

Things Shakeable and Things Unshakeable In Holiness Theology

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Conference on Revisioning Holiness
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When I was invited to speak at this conference on Revisioning Holiness, I wondered what the word “revisioning” was supposed to mean in this context. Was the word used as in the revision of a book or article? Did “revisioning” then mean the same as “revising”? Were we coming here to revise holiness doctrine? Surely, I thought, we are not intending to revise holiness itself; God might have something to say about that, since he is the Fountain of all holiness! Or should the accent be placed on the first syllable, reading the word as “re-visioning,” as in “seeing again,” i.e., taking a new look at holiness doctrine? At any rate, when I got in touch with my NNU contact and inquired as to the intended meaning of the word, I received no definitive answer. So I decided if those who set up this conference were not clear in what they meant by “revisioning,” then I was free to follow the maxim of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*: “When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

I was not invited here to preach a sermon, and I have no intention of doing so. But I would like to take a text—merely to use as a convenient peg on which to hang the somewhat disjointed and perhaps discombobulating remarks I want to make. It is a loose—very loose—paraphrase of Hebrews 12:27, taken out of context (how’s that for handling Scripture?). My paraphrase goes like this: “*Let the things that can be shaken be shaken, so that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.*”

I may do what one man said his pastor did every Sunday: took a text and preached from it—a long way from it! So if I start out a long way from this so-called text, I hope to meander back to it now and then before I am finished.

My remarks will fall into 5 parts.

I. A Protestant Rediscovery of Holiness

I said I would start a long way from my so-called text. Likewise, I will start a long way from Nampa, Idaho. I will start in Scandinavia.

For me, one of the most exciting theological developments to come down the pike in recent years is the rediscovery of some of Martin Luther’s ideas that have been buried under layers of the post-Luther Protestant confessions and theologies. This theological excavation has been spearheaded by some Finnish theologians, particularly at the University of Helsinki. They have tried to look at Luther without viewing him through the lenses of the Protestant creeds and confessions that have been piled onto Luther’s own thought and, in their opinion, well nigh obscured the real Luther.

There is not time to explore this development in any depth, but I will try a brief summary:

We know that for centuries Luther has been depicted as teaching, and the Lutheran confessions have taught, that justification by faith is primarily about our standing with God. This is the view that is enshrined in the main Lutheran Confessions and in most Lutheran theology starting with Melancthon. The righteousness we have is an alien (not an actual) righteousness that is imputed (not imparted) to us in justification. Justification is forensic, not effective. Justification is sharply distinguished from sanctification which is thought to be simply the growth of the Christian following the crucial divine act of justification.

Standing as the antithesis of that view is the Catholic emphasis on holiness, and more especially the Eastern Orthodox view that salvation involves *theosis* or deification, becoming God-like. For Lutherans the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is the doctrine on which Christian faith stands or falls, with sanctification taking something of a back seat. But in the Eastern Church the doctrines of justification and sanctification are inseparably held together. It is well known that John Wesley was greatly influenced by the Eastern Fathers.

And now these theologians from Helsinki, and others, come along and find in Martin Luther himself much of this Eastern emphasis on sanctification, on deification and *theosis*. But to get to it, one has to dig beneath all the Lutheran Confessions and look at Luther's own writings. This is making possible a new understanding and relationship between Protestants and Catholics, and especially between Protestants and Orthodox. The focus of both alike, to a degree not seen before, is on *theosis*, deification, sanctification

This new understanding holds that in Luther himself one does not find the sharp wall of separation between justification and sanctification that was erected by later Lutheran theology. It is held that Luther's view of justification itself carries sanctification in its bosom, and that in his thought one was never without the other. [For a short but comprehensive account of this movement within Lutheranism, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004), 144pp.]

Of course there are some Lutheran theologians who are skeptical of this so-called rediscovery of holiness in Luther and its compatibility with Eastern Orthodoxy, and there are some who are not sure it can be substantiated but earnestly hope it can be. But if the case can be made convincingly it will doubtless be the result of an ecumenism in which the Finnish theologians have been in ongoing dialogue with Eastern Orthodoxy. Such dialogue cannot help but be fruitful.

