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# **Full of the Holy Spirit and Faith**

*Essays Presented in honour of  
Dr. Allison A. Trites  
Pastor, Teacher, Scholar*

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# **From Wesley to Azusa**

**The Historical Journey of the  
'Second Work' Doctrine**

**Bradley T. Noel**

## **Introduction**

Though Pentecostalism appears to differ from its evangelical brothers and sisters in many respects, the distinctives are often less extensive than they appear. One of the key features of Pentecostalism that differentiates it from other conservative Protestant groups is its strong emphasis on a second work of grace. All evangelical groups believe and teach the necessity of a crisis experience, or conversion event, during which the unregenerate individual is met by the grace of God and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals however, teach the importance of a second experience, that of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Beginning with the writings of John Wesley, the furtherance of the doctrine of a second work of grace can be clearly found in the fore of the Holiness and Keswick movements, and seen in the thought of individuals such as Phoebe Palmer and Charles G. Finney. In each of these sources Pentecostalism finds its roots. A larger question then presents itself. In its

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Wesleyan origin, the second work was a divine act of sanctification. Inasmuch as Pentecostals understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an empowerment for evangelism, how did the concept of the second work of grace acquire this radical shift in meaning and purpose? This essay will explore the historical background of the second work doctrine, and trace its evolution in consequence from sanctification to empowerment.

## The Writings of John Wesley

### Background Information

The first historical occurrence of the doctrine of a second blessing is debated among scholars,<sup>1</sup> though in all such discussions, the writings of John Wesley figure prominently. When researching the historical roots of Pentecostalism, however, Wesley's writings are without doubt *the* place to begin.

Wesley's belief in a second work of grace came through his study and preaching on the doctrine of sanctification. The son of an Anglican minister, he trained as a young man first at Oxford, and subsequently in Anglican doctrine. At the age of twenty-five, he began his own learning program to further define his convictions.<sup>2</sup> The reading which followed profoundly shaped the young Wesley's views. Most notable among the titles were Jeremy Taylor's *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*, and Thomas a Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, which Wesley read in 1725. Most influential in forming his views on holiness and sanctification, however, were William Law's *Treatise on Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call to a Holy and Devout Life*. Wesley adopted much of Law's

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<sup>1</sup> See James Dunn, "Spirit-Baptism and Pentecostalism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970): 397-399. Dunn believes the move towards two distinct works began with the Puritans, from whom Wesley borrowed the idea. This was not conclusively demonstrated, nor referred to in the other works consulted.

<sup>2</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 14.

thinking, and spent the rest of his life in pursuit of the type of holiness so upheld in those writings.<sup>3</sup>

### His Conversion

It is important to note that Wesley's doctrinal formulation of the importance of holiness began some thirteen years before his own conversion experience of May 24, 1738. While attending a reading of Martin Luther's preface to *Romans* on Aldersgate Street in London, Wesley experienced something akin to that which the famous German had experienced through the reading of *Romans* centuries before. "About a quarter before nine, while he [Luther] was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."<sup>4</sup>

Despite this new-found assurance of his salvation, Wesley never associated it with attainment of his perfectionist goals. He preferred to believe that perfecting holiness lay sometime in the future.<sup>5</sup> From the time of his conversion onwards, Wesley developed and perfected his doctrine of Christian sanctification. Beginning in 1739 and continuing until 1777, he issued and repeatedly revised his beliefs concerning perfection in a tract entitled, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection as Believed and Taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley." This eighty-one page document has since become a veritable manifesto on holiness.<sup>6</sup>

### Wesley's Theology of Christian Perfection

How might we summarise the teachings of Wesley on holiness and sanctification? With his use of the term 'perfection', Wesley has often

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3 Ibid., 14-15.

