774).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 6:136-137. Letter to Elizabeth Ritchie (January 17, 1775).

¹⁰⁹ Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. de la Flechere*, 172.

¹¹⁰ Outler, *Sermons*, 3:617, “The Death of the Rev. Mr. John Fletcher.”

¹¹¹ Fletcher, *New Birth*, 46-47.

¹¹² Telford, *Letters* 6:221 (to John Fletcher, June 1, 1776).

¹¹³ *Unexampled, Labours*, 281. 305, 286.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 287-288, 320.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹¹⁶ A letter loosely contained, and bound up in a large volume (or folio) in John Rylands Library, entitled, *Letters Relating to the Wesley Family*, stored in JRULM MAW F1 Box 18. The immediate context of the approval of Fletcher’s writings given by Charles Wesley was related to a pamphlet that Fletcher wrote on “Three National Grievances,” but Charles expands on the extent of approval to include Fletcher’s writings from *the beginning*.

¹¹⁷ *Unexampled, Labours*, 134.

¹¹⁸ Fletcher, *Works, 1806*, 6:359-60. Italics and brackets are Fletcher’s.

¹¹⁹ Joseph Benson, *The Arminian Magazine*, 1781, 553. Italics are Benson’s.

¹²⁰ Outler, *Sermons* 3:313-314, “On Zeal.”

¹²¹ *Journal and Dairies VI (1776-1786)*, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* 23:206, (June 3, 1781).

¹²² Outler, *Sermons* 4:525, “Appendix C” by Richard P. Heitzenrater.

¹²³ *Journal and Dairies VI (1776-1786)*, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* 23:218, (August 8, 1781).

¹²⁴ *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 8 (August 1829): 528.

¹²⁵ Op. cit., Sermon 16, dated April 22, 1783, pp. 341-348, 397-403.

¹²⁶ Outler, *Sermons*, 2:493, "The General Spread of the Gospel."

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:494-95.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:493.

¹²⁹ Outler, *Sermons*, 2:494, "The General Spread of the Gospel."

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:498.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 2:495.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 2:491.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 2:499.

¹³⁴ Henry Moore, *The Life of Mrs. Mary Fletcher, Consort and Relict of the Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, Salop. Compiled from her Journal, and other Authentic Documents*, London: Thomas Cordeux, 1818, Appendix 2, Sermon: "Acts 27:29. They cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day," pp. 436-443. Quote found on p. 443.

¹³⁵ Outler, *Sermons*, 2:454, "The Mystery of Iniquity."

¹³⁶ *An Account of the Infancy, Religious, and Literary Life of Adam Clarke* (autobiography), edited J. B. B. Clarke (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1833), 1:110.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 171. In his autobiography, Clarke said for "most of these sermons" that Wesley preached during October 1783 he had "preserved either the *skeletons*, or the leading thoughts." *The Life of Adam Clarke* (autobiography), 1:110. I have been unable to locate this information among Adam Clarke's archival collections at Duke University Library or the John Rylands University Library.

¹³⁸ *The Life of Adam Clarke* (autobiography), 1:110.

¹³⁹ *Telford, Letters*, 6:146 (to John Fletcher, March 22, 1775).

¹⁴⁰ R. Hawes was a printer that Wesley used for his books to be sold at the New-Chapel, City-Road, London. See *Collections of Psalms and Hymns* by John and Charles Wesley (printed by R. Hawes). A second edition of *The Last Check* was published in 1783 in London by J. Paramore with the notice that it was "sold at the New-Chapel, and at Mr. Wesley's preaching-houses in town and country."

¹⁴¹ Cf. *The National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints* (London: Mansell Information/Publishing Limited, and Chicago: The American Library Association, 1971), 175:237.

¹⁴² For example, cf. Adam Clarke, commentary on the Book of Acts on Acts 1:4,5, where he said "Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost, for the destruction

of sin.” *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (Cincinnati: Applegate & Company, 1856): 3:490.

¹⁴³ Outler, *Sermons*, 3:45, “Of the Church.”

¹⁴⁴ Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch, and Other Essays* trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (London: SCM press Ltd., 1984; Gerhard von Rad, “Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann. Trans. James Luther Mays (London: SCM Ltd., 1963), 17-39.

¹⁴⁵ *The Religion of Israel*, trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 258.

¹⁴⁶ “Pleading the Promise of Sanctification,” *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742), v. 14. 262.

¹⁴⁷ *Doctrinal and Controversial Treaties II*, ed. Paul Wesley Chilcote and Kenneth J. Collins in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 13:156-157, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.”

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 13:153-154.

¹⁴⁹ Outler, *Sermons* 2:120-121, “Christian Perfection.”

¹⁵⁰ “Pleading the Promise of Sanctification,” *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1742), vv. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. 262.

¹⁵¹ O. P. Fitzgerald, *Dr. Summers: A Life Study* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1885), 234.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 334.

¹⁵³ James Sigston, *Memoir of the Life and Ministry of William Bramwell*, Revised by Thomas O. Summers (Nashville: E. Stevenson & F. A. Owen, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1856).

¹⁵⁴ Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *The Story of Asbury Theological Seminary* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2010), 7.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵⁷ Henry Clay Morrison, *My Pentecost* (Louisville: The Herald Press, nd), 10-11.

¹⁵⁸ Citation from Whitefield in Luke Tyerman, *The Life of George Whitefield* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), 1:237.

¹⁵⁹ 1:590-591n, “An Equal Check”; cf. *Works*, 2:550, 560, “The Last Checks”; cf. Whitefield, *Twenty-Three Sermons on Various Subjects* (London: W. Strahan, 1745), 218-219.

¹⁶⁰ Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. de la Flechere*, 57. Cf. Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, 116.

¹⁶¹ *Journal and Diaries II (1738-1743)*, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* 19:29, (January 1, 1739).

¹⁶² Abel Stevens, *The History of Methodism* (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1878), 81; John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of George Whitefield* (New Haven: Joseph Barber, 1812), 24n. Cf. Robert Philip, *The Life and Times of George Whitefield* (London: George Virtue, 1838), 74. Luke Tyerman, *The Life of George Whitefield* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), 155.

¹⁶³ *George Whitefield's Journals* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 224, (Letter on Feb. 20, 1739). Cf. Letter to the Revd. George Whitefield and William Seward (Feb 26, 1739), Letters I 1721-1739, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 25:601-602.

¹⁶⁴ *Unexampled, Labours'*, 145.

¹⁶⁵ E. Stanley Jones, *Song of Ascents* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 231.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁶⁸ E. Stanley Jones, *The Spirit of Power and Poise*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1949), 119.