It is not my intention to explore this movement within Lutheran theology (we are not here to "revision" Lutheranism), but only to mention it in order to say that we Wesleyans are strategically located to be able to speak effectively to this current theological focus—if we can find our voice.

In doing so we may need to tweak Wesley a tiny bit. Wesley, like the later Lutheran confessions, did draw a sharp distinction between justification and sanctification. Justification is a relative change; sanctification is a real change. The one saves from the guilt of sin, the other from the power and being of sin. Justification is what God works for us by his Son; Sanctification is what God works in us by His spirit (see sermon "Justification by Faith," II, 1). This sounds much like the distinctions drawn by Lutheranism.

But (and this is a big but!) Wesley also held that God justifies no one whom he does not also sanctify. The work of sanctification begins at justification (sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," I,4). "It begins the moment we are justified. . . .It gradually increases from that moment. . . till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man" (sermon "Working out Our Own Salvation," II, 1). Apart from the "secondness" implied in his phrase "another instant," this puts Wesley shoulder to shoulder with the Helsinki theologians (or, more correctly, puts them shoulder to shoulder with Wesley). Thus Wesleyanism has always been positioned very close to this newly discovered underlying unity of Protestant and Catholic thought. As long ago as 1935, George Croft Cell claimed that Wesley's theology was a unique synthesis of the Catholic ethic of holiness and the Protestant ethic of grace. To call it a "synthesis" may be too strong; I would simply call it a "conjoining." Nevertheless, Wesley the Anglican embodied the same unity between East and West that the Helsinki theologians are now "discovering" in Luther. This East/West unity perhaps opens the door a bit wider for Wesleyanism to gain a better hearing within, and make its contribution to, the Church Universal, thereby making the doctrine of holiness even more *unshakeable*.

II. The Challenge of Theological Change

The doctrine of sanctification is historically related directly to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Therefore I would like to briefly re-visit an issue that was very much alive between 2 and 3 decades ago. I speak of the debate about the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, in which I was a rather fortuitous participant. I do not wish to beat a dead horse, or even to rekindle a debate over an issue that appears on very few, if any, radar screens today. I merely wish to make two points by using that issue as an illustration of how to handle, and how not to handle, some of the theological issues facing the church today.

Most of the younger biblical scholars in the church today were not witnesses to that debate as it unfolded. Some of them are aware that the question of Spirit Baptism was an issue two or three decades ago, but fail to see the significance of it for their work in biblical studies. As a result, many are astounded that anyone ever considered that what happened on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 was a “second definite work of grace subsequent to regeneration.” They are surprised that some of the “powers that be” would hold to this view so fervently that they would consider heretical anyone who questioned it, including yours truly.

I was almost denied tenure at NTS, because of this debate, and because in 1979 I had written a 38 page paper which mostly quoted others and summarized the discussions of the preceding 12 or 15 years. And it was not even published!

I recently got to thinking about that whole episode and wondered what would be the opinion of New Testament scholars today. So I conducted a poll, by e-mail, of all the NT professors in Nazarene schools in the US and Europe, for whom I was able to obtain e-mail addresses. This question was asked: **Was the outpouring (baptism) of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost the equivalent of entire sanctification as our holiness tradition has understood it? (In other words, do you see that corporate event as a proof-text for the “secondness” of entire sanctification as an individual experience?)**

The question was sent to 14 NT professors, all of them, to my knowledge, holding doctorates in their field. Out of that 14, I received 12 replies. One was non-committal and two were nuanced NOs. There were 9 who answered with an unqualified NO. Most significantly, not a single NT professor answered YES to the question.

What I learned from this survey of our present NT professors (and I suspect a poll of the systematic theologians would produce a similar result) was another proof that a Church’s theological self-understanding can change. This can be a bad thing or a good thing, and history is replete with both results. Change does occur. It must. A church that resists all change is not a living organism but a fossilized corpse. The challenge is to try to make sure that the changes remain true to both Scripture and to the heart and soul of the Church’s historical heritage. In our case that means that Wesleyanism will be our compass with the Bible as our lodestar.