4 John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865), 97.

5 Synan, 17. See also Wesley, Vol. 1, 99.

6 Melvin E. Dieter et al., *Five Views of Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 37.

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been subjected to accusations of idealism, holding up as attainable something which humanity can never hope to accomplish.<sup>7</sup> Much of this misunderstanding can be eliminated when we delve into the original language from which Wesley derived 'perfection'. The crucial term for Wesley was not the Latin *perfectus*, but τελειόω in the Greek.<sup>8</sup> While the former stresses perfection in the sense that we use it today, that of 'being perfect', or 'without error', the latter has a different connotation. It suggests 'perfecting' or 'completing'<sup>9</sup>—a dynamic understanding that came to him from many of the Eastern fathers with which he was so familiar.<sup>10</sup> Wesley did not mean 'sinless perfection' in the sense that some have understood it, but rather 'Christian perfection'.<sup>11</sup> How are we to understand this? In his 1788 sermon *On Perfection*, he lists the following signs: 1) To love God with all one's heart and one's neighbour as oneself; 2) The mind that is in Christ; 3) The fruit of the Spirit; 4) The image of God, a recovery of man to the moral image of God . . . ; 5) Inward and outward righteousness, sanctity of life issuing from sanctity of heart; 6) God's sanctifying of man in spirit, soul, and body; 7) Man's own perfect consecration to God; 8) A continuous sacrifice of praise; and 9) Salvation from all sin.<sup>12</sup> "Wesley understood Christian perfection not as an absolute perfection but as perfect love—loving God with *all* one's heart and mind and soul and strength . . . [and] it was only upon attaining Christian

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7 William R. Cannon, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification and Perfection," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 35 (1961): 92-3.

8 Thomas Oden and L. R. Longdon, eds., *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 121.

9 F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 198.

10 Oden, 121.

11 John R. Higgins et al., *An Introduction to Theology: A Classical Pentecostal Perspective* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1994), 117.

12 Quoted in Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1980), 131-2.

perfection that he would have an assurance of his acceptance by God. His primary motivation to seek holiness was to know that he was saved.”<sup>13</sup>

Wesley distinguished strongly between voluntary and involuntary sins. One may still sin because of the human condition, but will respond with Christian perfection to the situation.<sup>14</sup>

I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. Therefore, *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use . . . I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please, I do not . . .<sup>15</sup>

Harald Lindstrom, the author of perhaps the finest book on Wesleyan theology to date, argues that prior to his conversion of 1738, Wesley believed in perfection as something the Christian was commanded to strive for but could never procure. After his conversion and realisation that justification is obtained by faith alone, he saw sanctification as something that might be achieved in similar fashion. Each is a gift of God, unattainable by any other mean than *sola fides*.<sup>16</sup>

Wesley's new view of grace had its repercussions on his doctrine of perfection as well as on his doctrine of justification. Man was justified by faith, and by faith he would be fully sanctified too. He explained the fact that

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13 Henry Knight III, "From Aldersgate to Azusa: Wesley and the Renewal of Pentecostal Spirituality," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996): 83.

14 C. W. Conn, "Christian Perfection," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. S. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 176.

15 John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*.

16 Lindstrom, 133.

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perfect sanctification was not ordinarily accorded to the Christian until shortly before death by pointing out that it was not expected earlier, and therefore not prayed for in faith.<sup>17</sup>

Lest we think the issue relatively unimportant, it is imperative to realise that for Wesley entire sanctification is necessary for one to enter Heaven, for “without holiness shall no man see the Lord.” Without holiness—and perfect holiness at that—no one can be justified at the Last Judgement.<sup>18</sup>

Most scholars agree that Wesley did indeed perceive sanctification as an act of God, subsequent to salvation, completing the process of holiness begun at salvation.<sup>19</sup> Typically, not everyone agrees with the preceding statement. Albert Outler suggests that the doctrine is a later development of Methodist “holiness movements.”<sup>20</sup> This is hard to justify when faced with the clearest and most convincing evidence of Wesley’s second work doctrine, the words of Wesley himself. Below is some of Wesley’s most lucid teaching on sanctification, which is worth quoting at length:

But does God work this great work in the soul gradually or instantaneously? Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some . . . but it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God that it should be done instantaneously; that the Lord should destroy sin “by the breath of his mouth,” in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And so he generally does; a plain fact, of which there is evidence enough to satisfy any

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17 Ibid.

18 Philip Watson, “Wesley and Luther on Christian Perfection,” *The Ecumenical Review* 15 (1963): 294-5.

19 See Synan, 19; Dieter, 17; William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York: University Press of America, n.d.), 242; R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfectionism in Christian Theology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 329-341; and Lindstrom, 132-133.

