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Understanding of the Baptism  
of/in/with/by the Holy Spirit

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# Towards the Biblical and Original Wesleyan Understanding of the Baptism of/in/with/by the Holy Spirit

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## **Introduction**

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. comments,

Ultimately, the Twentieth Century will be evaluated by church historians as the century in which the *Holy Spirit* birthed and nurtured two great movements: one of them formally known as the Ecumenical Movement, the other one...the *Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement*.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the rise of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century has resulted in unprecedented impact all around the world. Even within the Christian Church itself, Pentecostalism has

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<sup>1</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), p4. Emphasis is mine.

stimulated breathtaking interest in, and the study of, Pneumatology and one of its most controversial issues is none other than the “Baptism of/in/with/by the Holy Spirit.”

Actually, there are only seven passages in the New Testament that directly refer to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit: Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5, 11:16 and I Corinthians 12:13. In order to acquire a biblical notion of this phrase, therefore, the writer suggests that what it *meant* is what it *means*. In other words, the understanding of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, Peter the Apostle, and Paul the Apostle on Spirit Baptism matters the most, for they are the characters who originally used the term in their proclamation, teaching or observation.

In this paper, the writer endeavours to put forward, firstly, the biblical understanding of Spirit Baptism, and subsequently, the Wesleyan notion of Spirit Baptism.

### ***Towards the Biblical Understanding of Spirit Baptism:***

#### ***1. John the Baptist “coined” the term:***

John, the herald and forerunner of Jesus Christ, in the account of all the four evangelists, that is, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, rose to being the key person that fulfilled the Isaianic prophecy about preparing the way of the Lord.<sup>2</sup> He proclaimed that God’s Dominion, or saving grace, was approaching, or at hand, and furthermore, spoke of the

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 40:3.

greater one coming after him, in a way that diminished his own stature as a great prophet, and would “*baptize you* [the people who were waiting expectantly and were *all* wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ]<sup>3</sup> *with the Holy Spirit* and with fire.”<sup>4</sup>

Indubitably, John the Baptist proclaimed a coming, remarkable baptism, “in Spirit and fire,” which is to be understood in the light of Old Testament teaching and his own immediate context. With regard to the former, the sayings of the prophets Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel would be the most pertinent references, as demonstrated below:

<b>Prophet and Text</b>	<b>Message</b>	<b>Accordingly, “Baptism” with the Spirit and fire is or has to do with:</b>
Moses (Numbers 11:29)	“[Moses said] I wish that <i>all</i> the Lord’s people were <i>prophets</i> and that that the Lord would <i>put his Spirit on them.</i> ”	putting of the divine Spirit on all the Israelites by the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 3:1.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 3:11b; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33. Emphasis is mine. See also: Ben Witherington III, *Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary: Matthew* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), pp 77-78.

<p>Isaiah (44:3)</p>	<p>“[God said] For I will <i>pour water</i> on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will <i>pour out my Spirit</i> on your [Jacob’s] offspring, and <i>my blessing</i> on your descendants.”</p>	<p>watering of thirsty land, that is, the giving of life by the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.</p>
<p>Ezekiel (36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29)</p>	<p>“[God said] I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be <i>clean</i>, I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a <i>new heart</i> and put a <i>new spirit</i> in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will <i>put my Spirit in you</i> and move you to follow my decrees...I will put my Spirit <i>in you</i> and you will <i>live</i>...I will no longer hide my face from them for I will <i>pour out my Spirit</i> on the house of Israel.”</p>	<p>sprinkling of clean water, that is, the cleansing, renewing, transforming, and empowering work of the Sovereign Lord; even, an unprecedented indwelling of the Spirit <i>in</i> God’s people would come to pass.</p>

<p>Joel (2:28- 29, 32)</p>	<p>“[God said] I will <i>pour out my Spirit on all people</i>. Your sons and daughters will <i>prophesy</i>, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will <i>pour out my Spirit</i> in those days...And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be <i>deliverance</i>.”</p>	<p>An out-pouring of the Spirit on all God's people for prophetic empowerment, which would result in deliverance or salvation.</p>
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Besides crucial insights from the Old Testament, the understanding of the Jewish people in John's day, particularly with regard to baptism and the Holy Spirit, are also essential. Craig Keener points out that, on the one hand, the image of baptism “connoted two ideas to ancient Jewish hearers: conversion and immersion;” on the other hand, the phrase “Holy Spirit” would be seen by Jewish contemporaries as “God's way to *purify* his people or (far more often) to *empower them to prophecy*.”<sup>5</sup> John Nolland

