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EDITOR'S NOTES

The Fall 1995 issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* focused on vital issues related to biblical hermeneutics, especially as these are conceived within the Wesleyan theological tradition. The question then centered on how we contemporary believers should go about conceiving of biblical authority and interpreting biblical content in the changing cultural settings of today. Now, in this issue, the focus becomes more applicational.

Attention is given here to a series of subjects discussed often in today's church. Given a commitment to biblical authority and appropriate ways of interpreting its content, what does the Bible teach about mission to the poor, race relations, religious pluralism, revivalism, small-group life in the church, and the appropriate role of women in leadership? How has the American holiness tradition done in living out such teaching? What really is "spirituality" and how does biblical faith relate to contemporary religious phenomena like "glossolalia" and the "pentecostalization" of American Christianity in the twentieth century? Does the Wesleyan theological tradition offer any particular wisdom here?

Did Richard Steele (30:1, Spring 1995) present the most appropriate perspective on the sources of the revivalistic model employed by John Wesley? Charles Goodwin thinks not, and Steele replies to Goodwin.

Special honor is given in this issue to Dr. James Earl Massey, 1995 recipient of the Wesleyan Theological Society's award for lifetime service to the holiness tradition. Included is a biographical introduction and photo of him, and a significant article by him.

Also, attention is drawn to the recent establishment of the *Wesleyan Theological Society Endowment Fund*. For further information, contact the Society's promotion secretary, Dr. Stephen Lennox, at Indiana Wesleyan University (phone 317-667-2242).

“TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR”: MISSIONAL SELF-UNDERSTANDING IN EARLY FREE METHODISM (1860-90)

by

Howard A. Snyder

My special mission is to preach the gospel to the poor. I believe that churches should be as free as the grace we preach. The Lord allowed me to be thrust out as I was, because He saw that in this manner this work could be carried on to the best advantage. The work is progressing and I expect to live to see FREE churches all over the land—especially in the cities where the poor are congregated. This is a blessed work! (B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian*, January 1865)

The Free Methodist Church, organized in New York State in 1860, claimed that it was raised up to preach the gospel to the poor. For many decades the denomination carried this statement near the front of its *Book of Discipline*: “All their churches are required to be as free as the grace they preach. They believe that their mission is twofold—to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity, and to preach the Gospel to the poor.” Some paragraphs later the church declared that “special efforts” must be made to reach the poor. “In this respect the Church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it that the gospel is preached to the poor. Thus, the duty of preaching the gospel to the poor, is enjoined by the plainest precepts and examples.” The church, from its music to its architecture, must be organized specifically to reach the poor.¹ To adapt the jargon of today, Free Methodism was to be a “poor-friendly church.”

¹Quotations are from *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Free Methodist Church* (Rochester, NY: The General Conference, 1870), ix, xi.

The Free Methodist Church is now 136 years old. Beginning in western New York State and Illinois, it spread quickly throughout the Midwest and to the West Coast of the United States. Overseas missionary work began in the 1880s. The denomination is now found in about 27 nations of the world. In general, the work in other nations has grown more rapidly than that in the United States and Canada.² Has the Free Methodist Church reached the poor? In many places in the world the denomination is a church of and among the poor. In the United States and Canada, it has become a middle class denomination. Today in North America the denomination does not claim to be a church of the poor or bear special responsibility for reaching the poor. Yet this was a prominent note in the church's origin.

Is Free Methodism a nineteenth-century example of a preferential option for the poor? Some have argued that it is.³ This paper explores the issue further, raising these questions:

1. What was the source of Free Methodism's early concern for the poor?
2. How was this concern understood?
3. What was the relationship of this concern to the denomination's focus on a Wesleyan understanding of sanctification?
4. To what extent was this concern with the poor sustained over time?⁴

Concern for the Poor in the Origin of Free Methodism

The organization of the Free Methodist Church in 1860 followed a series of controversies in the Methodist Episcopal Church, particularly in the Genesee Conference, over the previous decade. The 1860 schism followed the organization of the abolitionist Wesleyan Methodist Church out

²That portion of the denomination outside the United States passed the North American church in total membership in the 1960s. Today the denomination counts nearly 400,000 members, with only about 85,000 of these being in the United States and Canada.