20 Oden, 122.

unprejudiced person. *Thou* therefore look for it every moment! Look for it every day, every hour, every moment! Why not this hour, this moment? Certainly you may look for it *now*, if you believe it is by faith. And by this token you may surely know whether you seek it by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done *first, before* you are sanctified. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it *as you are*; and if as you are, then expect it *now*. It is of importance to observe, that there is an inseparable connection between these three points, Expect it *by faith*, Expect it *as you are*, and Expect it *now!*<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, Wesley believed in entire sanctification as a work wrought by God, in an experience subsequent to salvation. This is the first step in tracing the Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace. Before we leave this era, however, it may be helpful to briefly consider the ideas of Wesley's designated successor, John Fletcher.

Once it was clear that the 'moment' of entire sanctification was emphasised in Wesleyan thought, the question naturally arose as to whether it was appropriate to describe this moment in terms of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Fletcher was keen on using the phrase,<sup>22</sup> but Wesley appears to have resisted this trend. He insisted that "the phrase in that sense is not scriptural and not quite proper; for they all 'received the Holy Ghost' when they were justified."<sup>23</sup> For Fletcher's part, it would seem that he agreed to disagree on this one issue, commenting that

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21 John Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. John H. Leith (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1973), 372.

22 Dunn, 399.

23 Quoted in Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 50. Though see Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 21, who concludes, perhaps in an assumption, that Wesley equated entire sanctification with the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

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You will find my views on this matter in Mr. Wesley's sermons on Christian Perfection and on Scriptural Christianity; with this difference, that I would distinguish more exactly between the believer baptised with the Pentecostal power of the Holy Ghost, and the believer who, like the Apostles after our Lord's ascension, is not yet filled with that power.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, Fletcher's ideas were the beginning of what would later become a significant Pentecostal doctrine and are our first hint of the change in focus from Methodist to Pentecostal perspectives on the second work. These beliefs did not develop in early Methodism, due in large part to Wesley's resistance, and the widespread faithfulness to his theology. America would provide the proper ground for these motifs to advance further.

## The Holiness Movement

### The Beginnings

When Methodism was transplanted to American soil, the doctrine of entire sanctification came with it. The first Methodist to preach in North America was Captain Thomas Webb.<sup>25</sup> In the earliest recorded Methodist sermon in the United States, dating back to 1766, Webb declared, "The words of the text were written by the Apostles after the act of justification had passed on them. But you see, my friends, this was not enough for them. They must receive the Holy Ghost after this. So must you. You must be sanctified . . ." <sup>26</sup> This is the initial tying together of the second work with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in America. As shall be seen, it was only the beginning.

The first appointed leader of the Methodist church in America was Francis Asbury, whose name seems to be synonymous with

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24 Dayton, 50.

25 Synan, 19.

26 Ibid.

“indefatigable.”<sup>27</sup> When in 1771 Wesley asked for volunteers to go to America, Asbury responded eagerly, and assumed leadership of the four Methodist ministers already in America. Though the War of American Independence slowed the growth of the new movement, the Methodists had soon spread to nearly every state. Although statistics do not tell the whole tale, the four ministers who cared for 300 people upon Asbury’s arrival in 1771 had grown to 2,000 ministers and over 200,000 Methodists at his death in 1816.<sup>28</sup>

The focus upon sanctification and holiness so strong in English Methodism was less forcibly advanced in America, due no doubt to the need, in the frontier context, to focus most strongly on salvation.<sup>29</sup> At the Methodist General Conferences of 1824 and 1832, urgent calls to return to the practice and teaching of holiness were sounded. By 1840, perfection was becoming one of the major theological themes in America, influencing social, intellectual, and religious circles.<sup>30</sup> Affected by this were individuals destined to be influential in the cause for holiness, such as Charles Finney, whose contribution will be discussed below.

### Phoebe Palmer

Many factors contributed to the rise of the holiness revival, and space does not permit an analysis of them all. In New York, a physician’s wife, Phoebe Palmer, received the experience of sanctification in 1837 and soon thereafter began telling all who would listen of her special sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence.<sup>31</sup> Meetings known as the “Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness” became, over a sixty year period, a magnet for those interested in holiness, both as a movement and for themselves.<sup>32</sup>

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27 Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 172.