More than two decades have now passed since that debate. At the time I tried to advocate, in my infamous paper, that both traditions (Wesley’s view that Pentecost was not entire sanctification and the American holiness movement’s view that it was) should be given expression. It was an attempt to say we could live with two traditions. Although I think it was clear that my sympathies lay with one side, I wanted to hold both sides together in unity, and allow each tradition to make its contribution to the whole. I felt that anything short of that would be divisive. I felt that the early 80s was not the time to disturb the Church by calling for any radical rethinking of her position.

But in more than two decades of hindsight, I now believe such a strategy to be unworkable in the long term. I still believe it was necessary for the sake of unity at that time in our history. But the simple truth is that honest biblical exegesis cannot sustain both positions. I do not believe honest biblical

scholarship or theological integrity can sustain the narrow position that makes the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the birthing of the Christian Church a prototype of the individualistic religious experience that our holiness tradition has called entire sanctification. The two are not experiential equivalents. I do not believe the doctrine of sanctification is well served by basing such an individual religious experience on a text in the Book of Acts where the focus is on the creation of Christ's Church by the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Timothy Smith said to me at the time: "If you take away that scriptural base for the 'secondness' of entire sanctification, we have nothing left, for secondness is one of our distinctives, and Pentecost constitutes the basis of that distinctive." My esteemed late colleague Dr. Paul Orjala told me the same thing. I disagree. I believe there is a valid biblical basis for the doctrine (including its "subsequence" to the new birth)—if we are willing to let the Bible speak on its own terms. But if that Acts passage is "all we have left" to sustain one element of holiness doctrine then we have a flimsy foundation for it. In truth, secondness is not the core element of holiness doctrine anyway, but only a subsidiary element. It is a part of the doctrine's structure or circumstance and not its main substance. In fact, it is not "secondness" but "subsequence" that is mentioned in our Articles of Faith

It is time for the Church of the Nazarene to finally admit *de jure* what is widely believed *de facto*—that in the issue of equating Pentecost solely with entire sanctification, along with a few other issues as well, the American holiness movement got it wrong. This realization cannot be suppressed any longer. The doctrine will be far stronger if we will "*let the things that can be shaken be shaken so that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.*"

In 1984, when I survived my "ordeal of fire," was cleared by the Board of General Superintendents, and was granted permanent tenure, the chairman of the Seminary trustees at the time, Dr. Paul Cunningham, was not exactly happy with that outcome. He wrote to me saying he could not understand how our doctrine of entire sanctification can be accepted if it is preached on a "multiple-choice basis." As I said earlier, I thought in the 1980s that "multiple-choice" (to use his term) was the best way to preserve unity. Today it is clear that on that score Cunningham was right. But the choice that he wanted to canonize as the only choice allowed has been slowly but surely fading into irrelevance. On that score, I was right.

In December 1982 I attended a theology conference in Kansas City where the keynote speaker, General Superintendent Eugene Stowe, stated at the outset that our doctrinal statements on holiness were "non-negotiable." I wondered about that at the time. The Articles of Faith are part of the church's constitution, and the constitution contains a provision by which said constitution may be changed. And it has been changed and enlarged a number of times, especially Article 10 on Entire Sanctification, so much so that if the trend continues it could become as lengthy as the Jewish Talmud! (Incidentally, we do not have an article of faith on Sanctification; we only have one on Entire Sanctification. Since Wesleyans use the word "sanctification" in at least 5 or 6 different senses and at different points in the Way of Salvation, it seems we should have an article titled "Sanctification" with "Entire Sanctification" being a sub-point under that.) It could well be stated more succinctly and in language that is more biblical and more understandable for people today. But the fact that changes have been made obviates the claim that doctrinal statements are non-negotiable.