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<sup>5</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), p152. Emphasis is mine.

observes, “At Qumran also the Spirit is spoken of in connection with images of *purgation and refining*.”<sup>6</sup>

By and large, the writer is convinced that John the Baptist proclaimed Spirit Baptism as a coming, unprecedented, indwelling, life-giving, purifying, refining, renewing, transforming, prophetic and empowering work of the Redeemer’s Spirit. Such would come to pass through none but the Anointed One of the Sovereign Lord, whose sandals, John remarked, “I am not fit to carry,” and the outcome is salvation and deliverance.

## 2. *Jesus Christ interpreted the term:*

Jesus Christ, whom John the Baptist regarded as *the sin-bearer*<sup>7</sup> and Spirit-Baptizer, clearly interpreted the significance of Spirit Baptism when he commanded his disciples:

Do not leave Jerusalem, but *wait for the gift my Father promised*, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but *in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...*[Y]ou will *receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you*; and you will *be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1:9-9:20* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), p153. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>7</sup> John 1:29: “John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

<sup>8</sup> Acts 1:4, 5, 8. Emphasis is mine.

In light of what happened, literally, “in a few days,” that is, later, on the day of Pentecost,<sup>9</sup> it is apparent that Spirit Baptism, according to Jesus Christ himself, is none other than the *giving* of *the Gift* - the *Paraclete* - gratuitously and abundantly, to *all* believers, by the Heavenly Father, because the Son of God had been glorified.<sup>10</sup> Thenceforth, *every* believer shall receive, at conversion,<sup>11</sup> the permanent indwelling of the Spirit; and consequently, in the name of Christ - *the Bearer, Dispenser, and Definer* of the Spirit - complete and full access to *all* the Spirit’s grace, gifts and power, which are given for the purpose of world mission. In other words, from the Jerusalem Pentecost onwards, the Spirit who rested upon the incarnated Jesus,<sup>12</sup> is *now* made over to *all* disciples, *along with* the mission on which Jesus himself was engaged. In light of this, Spirit Baptism has actually revealed the truth of *missio Dei*, that is, mission has its origin in God, and the Spirit-born Church is valid and vital for missionary work because the mighty *ruach*, who can transform chaos to cosmos is her source.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:1-12.

<sup>10</sup> John 7:38-39: “[Jesus said] Whoever *believes* in me, as the Scripture has said, *streams of living water will flow from within* him. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to *receive*. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

<sup>11</sup> John 14:16-17; Acts 2:37-39.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 3:16: “As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw *the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him*.”

<sup>13</sup> The *ruach* transformed the *chaos* into *cosmos* in the beginning of the world (Genesis 1:1-31). The writer is grateful to Raniero Cantalamessa, whose book *Come, Creator Spirit* has enabled me to see this point. See: Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), pp23-40.



### 3. *Peter reflected on the term:*

As the Gospel of Christ spread to the Samaritans and the Gentiles,<sup>14</sup> the apostle Peter, to whom Christ said, “[O]n this rock I will build my church,”<sup>15</sup> understood, experienced and appreciated more, the *universal* significance and benefit of the promise of Spirit Baptism given by the Father through the Son.<sup>16</sup>

Peter prayed for and witnessed the receiving of the Redeemer Spirit by the already-converted Samaritans, with whom Jews had a long-standing antipathy and hostility.<sup>17</sup> The unique withholding of the Spirit, by God, until the apostles came down from Jerusalem to pray, on the one hand was meant to teach the Jewish apostles and believers that God, indeed, so loved the *world* and would pour out his Spirit on *whosoever* believed in Christ, and, on the other hand, was intended for affirming the Samaritan believers that they were indeed incorporated into the new covenant body of Christ. Subsequently, Peter, once more, witnessed the receiving of the Pentecostal Holy Spirit by the Gentiles in Caesarea. This incontrovertible confirmation of God’s acceptance of the Gentile believers had caused Peter to reflect, and hence exclaim, “I remembered what the Lord

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<sup>14</sup> Acts 8:1-25; 10:1-48.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 16:18-19.