28 Ibid., 173.

29 Dayton, 65.

30 Synan, 28.

31 Noll, 182.

32 Ibid.

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Palmer was the first to popularise the vocabulary associated with Pentecostalism, using the phrase “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” as synonymous with “entire sanctification.”<sup>33</sup> At a Methodist campmeeting in Canada in June of 1857, Palmer inquired as to whether believers of that day ought not to expect a baptism of the Holy Ghost similar to that on the day of Pentecost. Her teaching, that such was every believer’s privilege, spread far and wide.<sup>34</sup>

This attitude marks a noticeable change from Calvinist to Arminian theology, discussed below in the thought of Finney. In her ‘shorter way’ to holiness, she outlines three steps, each of which focuses on the human decision: 1) entire consecration; 2) faith, that is, believing we have already received that which we have asked for; 3) and testimony to the fact that we have received it, whether or not we have felt anything. Palmer’s influence on Pentecostalism can hardly be overemphasised. Indeed, she has been called “the missing link between Methodist and Pentecostal spirituality.”<sup>35</sup>

## Finney and Oberlin Perfectionism

In the generation after Asbury, Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) emerged as the best-known revivalist in the United States.<sup>36</sup> As such, he impacted the religious thought of America in several ways that would help to prepare the path for Pentecostalism. Most historians concentrate on the first of these, the ‘new measures’ that Finney used to create revivalistic fervour. These included such things as an ‘anxious bench’, where those who intended to do business with God would sit, as well as the public praying for ‘sinners’ by name.<sup>37</sup>

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33 Richard M. Riss, *A Survey of 20th-Century Revival Movements in North America* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 18.

34 *Ibid.*, 18.

35 Knight III, 86.

36 Noll, 174.

37 Keith J. Hardman, *Charles G. Finney: Revivalist and Reformer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 84-85; 134-138.

Such practices flew in the face of traditional Calvinist theories of revival, which placed much, if not all of the responsibility for the movement of God in the hands of God Himself. Conventionally, in the pattern of the First Great Awakening under Jonathan Edwards, salvation was firmly in the domain of God alone. Man could do nothing either to advance salvation to his peers, nor to accept Christ himself. All was the work of God, as the Fall left man so utterly depraved as to render him incapable of choosing Christ. When conversion did occur, it was the culmination of a long process of conviction and grace.<sup>38</sup>

Under Finney, however, the focus began to change dramatically. As Wesleyan Arminianism began to make progress on the theological scene, it affected the soteriological view of many, especially that of Finney. His revivalism, known today as evangelism, was for the 'whosoever will', and stressed the free choice of mankind. Unless one accepted Christ by an act of the will (though aided by the grace of God), one was doomed to hell. God offers salvation freely; humanity must accept it willingly. Conversion was understood less as a process and more as a crisis experience, gained in a moment of time.<sup>39</sup> "Finney made salvation the beginning of religious experience in contrast to the older revivalism which made conversion the end."<sup>40</sup> This transformation in the understanding of conversion helped prepare the way for a similar move in sanctification theology.

These developments were a necessary prelude to what would follow. Once "crisis" overwhelms "process" to make sanctification primarily an event occurring at a definite point in time—that is, when sanctification has been largely absorbed into entire sanctification—and once the teleological thrust of Christian perfection is transmuted into an initiatory experience that usually follows rapidly on conversion, the stage has been set

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38 William W. Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture 1765-1840* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), 148.

39 J. D. Douglas, ed., *New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 715.

40 William W. Sweet, *The American Churches: An Interpretation* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947), 126.