³William Kostlevy, "Benjamin Titus Roberts and the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in the Early Free Methodist Church," in Anthony L. Dunnivant, ed., *Poverty and Ecclesiology: Nineteenth-Century Evangelicals in the Light of Liberation Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 51-67; Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering An Evangelical Heritage*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 102-12.

⁴I wish to acknowledge here the help of Christopher Heckaman, my student assistant at United Theological Seminary, in researching this paper.

of Methodism in 1843 and the North/South division over slavery and related issues in 1844-45.

These slavery-connected controversies were not totally unrelated to the formation of the Free Methodist Church, and early Free Methodists were abolitionists. Free Methodism arose out of a somewhat different complex of issues, however. The most immediate issue concerned the sale or rental of pews, especially in new church buildings. It was this controversy which produced the name "Free Methodist." The Free Methodists were for "free" pews and "free" church buildings, not for "stock churches" in which one had to pay in order to get a good seat.

In the 1850s the Genesee Conference was sharply divided along theological, sociocultural, and church-political lines. On the one side was the "Buffalo Regency," made up of leading pastors and other denominational leaders, and on the other the so-called "Nazarites" who were protesting the liberalizing trends in the denomination.⁵ "Secret societies"—the Masonic and Odd Fellow lodges—became a key issue in the dispute. A number of leading Methodist clergy, including the denominational book agent, Thomas Carlton, had become Masons. In 1829 the Genesee Conference had passed a resolution against Masonry, saying ". . . we will admit no person on trial, nor admit any into full connection in this conference . . . who shall have ever belonged to the Masonic Fraternity, who will not renounce all connection with Masons as such, by withdrawing from the institution, and promising to have no further connection with Masons."⁶ But twenty years later sentiment had changed. After the anti-Masonic movement in the U. S. of the 1830s (which was centered in western New York State), Masonry regained popularity. The number of

⁵The term "Buffalo Regency" suggests an unflattering comparison with the "Albany Regency," the New York State political machine engineered by Martin Van Buren which set much of the pattern for U. S. political parties in the 1820s and 1830s. See Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 485, 488-90. The O. T. term "Nazarite" apparently was first applied to the reform group by the rather eccentric Rev. Joseph McCreery, the main source of the more extreme Nazarite agitation, at a camp meeting in 1855. After the formation of the Free Methodist Church, a Nazarite group continued, protesting that the Free Methodists were not sufficiently open to the direct leading of the Spirit. See James Arnold Reinhard, "Personal and Sociological Factors in the Formation of the Free Methodist Church, 1852-1860" (Diss., University of Iowa, 1971), 39.

⁶Conable, *History of the Genesee Annual Conference*, 302, quoted in Reinhard, 138.

Masonic lodges in New York State more than doubled between 1846 and 1851, going from 114 to 234.⁷ Apparently the lodge appealed to many Methodist clergy in larger city and town churches.

A principal leader of the protest against pew rental, secret societies, and similar issues in the Genesee Conference was Benjamin Titus Roberts (1823-93). Roberts preached and wrote a series of articles against pew rental and what he saw as the spiritual decline of Methodism. His protest provoked a church trial and his expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church (along with Joseph McCreery) in 1858.

A series of Laymen's Conventions⁸ over the next three years resulted in the organization of the Free Methodist Church in August, 1860, and the denomination's first general conference the following October. It was this first general conference which proclaimed the denomination's twofold mission to maintain biblical Christianity and to preach the gospel to the poor.