Nevertheless the non-negotiable boundaries that were set up eventually had an adverse effect, as a result of that Spirit Baptism debate. A number of students who were in school at that time, observed how it was handled by the church, came to the conclusion that they could not honestly preach sanctification the way they perceived they were expected to, and saw a more biblical alternative that was embedded deep in our Wesleyan tradition. As more and more persons became skilled in biblical theology, some of them were faced with choosing one of four options: (1) preach only what they truly believed, and risk ecclesiastical censure, (2) suppress their true beliefs and preach what they were not convinced was true, (3) not attempt to preach on the subject at all, or (4) leave the church in the interest of intellectual honesty. All four options had their takers.

I said that I brought up this matter to make two points. One point has already been made—that theological change does occur, and our challenge is to see to it that change remains true to Scripture and the church’s theological heritage.

The other point is this: It is regretful that the debate over Spirit Baptism and its outcome may have frightened off some young preachers. But not to have brought the issue to attention and allowed things to go on unexamined would have been far worse. The same can be said of this “Revisioning” conference, as I perceive it. As I said in the beginning, I am not sure what the term “revisioning holiness” is supposed to mean. But I know this: Socrates said: *“The unexamined life is not worth living.”* Likewise an unexamined doctrine is not worth preaching. Let it be examined carefully and painstakingly, and also prayerfully and reverently, and then *“let the things that can be shaken be shaken, so that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.”*

III. The Problem of Nazarene Identity

Today the Church of the Nazarene is faced with other, perhaps more serious, problems. She has largely forgotten who she is and does not really know what she believes. One could almost wish for those days in the early 1980s when a question of church doctrine could raise hackles and stir folks to such vehement action. Theology fails to excite many today. For several years the emphasis was on church growth; it became the engine that drove the denomination, with theology withering on the sidelines.

More recently there have been debates about worship styles, many local churches opting for a more “contemporary” worship. Gone are many of the old hymns, like those of Charles Wesley, which taught through music what we believed as a Church, especially about sanctification. Often in their place are frothy choruses with little substance. Undeniably, this has attracted some people, especially the younger generations. Old geezers like me just “grin and bear it” (and some bear it without grinning!) But the biggest part of a whole generation has been lost to our church’s theology. It is doubtful if we will ever get them back.

More than once I heard our late brother, T. Crichton Mitchell, say (quoting someone whose identity I do not recall): “Let me write a nation’s songs and I care not a whit who writes her laws.” Could this apply also to the church? Let me choose all the songs a denomination sings and I will probably influence what her people believe more effectively than by writing, or re-writing, doctrinal statements.

But worship involves more than music. Churches that neglect traditional liturgies and the public reading of Scripture, and celebrate the Eucharist sloppily without the words of institution, have cut themselves off from their historical moorings. That great 20th century American prophet, Reinhold Niebuhr, warned us that spontaneity does not last forever and “when it is gone a church without traditional liturgy and theological learning and tradition is without the waters of life” (*Essays in Applied Christianity*, p. 62).

Today it is neither church growth nor worship styles that perhaps characterize our church most severely. The more serious threat is the almost unconscious acceptance of a relativism that is one bad result (among some potentially good ones) of post-modernism: *“I have my story, you have your story, and both are OK. What works for one person may not work for another. My truth is my truth and your truth is your truth. There is no one universal truth for everyone.”* Of course the church would not like to admit that she has been permeated by such insidious influences, but the evidence is there to one who has ears to hear and eyes to see.

In contrast to that, and from the other end of the ideological spectrum, I hear from time to time that some people who have a broader platform and higher pulpit than I do have said: “The Church of the Nazarene should not be characterized by her Wesleyanism, but rather by her origins in the American Holiness movement.” My God! If the Church of the Nazarene ever says that with a united voice she will have lost her mind as well as her soul.

Who would want to live in a house that floats free from its foundation, or try to ride a horse whose legs have been cut off? Can we deny our own history? Don't such folks know that the Holiness Movement of the 19th century was precisely an attempt to renew and revitalize the message of the Wesleyan Revival of the 18th century? To be sure, in this renewal some changes were made and some modifications of Wesley's message were added, some helpful and some not so helpful, as we have seen. But for a church to sever herself from her own theological roots is sheer madness.