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for the re-emergence of the Pentecostal formulation of entire sanctification.<sup>41</sup>

Finney's other significant preparatory contribution to Pentecostal theology came after he had assumed the professorship of theology at Oberlin college, Ohio, in 1835.<sup>42</sup> Perfectionism had become a question of great importance in America, and Oberlin College was no exception to this concern. The impetus came the year previous in the form of a question from a student to President Asa Mahan: "When we look to Christ for sanctification, what degree of sanctification may we expect from him? May we look to him to be sanctified wholly, or not?"<sup>43</sup> This propelled Mahan, Finney, and others in search of an answer, culminating in "Oberlin perfectionism," an odd blend of Wesleyan teaching and Calvinist New Divinity, and with Finney's influence, a greater tendency towards people's free will.<sup>44</sup> Though he did stress the role of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in sanctification, Finney's thought tended to place more of the obligation in the hands of individuals. "According to Finney, a person could achieve the coveted state of Christian perfection or sanctification by simply exercising free will and cultivating 'right intentions'. Sin and holiness, he explained, could not exist in the same person."<sup>45</sup> Though Finney's doctrine of perfection moved away from that of Fletcher's, and perhaps even postponed the turn to Pentecostal sanctification,<sup>46</sup> it nonetheless brought a renewed stress on holiness, and on the individual's role in obtaining it.

Finney's other major contribution to Pentecostalism was his teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John L. Gresham, in *Charles G. Finney's Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, argues that Finney laid new emphasis on the doctrine of the baptism. Not only was the

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41 Dayton, 70.

42 Noll, 304.

43 Quoted in Hardman, 327.

44 Dayton, 66.

45 Synan, 26.

46 Dayton, 71.

baptism essential for sanctification, but also for *empowerment for service*. “Finney’s later discussions of the baptism in the Holy Spirit revolved around those two themes: sanctification and usefulness. The baptism was presented either as a cleansing, liberating experience or as an act of empowerment for ministry.”<sup>47</sup> Finney himself wrote, “If filled with the Spirit, you will be useful. You cannot help being useful. Even if you were sick and unable to go out of your room, or to converse, and saw nobody, you would be ten times more useful than a hundred of those common sort of Christians who have no spirituality.”<sup>48</sup> This tendency to interpret the baptism of the Holy Spirit in terms of sanctification *and* power for service is an important theme, and one which was of great significance for early Pentecostalism.

### Social and Theological Factors

Donald Dayton, in *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, notes several substantial social factors which helped prepare the way for Pentecostal ideas and theology. To be sure, the revival that swept across the American north in 1857-8 spread holiness thought as never before.<sup>49</sup> Beginning in New York City and spreading over most of the Northeast, it proved to be a powerful tool not only for the disseminating of holiness teachings, but also for propagating Pentecostal rhetoric and themes. Everywhere the revival was discussed it included the plethora of Pentecostal imagery that was in vogue when talking of such a move of God.<sup>50</sup>

Other factors also conspired to support a major transformation within Wesleyan thought. Various issues of great severity combined to create splits in nearly all the major denominations. The struggle over slavery, for

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47 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 15. See also H. H. Knight, “From Aldersgate to Azusa,” 88.

48 Charles G. Finney, *Finney on Revival*, ed. E. E. Shelhamer (Minneapolis: Bethany House, n.d.), 114. See also R. M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 41, who believes that Finney placed more emphasis on power than perfection.

49 Synan, 31.

50 Dayton, 74.

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example, produced within Methodism the anti-slavery Wesleyan Methodist Connection and the Free Methodist Church. The battle against the increasing secularisation split other groups along fundamentalist/modernist lines. The swelling numbers of immigrants challenged the hopes of a 'Christian America' and forced many, especially those attempting to preserve the ante-bellum Evangelical styles, into a defensive and reactionary stance. Finally, the upward mobility of denominations such as Methodism caused its own share of divisions, as some (such as the holiness movement) attempted to keep in contact with the masses.<sup>51</sup>

Further, the broad cultural optimism and push toward perfection that so characterised the first half of the 19th century began to diminish even before the Civil War. The growing struggles and violence concerning the issue of slavery forced many to choose between abolitionist or pacifist positions. Much thought was given to the institution of slavery and the proper Christian response to it. The dissolution of cultural supports for the doctrine of Christian perfection gave stimulus for ways to re-express the doctrine in a culturally relevant manner.<sup>52</sup>

It has also been noted that in the 1830s and 1840s a 'denominational transformation' occurred, as the churches turned from public responsibility to private devotion. Perhaps the weight of the decisions placed upon them caused a number to withdraw and move from "Reform to Refuge." By the 1850s many had become "protected and withdrawn islands of piety."<sup>53</sup> This turn towards a more personal and 'spiritual' mood among many holiness groups anticipated the coming Pentecostal style and message.