In the minds of Roberts and other early Free Methodist leaders, preaching the gospel to the poor and free pews were related issues. This is clear from the statement of mission quoted above, which reads more fully:

All their churches are required to be as free as the grace they preach. They believe that their mission is twofold—to main-

⁷This was still much lower than the high of 500 lodges in the state in 1836, before the anti-Mason crusade. See John C. Graves, "Free Masonry Fifty Years Ago," address delivered before Washington Lodge No. 240, Sept. 28, 1916, cited in Reinhard, 139. Kathleen Kutolowski notes that Genesee County in western New York was the "birthplace of the [Antimasonic political] party and seedbed for its early ideology, imagery, and organization. Here Freemasonry had flourished (with seventeen lodges and three Royal Arch chapters in the twenty-two towns), and here Antimasonry would triumph, with the party's candidates winning every county office from 1827 to 1833, averaging 69 percent of the vote." Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, "Antimasonry Reexamined: Social Bases of the Grass-Roots Party," *Journal of American History* 71:2 (September 1984), 270.

⁸This series of conventions was part of a broader "lay" movement in Methodism seeking increased participation of members and more democratic process in the church, and particularly "lay" representation in annual and general conferences. A number of Laymen's Conventions were held in various places during the 1850s. See Donald B. Marti, "Rich Methodists: The Rise and Consequences of Lay Philanthropy in the Mid-19th Century," in Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe, eds., *Rethinking Methodist History* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1985), 164-65.

tain the Bible standard of Christianity, and to preach the Gospel to the poor. Hence they require that all seats in their houses of worship should BE FREE. No pews can be rented or sold among them. The world will never become converted to Christ, so long as the Churches are conducted upon the exclusive system. It has always been contrary to the economy of the Christian Church, to build houses of worship with pews to rent. But the spirit of the world has encroached, by little and little, until, in many parts of the United States, not a single free church can be found in any of the cities or larger villages. The pew system generally prevails among all denominations. We are thoroughly convinced that this system is wrong in principle and bad in tendency. It is a corruption of Christianity. *Free Churches are essential to reach the masses.*⁹

The Pew Rental System

Renting or selling the exclusive right to particular pews in church buildings had in fact become a widespread practice by the mid 1850s.¹⁰ The practice often produced considerable income in larger churches. The *Chicago Post* reported in 1869: “At the sale of pews at Grace Church, on Monday evening and Tuesday, the prices obtained for sittings in that house of worship were greater, we believe, than ever realized in Chicago. The pew admitted to be the best went off to S. Mason Loomis, at the modest figure of \$2,150, he having gallantly bid \$950 for the first choice. From that sum down to more moderate rates, the descent was easy—the sale of the evening closing by knocking off No. 136 to Dr. E. M. Hale, the abortionist, at the extraordinary low sum of \$400.”¹¹ A little calculation shows the dimensions of this sale. If the average price was \$1,200 (less than half the average between the highest and lowest paid), and 136 pews

⁹*The Doctrines and Discipline of the Free Methodist Church*, 1870, ix-x. This statement (edited somewhat) is still found in the current (1989) Free Methodist *Book of Discipline*, 294 (the Historical Appendix).

¹⁰Though the practice was relatively new in American Methodism, pew sale or rental has a long history. The Methodist *Discipline* in 1820 added a prohibition against the practice, saying Methodist edifices were to be built “with free seats,” but this was effectively nullified in 1852 by adding, “wherever practicable” (Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974, 2:1892-93).

¹¹Article from the *Chicago Post*, reported in *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* (January, 1870), 31-32. Whether this was the Grace M. E. Church in Chicago or a church of another denomination is unclear.

were sold, \$163,200 would have been raised in this sale—an enormous amount at the time.¹² The *Post* article went on to comment:

. . . while indulging in the conceits of ecclesiastical architecture, the sweet strains of operatic music, the luxury of a house complete in all its appointments, all in the name and for the glory of God, it is well enough for them to remember that the Protestant poor of Chicago are lapsing into unbelief and darkness, because with the exception of the few Mission churches, there is no place in the House of God for them. . . . No man who labors with his hands will find a place in Grace Church. . . . What we say of Grace Church is true of all like establishments in Chicago and throughout the whole country. In them a certain number of lawyers, doctors, politicians, editors, speculators, merchants, and sometimes abortionists meet to loll away an hour and a half of each Sunday, on luxuriously cushioned seats. . . . In all of them, the men who labor, no matter at what, nor how faithfully and intelligently, are practically forbidden as if an angel with a flaming sword stood at the entrance.¹³

This article gives some sense of the growing affluence, sophistication, and status-consciousness of many city churches of the day. Prospering urban Methodists increasingly fit this pattern.