<sup>16</sup> One of the major themes throughout Luke-Acts is the universalization of the gospel - that it is for all people from the last, least, lost to the first, most, and found (cf. Isaiah 52:10; Luke 3:6). See: Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), pp68ff., 293.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 8:14-17; John 4:9; Ben Witherington, III, *op. cit.*, p289.

had said, ‘John baptized with water. But you will be *baptized with the Holy Spirit.*’ So if God gave them the *same gift* he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think I could oppose God?’<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, for Peter, by the time he interpreted it before the Jewish circumcised Christians in Jerusalem, Baptism of the Holy Spirit undoubtedly meant the coming of the Holy Spirit on *any* believer, as a *free* gift of God; such is a sign and seal of sonship before God, and *equal* fellowship with all the apostles and other Christians, in the name of Jesus Christ. No wonder, John Chrysostom, in his *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, observed,

Gentile? What Gentiles now? They were no longer Gentiles, the Truth having come. It is nothing wonderful, he says, if before the act of baptism they received the Spirit: in our own case this same happened. Peter shows that not as the rest were they baptized, but in a much *better way*. This is the reason why the event takes place in this manner, that they [his opponents] may have nothing to say but even in this way may account them [the Gentiles] *equal* with themselves [the Jews].<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. *Paul applied the term theologically:*

The apostle Paul, emphasizing the importance of unity, in his epistle to the Corinthian Christians, has defined Spirit

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<sup>18</sup> Acts 10:16-17.

<sup>19</sup> Francis Martin, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Acts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 140.

Baptism. Writing of the body of Christ, the living organism into which Christians are formed, Paul says that “we *were all baptized by one Spirit into one body* - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, each individual who believes in Jesus, experiences the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in the sense that the Holy Spirit joins him or her to other believers in the spiritual body of Christ, the covenant community.<sup>21</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

In short, “Baptism of/in/with/by the Holy Spirit,” in the writer’s view, *meant* (according to John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, Peter, and Paul) and thus *means*: Jesus Christ, through his historical ascension and glorification, *opens* all sinners who repent and believe in his name to a whole new realm of spiritual blessings and possibilities in the Holy Spirit, as the Heavenly Father has promised, that is, to breathe and pour out *the* divine Gift who is the *Giver* of life (*zoe*), grace (*charis*) and all gifts (*charisma*).

In other words, “Baptism of/in/with/by the Holy Spirit” is all about the *gratuitous giving* of the Third Person of the Trinity, by the First Person, through the meritorious redemptive work of the Second Person, to God’s people, in an unprecedented manner - universally, internally (with and in believers) and permanently - for world mission and conversion. Such *full access* to, and hence, continual and potential *full experience* of the saving, sanctifying, and

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13.

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1985), 102.

empowering grace of the Third Person of the Trinity, commenced at Pentecost in Jerusalem, in terms of salvation history, but commences in an individual at their personal conversion, which is none other than union with Christ, through the working of the Spirit of Truth in the unfailing love of the Father God.

### ***Toward the Original Wesleyan Understanding of Spirit Baptism:***

John Wesley (1703-1791 AD), a powerful evangelist with “practical divinity” who laid the foundation for the Methodist movement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is by no means obscure in his theology of the Baptism of/in/with/by the Holy Spirit. He has, in fact, interpreted this biblical term both theologically and sacramentally.

#### ***1. The Wesleyan theological understanding of Spirit Baptism:***

John Wesley’s theological interpretation of Spirit Baptism may be found in his explanatory notes on Matthew 3:11 where he succinctly states,

*He [Jesus Christ] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire---He shall fill you with the Holy Ghost, inflaming your hearts with that fire of love which many waters cannot quench. And this was done, even with a visible appearance as of fire, on the day of Pentecost.*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 2000), p24.