The Holiness currents were increasingly, though not exclusively, the carriers of the experimental fidelity to the doctrine of entire sanctification. One of the most striking differences in mood between the ante-bellum advocates of Christian perfection, especially those at Oberlin college, and the postwar proclaimers of

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51 Ibid., 75.

52 Ibid., 76.

53 Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1978), 147, quoted in Dayton, 76.

Pentecostal sanctification is the earlier sense of 'ability' and the latter search for 'power'. It may well be that the late nineteenth century saw the decline of confidence, at least in some circles, in the ability of human effort to cope with growing social complexity and a consequent growing search for the 'power' either to cope or to sustain one through to better times. The Pentecostal formulation of entire sanctification may have played an important role in the 'empowering' of the 'powerless'

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Finally, two theological factors may be recognised. First, it is possible to discern in the nineteenth century a radical turn to themes of pneumatology and spirituality. The rise of spiritualism, Christian Science, and philosophical idealism, all embodied this new focal point. In theologically conservative circles this development took the form of an increased emphasis on the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup> From this vantage point, the shift in Wesleyan thought to Pentecostal sanctification may be seen as the product of an increased interest in the Holy Spirit. Second, the theme of perfection had always been controversial, full as it was of apologetical problems. This intensified when holiness motifs crossed denominational lines into other theological contexts, especially that of the Reformed tradition. "In those contexts the vocabulary of Pentecost subordinated themes of perfection in such a way as to have a claim for some to be more *prima facie* biblical."<sup>56</sup> Thus in 1874, Daniel Steele, past president of Syracuse University, admonished Christians to, "cease to discuss the subtleties and endless questions arising from entire sanctification or Christian perfection, and all cry mightily to God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit . . ."<sup>57</sup> Whatever the reasons, the shift in focus did take place, and the consequences for Pentecostalism cannot be understated.

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54 Dayton, 77.

55 Noll, 380.

56 Dayton, 79.

57 Quoted in Dayton, 79.

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### Holiness Campmeetings and the Keswick Conventions

It would not be sufficient to conclude this section without some commentary on the role of the Holiness Campmeetings and the Keswick Conventions. In the years following the American Civil War, the Holiness movement increasingly adopted the language and beliefs of Pentecostal theology. The most important institution of this movement was the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness in 1867.<sup>58</sup> The call to the campmeeting hoped “to realise together a Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>59</sup> From 1867 to 1883 a total of fifty-two national camps were held, each interdenominational, though dominated by Methodists. Synan believes that this may be properly understood as the beginning of the modern Holiness movement in the United States, and was responsible for birthing over one hundred new denominations, including that of Pentecostalism.<sup>60</sup>

The Keswick Movement is another contributing factor in the shift from Wesleyan to Pentecostal doctrine. The influence of American holiness figures such as Finney and Cullis was strongly felt in Britain as well. In 1875, a series of annual conventions commenced in Keswick, England. These events became a major centre of late nineteenth-century holiness and spirituality.<sup>61</sup> Theologically, Keswick occupied territory somewhere in between the Holiness movement and the Revivalist teachings. It was more concerned with the second blessing as a remedy for sin, but steered clear of perfectionism.<sup>62</sup> While not identical with later Pentecostal doctrines, the Keswick teachings continued the Wesleyan emphasis on a second work, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit for the completeness of the Christian life.

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58 Nils Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement* (New York: Humanities Press, 1964), 15.

59 Dayton, 90.

60 Synan, 37.

61 Dayton, 105.

62 Knight III, 91-92.

## The Triumph of Pentecostal Spirit Baptism<sup>63</sup>

### Perfection or Power?

By the time the Spirit of God began to fall on worshippers at Azusa street in 1905, the religious world was well prepared to understand the occurrence in terms of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many factors and individuals, from Palmer to Finney, had been instrumental in the preparatory work. The dominant issue for many however, consisted of integrating the 'perfection' and 'cleansing' motifs of Wesleyanism, with the increasing theme of 'power' in Pentecostalism. Several responses came to this dilemma and each will be examined in turn.