But, sadly, I am not sure that we are in actual fact either a "Wesleyan" or a "Holiness" church today. We seem to have settled for being a rather generic "evangelical" church with little discernible difference from other evangelical churches. (This may seem to run counter to what I said earlier about our being so placed as to dovetail with, and contribute to, the recently developed concord between Protestant and Catholic, especially Eastern Catholic, thought. But that emphasis is a rediscovery of holiness among Protestants. On the other hand, a merely generic evangelicalism shows little appreciable overriding interest in that theme.)

How, then, should a "Wesleyan/Holiness" church today go about becoming who she really is? That is the question. I think I heard a good answer to it three weeks ago when NTS hosted George Lindbeck, David Burrell, and Stanley Hauerwas in a day-long conversation—three outstanding scholars (a Lutheran, a Roman Catholic, and a Methodist) all of whom have been very active in ecumenism. One of the many powerful statements that I heard in their panel discussion was this: "The best way to serve the Church Universal is to dig deep into your own tradition."

This is what we must be all about. To merely blend ourselves in with others as a generic evangelical church is to substitute breadth for depth. Let us dig deep into our tradition! If we dig deeply enough, down through the 19th century American holiness movement, down through the 18th century Wesleyan Revival, and on down to the Early Church Fathers, and to the Scriptures, we will find the bedrock of our tradition, and we can share it within the Church Universal as our contribution to the whole. We will find that bedrock to be the call to holiness and the enabling grace to follow that call. The founder of the work that became part of the Church of the Nazarene in the Southeast, J. O. McClurkan, had a motto on his office wall that read: "Every call of God carries with it the divine enablings." As we dig deep, we will not only find bedrock but will also be enabled to correct any flaws that may have found their way into the superstructure we have erected on that foundation.

And that leads me to Part IV:

IV. Some Necessary Theological Priorities

Before any successful "revisioning" of holiness doctrine can take place, there are some prior and related theological chores that need to be accomplished. Much of our theology of sanctification has been rooted in anthropology. Because human beings are the way they are, and because sin is seen as twofold, the need for a second work of grace is needed to take care of indwelling sin. Instead of being rooted in anthropology, the doctrine of holiness should be anchored in the doctrine of God. This would correct several defects into which our traditional formulations have fallen. It would also necessitate developing a better understanding of two other major doctrines:

(1) First, our ecclesiology needs a lot of work. Cyprian, the third century church father, was correct in principle when he said: "There is no salvation outside the church." It can also be said that there is no sanctification outside the church either. We are all familiar with Wesley's oft-quoted statements that "the Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness," and "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and to turn it into a solitary one is indeed to destroy it." Such statements were usually made in refuting the Mystics who claimed that holiness was to be sought and cultivated in solitude. We have done little with this social understanding of Wesley in developing a meaningful theology of the Church, particularly in the way it relates to sanctification. Our sanctification is possible only as we are part of the "*one holy catholic apostolic Church.*"

A valid ecclesiology will involve the Eucharist. I presented a paper on the Eucharist at a conference on this campus exactly 7 years ago this week, and therefore will not talk about it here, except to say this: Anyone who knows anything about the Early Church Fathers knows that the Eucharist was a central and indispensable part of worship in the early church. We need to get back to that. We must get back to that—if we are to be the Church. It is a good sign that some pastors have gotten this vision and celebrate the Eucharist frequently, meaningfully, and with conviction. May their tribe increase.

(2) Second, our **eschatology** needs work. We need to take seriously the Pauline claim that the whole creation awaits redemption (Rom. 8). Beyond what this says about Christian responsibility for the natural environment, it speaks to holiness doctrine. We are part of this creation, and as Paul says: “*the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God*” (Rom. 8:21). Our sanctification therefore is not complete until the New Creation is a reality.