The pew-rental controversy was an issue of economic justice in two senses. Obviously it constituted a form of discrimination against the poor. But it was at the same time a market-driven system of church economics that gave large influence to the wealthy, while undermining community

¹²Grace M. E. Church in Chicago was valued at \$115,000 in 1869 and with 232 members was the fifth largest M. E. church in Chicago, though it was declining (*Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1869*, New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 271). The highest “probable value” of any church building in the Genesee Conference in 1858 was \$28,000 (the value listed for both the Niagara Street and Grace churches in Buffalo), while the average value of the 144 church buildings in the conference was only \$2,620. Significantly, the average value of the four Buffalo church edifices listed was over seven times greater than the conference average (*Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Years 1858, 1859*, New York: Carlton & Porter, 7:322-24).

¹³Ibid.

and shared stewardship by enforcing economic distinctions. Pew sale or rental, where practiced, became a whole system of church economics.¹⁴

The protest against “pewed churches” was twofold: the system was poor stewardship, indicating an unacceptably low standard of Christian discipleship and experience; and it discriminated against the poor, violating the biblical standard of community and subverting the church’s ministry to preach the gospel to the poor. The practice effectively made the poor unwelcome in the church, directly violating James 2:1-7.

The link between the pew-rental protest and concern for the poor is thus fairly obvious. It is perhaps less obvious why Roberts and the early Free Methodists should have made this particular argument. They opposed pew rental in part as a violation of biblical stewardship. On the same principle, they opposed bazaars, raffles, and fund-raising dinners. But why specifically this concern with the poor?

One answer lies in the increasing affluence and prosperity of urban Methodists. This was reflected not only in their personal lifestyles but also in church architecture and worship patterns. Methodist church buildings in the larger cities were becoming stately and luxurious, music was becoming more professional, and expensive organs with paid organists were not uncommon. This was the period when newly prosperous Methodist businessmen and entrepreneurs like Daniel Drew and the Harper brothers in New York were endowing universities and seminaries and helping to fund local churches. According to Donald Marti:

The idea that Methodists might be rich was novel in the middle third of the 19th century. Methodists had always been characterized, in and out of their fellowship, as very ordinary people. . . . Methodists themselves agreed that their denomination had first grown among poor folk. The Reverend Gilbert

¹⁴For an understanding of pew-renting as an ecclesiastical economic system, see Callum G. Brown, “The Costs of Pew-renting: Church Management, Church-going and Social Class in Nineteenth-century Glasgow,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38:3 (July 1987), 347-61. Brown’s summary applies largely to the American scene as well: “It was of great significance that pew-renting reached its height in the nineteenth century. Its growth was closely related to the evolution of modern society. . . . In the nineteenth century the renting of pews became a device for creating and sustaining social exclusivity: those who could pay rents proved their worldly success, confirmed their allegiance to the prevailing moral values of thrift and self-reliance and, within the church-going community, established their place on the social hierarchy by the price they paid for seats—a fact observable to all by the location of pews within the church” (361).