The solution of some, such as Palmer, involved combining the two. She suggested that "holiness *is* power" and that "purity and power are identical."<sup>64</sup> Charles Finney tended to understand the baptism in terms of both sanctification *and* power, as has been demonstrated above. Others such as E. P. Ellyson and Russell Byrum taught that when the Holy Spirit came in His fullness, He cleansed the vessel from abiding sin, and through His indwelling presence empowered the believer for active service.<sup>65</sup>

Another very significant response to the 'perfection or power' controversy commenced some eleven years before the Azusa outpouring. In 1895, Benjamin Hardin Irwin founded the Fire-Baptised Holiness Church, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Irwin's solution was to advocate a 'three blessing' theory that began with salvation, proceeded to sanctification, and concluded with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>66</sup> As a holiness minister, Irwin had been greatly influenced by the writings of Fletcher, who seemed to describe something more powerful than the experience of

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63 This phrase is borrowed from Dayton.

64 Dayton, 94.

65 Ibid.

66 V. Synan, "Fire-Baptized Holiness Church," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. S. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 309.

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sanctification that he himself had received.<sup>67</sup> The movement never gained the national acclamation that it might have. Irwin began to teach the faithful that there were additional baptisms one might receive—numbers four, five and six—which he called “dynamite, lyddite, and oxidite.”<sup>68</sup> These and other extreme teachings, combined with his confession in 1900 to “open and gross sin,” left the growing denomination ready to be absorbed by the Pentecostal movement that followed.<sup>69</sup>

### Classical Pentecostal Doctrine

From the beginning, a majority of Pentecostals clearly tied the second work of baptism in the Holy Spirit to an endowment of power. Though some of the movement’s early leaders were inclined towards the ‘three blessing’ view, the two stage theology quickly took precedence.<sup>70</sup> Those who experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Azusa, clearly believed it was to empower them for service. Frank Bartleman, an eyewitness to the events at Azusa, wrote, “But here we are the restoration of the very experience of ‘Pentecost’, with the ‘latter rain’, a restoration of the power, in greater glory, to finish up the work begun.”<sup>71</sup> Another early member noted that the movement stood for “the restoration of Apostolic faith, power and practice, Christian unity, the evangelization of the whole world preparatory to the Lord’s return . . . .”<sup>72</sup> The themes of sanctification and holiness had all but disappeared.

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67 Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal*, 62.

68 Anderson, 35.

69 Synan, “Fire-Baptized,” 309.

70 See Knight, 93, who notes that Parham, Seymour, C. H. Mason, G. B. Cashwell, and Florence Crawford all subscribed to Irwin’s three stages. The third stage was evidenced by tongues.

71 Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1980), 89.

72 Quoted in E. Blumhofer, ed., *Modern Christian Revivals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 148.

Perhaps the best known advocate of the Pentecostal view of the second work came from Reuben A. Torrey, a famous evangelist of the turn of the century. While Torrey did not support the doctrine that would become the 'initial evidence' position of Pentecostals, he nonetheless clearly expounded their views concerning the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He taught that such an experience was subsequent to conversion, and that one may know whether or not one has received it. In addition, he wrote:

The purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not primarily to make believers individually holy. I do not say that it is not the work of the Holy Spirit to make believers holy, for as we have already seen, He is "the Spirit of holiness," and the only way we shall ever attain unto holiness is by His power. I do not even say that the baptism with the Holy Spirit will not result in a great spiritual transformation and uplift and cleansing . . . *but the primary purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is efficiency in testimony and service.*<sup>73</sup>

#### Modern Pentecostal Theology

To conclude our journey through the development of Pentecostal theology, we will briefly examine how the second work doctrine has expressed itself in present-day Pentecostalism. It might be useful to take a look at Pentecostal theology on sanctification. With their strong emphasis on power, Pentecostals have often been accused of underpromoting the cause of holiness. Today, Pentecostals tend to understand sanctification as part of the finished work of Christ on Calvary. H. H. Knight III argues that this is actually a Keswick understanding of holiness, formulated as a gradual completion, over the lifetime of an individual, of the work that was accomplished on the cross.<sup>74</sup>

One Pentecostal theology text describes sanctification as having twin dimensions. The believer is 'set apart' unto God at conversion, but the

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<sup>73</sup> R. A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 155-156.