A related thought is implied by the writer of Hebrews who says that the saints of old could not be made perfect without us (Heb. 11:39-40). Is it not a valid implication that we are not made perfect without those who are to come after us? The fullness of God’s glory will not be revealed until we can all enjoy it together. Then, and only then, will all things have been made new and God will have become All in All.

Then can we be entirely sanctified in this life? “Yes,” both Wesley and the American holiness movement have always said. But the word “entire” is a bit problematic, occurring only once in the NT as a modifier of sanctification, in 1Thess. 5:23, which I believe most NT scholars hold to be an eschatological passage, occurring as it does as part of Paul’s admonitions about the coming of the Lord. The American holiness movement did not adequately emphasize this eschatological dimension; but when it is given its due, entire sanctification can be understood as a total commitment to our destiny of *theosis*, of God-likeness, with a continual repentance for, and resultant cleansing from, anything that impedes or dilutes such commitment, or what Wesley called “the repentance of believers” which he said is “requisite. . . in every subsequent stage of our Christian course” (see Sermon The Repentance of Believers, Intro. 3).

A view of sanctification that is overly individualistic and not wedded to a proper NT ecclesiological and eschatological vision is shakeable. Let it be shaken. And let it become unshakeable by being undergirded with a solid view of God’s Church and God’s Future. Happily, some of our younger theologians are working in these areas.

V. Where Are We Now?

In this final section I will comment on two recent books relating to holiness theology, written by three of my former students. (This is not to say I was necessarily their most significant mentor, but only that they took some of my theology courses in seminary.) Each of these books, in completely different ways, purports to speak about the present situation in holiness theology.

Interestingly, Mark Quanstrom, in his book *A Century of Holiness Theology* (2004), demonstrates convincingly (but apparently unintentionally) the need for doctrinal reformulation, while at the same time bemoaning it when it occurs! He concludes that at the end of the 20th century the Church of the Nazarene had on its hands two divergent and conflicting interpretations of sanctification, for which he largely (and fairly, I think) blames Wynkoop, Dunning, and Staples, more or less in that descending order of importance. Although I see that as a fair assessment, I believe he incorrectly describes the two interpretations in his final summary. He says:

One interpretation believed the second work of grace ‘cleansed’ or ‘eradicated the sinful nature, thus allowing for a real change between the saved and the entirely sanctified. The other believed no such eradication

was even possible, and thus believed the second work of grace to be qualitatively indistinguishable from the first and not even always necessary as a second work (p. 169).

In describing the second so-called interpretation, Quanstrom lumps many persons together in a “one size fits all” category and tars a lot of people with the same brush without noting the differences between them, and without acknowledging any middle ground between the two interpretations. Although some in the church may hold to the second view as he defines it (I cannot speak for everyone), I know of no one who was engaged in those discussions of two and three decades ago, where Quanstrom thinks the bifurcation started (mainly spearheaded by Wynkoop), who denied the possibility of entire sanctification. Of course the term “eradication” was widely deemed unsatisfactory by folks all across the theological spectrum, although it is not a bad word if understood in the proper context. Quanstrom says those who held the second view “believed the second work of grace to be qualitatively indistinguishable from the first” (emphasis mine). But in fact Wynkoop’s very point is that the difference between the two works of grace is precisely qualitative. For instance, she says: “What is called ‘second’ points to a different kind of step in the process of redemption This love with the whole heart is not a quantity measure or a perfect expression of love but the quality or wholeness of love. . . . the significance of two experiences is not a quantitative value or addition” (*A Theology of Love*, pp. 347-48, emphasis mine). Thus Quanstrom has misread Wynkoop; and he fails to establish the cause and effect relationship that he strongly implies exists between her work and those whom he says reject a second work of grace.

I suspect it would be more accurate to say there were upwards of 10 or 15 views of holiness in play in the denomination at the end of the 20th century than only the two that Quanstrom enumerates. But to stick with his two, I think he too simplistically differentiates them as those who believed in entire sanctification and those who rejected it. A more accurate (and less pejorative) differentiation, I believe, would be between those who lean toward the classical Wesleyan formulations of the 18th century, on the one hand, and those who favor the 19th century view of the American holiness movement on the other. Differences could be found among persons within each group. But neither group, contra Quanstrom, rejected en masse the doctrine of entire sanctification. If there are now those who do, I hope and pray they are not typical.