Apparently, the founder of Methodism regarded Spirit Baptism as the risen Jesus' gracious, salvific act of *filling* his believers with the Holy Spirit, so that his followers would have a fervent and steadfast heart of *holy love* for God as well as for their neighbours.

Of course, in order to grasp this theological statement of Spirit Baptism more comprehensively, one needs to have a deeper understanding of Wesley's view on Spirit-filling and Christian love. First, in regard to the filling of the Holy Spirit, Wesley's conviction was that to be filled by the Holy Spirit is none other than to be filled "in *all* His graces,"<sup>23</sup> and "led by the Spirit...into *all* holiness,"<sup>24</sup> so much so that a Spirit-born Christian would *and* is able to "follow His guidance, in *all* our tempers, thoughts, words, and actions,"<sup>25</sup> "pursuing with the whole bent and vigor of my soul *perfect* holiness and eternal glory."<sup>26</sup>

Second, in regard to Christian love, Wesley literally sees it as "*all* inward and outward holiness."<sup>27</sup> In his letter to Mr Walter Churchey on 21 February 1771, he writes,

Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than *pure love*; love expelling sin, and governing both the heart and life of a child of God. The

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p718. Emphasis is mine. Wesley's notes on Ephesians 5:18 show his thoughts clearly: "*But be ye filled by the Spirit* - In all His graces, who gives more pleasure than wine can do."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p697. Emphasis is mine. See Wesley's notes on Galatians 5:18.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p698. Emphasis is mine. See Wesley's notes on Galatians 5:25.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p735. Emphasis is mine. See Wesley's notes on Philippians 3:13.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p695. Emphasis is mine. See Wesley's notes on Galatians 5:6.

Refiner's fire purges out *all* that is contrary to love, and that many times by a pleasing smart. Leave all this to Him that does all things well, and that loves you better than you do yourself.<sup>28</sup>

Wesley even declares, in his notes on I Corinthians 13:13, that "*Faith, hope, love - Are the sum of perfection on earth; love alone is the sum of perfection in heaven.*"<sup>29</sup>

In light of the aforesaid, no doubt, the founder of Methodism relates Spirit Baptism to the *whole* salvific work of the Almighty God in one's life *after* justification and regeneration. For him, a believer who is undergoing the overwhelming *baptizo*, that is, the filling and inflaming of the Holy Spirit, is not relatively changed (which should have taken place in justification), but *really*, even will be *entirely* changed. In other words, Spirit Baptism efficiently enables those that are born of God to work out their salvation and live out their "privilege," that is, in Wesley's own words,

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: And he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (Verse 9) But some men will say, "True: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin *habitually.*" *Habitually!* Whence is that? I read it not. It is not written in the Book. God plainly saith, "He doth

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Vol. 12* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), p432. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>29</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, p628.

not commit sin;” and thou addest, *habitually!* Who art thou that mendest the oracles of God?<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, John Wesley had a profound theological interpretation of Spirit Baptism. His sacramental interpretation of the term, however, should also not be overlooked.

## 2. *The Wesleyan sacramental understanding of Spirit Baptism:*

In John Wesley’s notes on I Corinthians 12:13, he wrote,

*For [we are all baptized] by that one Spirit, which we received in baptism, we are all united in one body. Whether Jews or Gentiles - who are at the greatest distance from each other by nature. Whether slaves or freemen - who are at the greatest distance by law and custom. We have all drunk of one Spirit -in that cup, received by faith, we all imbibed one Spirit, who first inspired, and still preserves, the life of God in our souls.*<sup>31</sup>

Later, as Wesley explicated Titus 3:5, he furthermore correlated baptism with the spiritual new birth: “[S]anctification, expressed by *the laver of regeneration*, (that is, baptism, the thing signified, as well as the outward sign), *and the renewal of the Holy Ghost*; which purifies the

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Vol. 5* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), p213. Emphasis is Wesley’s.