Haven of the New England Conference, later a bishop in post-Civil War South Carolina, thought that some of the denomination's special virtue arose from that fact.¹⁵

Marti notes that in 1855 Bishop Matthew Simpson

. . . encouraged some of the wealthier brethren in Pittsburgh to erect Christ Church, the first American Methodist church built in the Gothic Revival style. When Christ Church and other grand edifices arose, Methodists discovered that their new churches needed formal pews rather than the plain benches to which they had been accustomed. They called for liturgical embellishments as well. Simpson welcomed all of this. Certainly men who had earned fine homes and "social refinement" had the right to expect similar graces in their churches. The fact that they were willing to pay for them made their claim all the stronger.¹⁶

These dynamics are reflected in an 1857 editorial in the Methodist *Buffalo Christian Advocate*. In a piece entitled "Wealth and Piety—A Bright Side," editor John Robie defended the value of wealthy churches. It is well "to hold them up before the Christian world as model Church examples. Such churches always prosper. . . . The monied power of the Church is superadded to all the other gifts of God, and the whole brought under contribution in the blessed work of the Gospel. How shall such Churches be multiplied?"¹⁷

A clear sociocultural difference distinguished prospering urban Methodists from the many Methodists who opposed pew rentals. For the most part the protesters, or at least their main constituency, were from small town and rural congregations or from poorer city churches. These differences became clearer once the Free Methodist Church was organized. With a few exceptions, early Free Methodist churches were located in towns and rural areas. They were not necessarily poor, but were somewhat culturally isolated from the growing affluence and sophistication of the large urban churches. Early Free Methodist churches located in large cities (for example, New York, Buffalo, and St. Louis) appear to have been primarily working-class congregations.

Socioeconomic factors thus underlay the protest against pew rentals. James Reinhard comments in his dissertation, "Personal and Sociological

¹⁵Marti, 159.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 159-60.

¹⁷Quoted in Reinhard, 86.

Factors in the Formation of the Free Methodist Church, 1852-1860”: “New School Methodism [which Roberts opposed] was, by and large, coterminous with a particular social class. Upper-class attitudes were incongruous to the revivalism Roberts sought to foster.”¹⁸ Reinhard goes on to say:

. . . a decision-making elite, economically and socially, had developed among the Methodists in the Buffalo, New York area. Personal tensions and animosities quickly developed. Churches located in the poorer rural areas engaged in severe condemnation of wealth, worldly fashions, and pleasures. The crisis religious experiences, conversion and sanctification, commonly associated with lower-class religious movements, was the boast of the Genesee revivalists. Emotionalism in religion, often incongruous with prosperity and social position, was disruptive to progress for others. In western New York the perfectionistic dynamic of Methodism, as elsewhere, tended to disappear as people rose in the social scale. The upper classes found it easy to disparage and displace this more vigorous expression of faith.¹⁹

This rural/urban split as a dynamic in the origin of the Free Methodist Church casts its shadow down to the present. The Free Methodist Church has been primarily a small-town denomination. With the growth of the suburbs in the 1950s the pattern changed somewhat, so that now many North American Free Methodist churches are suburban. Even today, however, the denomination has few strong urban churches.

In the 1850s, it appears that the primary supporters of the pew-rental protest came from outside the large city churches. The leading spokespersons of this protest, however, people like B. T. Roberts and others, were not poor. Nor were they confined to rural or small-town congregations.

¹⁸Reinhard, 85.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 97. Concern with entire sanctification certainly was not limited to the “lower classes.” Witness the widespread influence of Phoebe Palmer. But Roberts and other early Free Methodists clearly advocated a more “radical” form of holiness—more emotionally expressive and carrying more specific and uncompromising social and economic implications. For example, Palmer thought Roberts and the Free Methodists discredited the holiness message by linking it to the political question of abolitionism. Roberts and Redfield felt Palmer presented a compromised view of holiness by not supporting abolitionism, which they saw as a moral question inseparable from holiness. See Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury / Zondervan, 1986), 42, 100, 228.

The itineracy system tended to place them in a variety of contexts. It should also be noted that the protesting pastors represented a younger element in the conference, a group concerned with reform in the church and with the denomination's drift from traditional Methodist doctrine as it grew and became more affluent. The comparative youth of Roberts and some of the other reformers seems to have been a factor in the controversy. Roberts was in his early thirties when he first began to call for reform, and only thirty-six when he was expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1856 the Rev. John Wentworth of the Genesee Conference decried "these unfledged and beardless and brainless boys" who are "allowed to insult the manhood, to question the honesty, and to malign the character of the Fathers of the Conference."²⁰

Whatever the socioeconomic factors underlying the controversy, clearly the protest was also theologically based. In fact, Roberts' protest explicitly linked theology and economic concerns, as we shall see.