<sup>74</sup> Knight III, 93.

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transformation of the character and will of an individual continues throughout life.<sup>75</sup> Another similar work acknowledges the lack of prominence placed on holiness: “The Pentecostal emphasis on Spirit baptism and supernatural gifts of the Spirit have resulted in an underemphasis on the rest of the work of the Spirit, including that of sanctification.”<sup>76</sup> Finally, another book on Pentecostal theology gives three aspects of sanctification. First, the ‘positional’ act of sanctification, which is bestowed at conversion upon everyone. Second, it is ‘practical’, continuing throughout the lifetime of a believer, and is seen as a gradual growing in grace, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Third, it is made ‘final and complete’ on the day of the coming of Christ.<sup>77</sup> The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each play a role in helping to sanctify a believer. Responsibility also rests with the individual, who must put his or her faith in God, obey the Word of God fully, yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and commit him or herself to personal holiness.<sup>78</sup>

Little has changed in Pentecostal theology regarding the second work, or the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals continue to believe that the post-conversion baptism of a believer in the Holy Spirit is the present-day reality of that which was experienced by the disciples on the day of Pentecost. The purpose of this blessing is understood as an empowerment for service, granted by God in accordance with Joel 2:28-29. Power is needed for witness to others, which persists as a theme of crucial importance.<sup>79</sup> The evidence that one has received the Holy Spirit in this manner is taken to be speaking in tongues; which for many has become

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75 Higgins, 119. The author goes on to quote Erickson’s *Christian Theology*.

76 S. Horton, ed., *Systematic Theology* (Springfield: Logion Press, 1994), 404.

77 Guy Duffield and N. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: LIFE Bible College, 1987), 238-242.

78 Ibid., 244-5.

79 J. T. Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 15.

the distinctive doctrine of Pentecostalism.<sup>80</sup> The position of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, as stated in their official *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths*, is as follows:

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience in which the believer yields control of himself to the Holy Spirit.<sup>81</sup> Through this he comes to know Christ in a more intimate way<sup>82</sup> and receives power to witness and grow spiritually.<sup>83</sup> Believers should earnestly seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>84</sup> The initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.<sup>85</sup> This experience is distinct from, and subsequent to, the experience of the new birth.<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

This essay has traced the doctrine of a second work through the writings of John Wesley, and into the theology of contemporary

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80 David A. Womack, ed., *Pentecostal Experience: The Writings of Donald Gee* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, 1993), 50. For an interesting study of this doctrine, see Gary McGee, ed., *Initial Evidence* (Teabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), and P. H. Wiebe, "The Pentecostal Initial Evidence Doctrine," *JETS* 27 (1984): 465-472.

81 Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5; Eph. 5:18. The following scripture citations are those given in the PAOC's *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths* (Toronto: Full Gospel Publishing, 1988), 5.

82 John 16:13-15.

83 II Cor. 3:18; Acts 1:8.

84 Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8.

85 Acts 2:1-4, 39; 9:17; I Cor. 14:18.

86 Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46.

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Pentecostals. It has shown the gradual connection between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the second work. The movement from sanctification as the purpose of this work to empowerment for service was also unhurried, taking shape in the thought and teachings of individuals such as Phoebe Palmer, Charles Finney, and R. A. Torrey. From each of these came the formation of the Pentecostal understanding.

What might Pentecostals learn from this study? As has already been suggested, their emphasis on power has overwhelmed their concern for holiness, as the tongues-speaking evangelists of the 1980s well proved. At the very least, Pentecostals would do well to take a fresh look at their Wesleyan heritage, with all of its unwavering emphasis on perfection, and ask whether a return to holiness teachings might not be advised. The words of William J. Seymour, one of the fathers of Pentecostalism, still ring true today:

Tongues are one of the signs that go with every baptised person, but it is not the real evidence of the baptism in everyday life. Your life must be measured with the fruit of the Spirit. If you get angry, or speak evil, or backbite, I care not how many tongues you may have, you have not the baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>87</sup>

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87 Cited in Knight III, 93.