<sup>31</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 623. Emphasis is Wesley’s.

soul, as water cleanses the body, and renews it in the whole image of God.”<sup>32</sup>

Obviously, Wesley, who remained an Anglican priest until his death, had a sacramental notion with regard to Spirit Baptism. For him, the baptism of/in/with/by the Holy Spirit would come to pass during water baptism, an outward sign of one’s new birth, as well as a significant sign that one has been united to the body of Christ. Wesley’s conviction was that if a repentant sinner receives the sacrament of baptism by faith, he or she would be baptized by the Third Person of the Trinity and thus be initially sanctified as well as intimately joined with other Christians in oneness.<sup>33</sup>

Thenceforth, the evangelical Anglican priest accentuated, “the *gradual* work of sanctification takes place” through which “we are enabled ‘by the Spirit’ to ‘mortify the deeds of the body,’ of our evil nature; and as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God.” And, the seasoned pastor underscored, “we

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 802. Emphasis is John’s.

<sup>33</sup> John Wesley views the new birth as *initial* sanctification, for it sanctifies a justified person from the *power* or *dominion* of sin. In one of his standard sermons he observes, “Justification implies only a relative, the new birth, a real, change. God in justifying us does something *for* us; in begetting us again, he does the work *in* us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies, we become children; by the latter our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The one restores us to the favor, the other to the image, of God. The one is taking away the guilt, the other the taking away the power, of sin: So that, although they are joined together in point of time, yet are they of wholly distinct natures.” See: Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Vol. 5*, p224. Emphasis is Wesley’s.



*wait* for the entire sanctification; for a *full salvation* from all our sins - from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief... [I]t means *perfect love*...excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul...love 'rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks.'<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *Conclusion*

In short, Wesley's theological and sacramental interpretations of Spirit Baptism have forwarded a unique Pneumatology. His peculiar views make Spirit Baptism indispensable, and related to *most* parts of the "Scripture Way of Salvation"<sup>35</sup>: (1) Spirit Baptism is actualized in the sacrament of water baptism which is undergone by faith, and hence unites a person with the Holy and catholic Church; (2) Spirit Baptism offers instantaneous regenerating grace, which frees a person from the dominion of sin and fills him or her with power over sin, peace, hope and love; (3) Spirit Baptism furthermore grants continuous sanctifying grace to believers, which would enable them to go on from grace to grace, as well as to exercise works of piety and mercy, in holiness and happiness, so as to convert the world; (4) Spirit Baptism will even, instantaneously, destroy the being of sin for and in those who seek Christian perfection (i.e., perfect love) by faith alone, enabling Christians to love God, as well as their neighbours, with all

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Vol. 6* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 46. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>35</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation" is the title of John Wesley's Standard Sermon 43. See: Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Vol. 6*, pp43-54. Emphasis is mine.

their hearts and with all their souls and with all their minds and with all their strength.

In the light of Wesley's great conviction of the overwhelming salvific work that can be done through Spirit Baptism, one would not be surprised, therefore, by the assertion in his notes on Acts 1:5: "Ye [the apostles] shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost---and *so are all true believers, to the end of the world.* But the *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost also are here promised."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 393. Emphasis is mine. For John Wesley, The extraordinary or the miraculous gifts (*charismata*) of the Holy Ghost include: "1. Casting out devils; 2. Speaking with new tongues; 3. Escaping dangers, in which otherwise they must have perished; 4. Healing the sick; 5. Prophecy, foretelling things to come; 6. Visions; 7. Divine dreams; and, 8. Discerning the spirits." He further points out that, "Some of these appear to have been chiefly designed for the conviction of Jews and Heathens - as the casting out devils and speaking with new tongues; some, chiefly for the benefit of their fellow-Christians - as the healing the sick, foretelling things to come, and the discernment of spirits; and *all*, in order to enable those who either wrought or saw them, to 'run with patience the race set before them,' through all the storms of persecution which the most inveterate prejudice, rage, and malice could raise against them." See: Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Vol. 10* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 16. John Wesley is convinced that all the aforementioned extraordinary gifts are just as relevant today as they were in the days of the first apostles. In his sermon, "The More Excellent Way," he writes with a grieving heart that, "We seldom hear of them [the extraordinary gifts] after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honor upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they [the extraordinary gifts] almost totally ceased; very few instances of this kind were found. The cause of this was not (as has been vulgarly supposed) 'because there was no more occasion for them,' because all the world was

## Conclusion

By and large, the biblical theology of Spirit Baptism - the gratuitous giving of the *Paraclete* by the heavenly Father, through the redemptive work done by the risen Christ, in a universal, internal, and permanent manner, to all believers, for world mission and conversion - is rich, and, the original Wesleyan understanding of Spirit Baptism - both theologically and sacramentally - is profound.