The American holiness movement, although attempting to be true to the Wesleyan heritage, was essentially a revivalistic movement. Revivalism always simplifies, in order to reach the masses with a simple and understandable message, with a view toward decision. That is a noble purpose. But the inevitable result is theological reductionism. (The work of the Wesleys is called a revival but it was not revivalism, undergirded as it was with solid theology.)

Quanstrom bemoans the existence of differing viewpoints. I would suggest that instead of bemoaning it we might see it as a golden opportunity. Perhaps what was, and is, happening is a bubbling new wine trying to burst out of the old wineskins. There is an attempt to overcome the reductionism of the holiness movement and undergird holiness doctrine with solid theological foundations. My little e-mail survey shows me that some of the traditional formulations have not commended themselves to the New Testament scholars of today. Furthermore, I am not at all certain that they communicate very well to the average person who attends our church services yearning to hear an authentic note of eternity in the sanctuary.

With the growing consensus between East and West, between Catholic and Protestant, between Luther and Eastern Orthodoxy, and the compatibility between them that the Helsinki theologians and others have brought to our attention, Wesleyanism is uniquely suited to step into this situation and say “We have known that all along.” We can make a contribution to this present theological discussion. But, again, holiness theology cannot do this by clinging to formulations that can no longer stand the test of biblical scholarship, nor commend themselves to where people live in this present world. “Let the things that can be shaken be shaken, so that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.”

What, then, cannot be shaken? I will conclude with just this:

In their book, *Relational Holiness* (2005), the authors, my former students Thomas Oord and Michael Lodahl, say this: “Perhaps the fundamental identity of the Holiness Movement—its theological distinctive—is . . . becoming extinct. Perhaps it is only the organizational machinery that keeps the tradition alive, while its theology no longer exerts influence.” (p. 27)

These two first cousins, Oord and Lodahl, do a good job distinguishing between what they call the “contributing distinctives” of holiness and its “core distinctive.” They isolate five concepts which they call “contributing distinctives” (namely following rules and ethical codes, being pure, total commitment, Christlikeness, being set apart, and perfection) but insist that the “core distinctive” is love.

I wrote a short review of that book which was published in the Spring, 2006 issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, which may have been read by only three persons—Lodahl, Oord, and myself! I agreed with their claim that the core distinctive of holiness is love, but I critiqued their definition of love as being inadequate. They define love as “intentional response to others—especially God—that promotes well-being.” That is good, as far as it goes. But a humanist or an atheist could doubtless agree with it if the words “especially God” were omitted, making it read “intentional response to others that promotes well-being.” Well of course! Duh!

I submit that the meaning of love can be better captured in descriptions and examples than in formal definitions. I would want to say that the love that is the “core distinctive” of holiness is the love of the Crucified God! It is the kenotic divine love of the suffering Servant who, says Isaiah, “poured out his soul unto death” (Is. 53:12). It is the self-denying cross-bearing love of Matthew 16:24. It is the love depicted by Dietrich Bonhoeffer who said: “When Jesus calls a man to follow him, he bids him come and die.” It is the love of the lowly Galilean, washing the feet of his followers, emptying himself, making himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and becoming obedient even to death on a Cross. The love that is the core distinctive of holiness is a cruciform love.

It is the love described so graphically in the 15th chapter of Luke:

--a love that goes out into the darkness of night, searching amid the hills and valleys, among the briars and the brambles, looking for that one lost sheep;

--a love that looks in every corner, sweeping in every nook and cranny, searching for that one lost coin;

--a love that stands forever out by the gatepost gazing yearningly, longingly, down the long road that leads in from the far country.

That is love. That is mission. That is evangelism. That is holiness!

That is what Wesleyan Theology calls “perfect love.”

That cannot be shaken.