In light of the aforementioned study, the writer would like to suggest that the perception of the Reformed and Pentecostal traditions on Spirit Baptism is probably limited (for the former) and makes Baptism of the Spirit an “elitist doctrine”<sup>37</sup> (for the latter).

The writer’s concern is that the Reformed perspective which defines Spirit Baptism as “what happens at one’s *initiation into the faith* at the time of conversion,”<sup>38</sup> though not denying “this

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become Christians. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, ‘the love of many,’ almost of all Christians, so called, was ‘waxed cold.’ The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly ‘find faith upon earth.’ This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.” See: Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Vol. 7* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), pp26-27.

<sup>37</sup> See: Shane Clifton, “Baptism in Spirit – Elitism Part 2;” available from [http://scc.typepad.com/scc\\_faculty\\_pentecostal\\_d/2007/03/baptism\\_in\\_spirit.html](http://scc.typepad.com/scc_faculty_pentecostal_d/2007/03/baptism_in_spirit.html); Internet.

<sup>38</sup> Chad Owen Brand, ed., *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), p31.

same Spirit...also is available to 'fill' believers...[and] produces the 'fruits of the Spirit' in those who walk by faith and obedience,"<sup>39</sup> is not biblical *enough*. For in light of the writer's study, Spirit Baptism is not only about "each believer...automatically placed in the body of Christ and made to drink in the Holy Spirit,"<sup>40</sup> but fundamentally about the radical opening of complete access to and thus the full potential of, deep experiences of the Third Person of the Trinity, as the First Person in the Blessed Trinity has promised in the Old Testament, and the Second Person of the Trinity has made available through his own atoning work and glorification, to *any* believer.

On the other hand, the Pentecostal perspective which defines Spirit Baptism as "(1) an experience that follows conversion [a *point* of entrance into a life of Spirit-empowered witness for Christ], and (2) *evidenced* by speaking in tongues,"<sup>41</sup> in the writer's opinion, has a tendency to make Spirit Baptism an "elitist doctrine." The predominant emphasis on tongues-speaking as *the* normative evidence for being baptized in the Spirit has (perhaps not intentionally) denied and subordinated diverse and profound experiences of the Spirit by various Christian communities in the Church's history. It is admirable and biblical, no doubt, for the Pentecostals to stress the many benefits of Spirit Baptism, particularly for effective witness for Christ, yet the writer would caution them about asserting that "*all* should speak in tongues."<sup>42</sup> The writer would rather accentuate, as Michael J Townsend does, the *euangelion*

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p36.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp55, 78. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p89.

of: “*all* can be saved, *all* can be saved by grace through faith, *all* know that they are saved, and *all* may be saved to the uttermost,”<sup>43</sup> through Spirit Baptism, made available by Christ as God the Father promised.

In short, the profundity of the biblical notion of Spirit Baptism, as well as the Wesleyan understanding of the term, needs to be recovered. Let not any limited definition of Spirit Baptism hinder the mighty flowing of the streams of Living Water from within believers. But rather, let the biblical Spirit Baptism define and empower Christian life and movement, in every culture and for every culture in all ages,<sup>44</sup> particularly as Christians wait upon, and move, in the Spirit through faith, obedience, surrender, and even through experiences of brokenness and forgiveness. Indeed, John 3:16 is *euangelion*, but Luke 3:16: “Christ will [and has and continues to] baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” is no less good news as well. Such understanding, in the writer’s view, is essential for victorious Christian witness and life in the world, before Christ’s glorious *parousia*.

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity (Volume 1): Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), p154.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* The writer is inspired by E. Stanley Jones’ notion: “The freedom of the gospel - in every culture and for every culture.”