B. T. Roberts' Protest

B. T. Roberts was born in 1823, when the Methodist Episcopal Church was scarcely forty years old. He grew up during the period of rapid Methodist growth, which was also the period of a growing socioeconomic rift between multiplying frontier Methodists and prospering city congregations. More immediately volatile was the dispute over slavery and slaveholding. From early on Roberts' sympathies were with the abolitionists and with aggressively reaching the common people with the gospel.²¹

Roberts' concerns included, in addition to abolition, farmers' rights, temperance, economic reform, and the right of women to preach. His 1891 book, *Ordaining Women*, prompted by Free Methodism's refusal to approve full ordination for women in 1890, has been called "one of the

²⁰Junius [J. B. Wentworth], "Nazarite Reformers and Reformation," *Medina Tribune* (Sept. 11, 1856), 1. Quoted in Reinhard, 24.

²¹No fully comprehensive biography of Roberts has yet been written. The best source is Clarence Zahniser, *Earnest Christian: Life and Works of Benjamin Titus Roberts* (Circleville, OH: Advocate Publishing House, 1957). See also Benson Howard Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts, Late General Superintendent of the Free Methodist Church. A Biography* (North Chili, NY: "The Earnest Christian" Office, 1900); Esther M. Roberts, *The Bishop and His Lady* (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1962); Richard R. Blews, *Master Workmen: Biographies of the Late Bishops of the Free Methodist Church During Her First Century 1860-1960* (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1960), 17-46, in addition to denominational histories. Much original source material which was used somewhat by Zahniser in his biography has recently become available; it is lodged in the Library of Congress, with copies in the library of Roberts Wesleyan College, Rochester, New York.

most radical and consistently egalitarian feminist tracts in the nineteenth century.”²²

Appointed to the prominent Niagara Street Church in Buffalo in 1852, where pew-renting was already in effect, Roberts began to work against the system both locally and in the conference. He wrote in the *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, “Is there any good reason for renting pews in churches? It tends to debase the poor. . . . It exalts the rich. . . . Renting pews is saying, in substance, we want none in our congregation but those who are able to move in fashionable circles, and can pay ten, twenty, fifty or one hundred dollars a year for a pew.”²³ In a letter about this time Roberts noted that Thomas Carlton, the newly-appointed Methodist book agent, on a visit to Buffalo had commented that “the free-seat system did not work well in New York, and they were getting out of it fast as they could. He said they have lately repaired Allen Street Church and he believed they had made it a stock church.” Roberts added, “Here all our churches are stock churches, and several of the men or preachers in this Conference say they would never build a church upon any other plan.”²⁴

The writing which led most directly to Roberts’ expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church was an article entitled “New School Methodism,” published in the newly-founded Methodist reform paper, the *Northern Independent*, in 1857.²⁵ The article attacked pew rental and other

²²Donald W. Dayton, “Reclaiming Our Roots: The Social Vision of B. T. Roberts,” unpubl. manuscript (1992), 7.

²³Quoted in Reinhard, 93.

²⁴Quoted in Benson Roberts, 77-78. Carlton was a member of the Genesee Conference and was prominent in the “Buffalo Regency” group, though as denominational book agent (publisher) from 1852 to 1872 he was stationed in New York City. He had succeeded George Lane, Ellen Roberts’ uncle, in this position.

²⁵The *Northern Independent* was established in late 1856 by William Hosmer, who had previously edited the *Northern Christian Advocate*. Roberts was a contributing editor. Reinhard notes: “What Hosmer had done in the *Northern Christian Advocate* he did even more ardently in his new business venture, the *Northern Independent*. Readers, disappointed with the conciliating denominational papers, rejoiced at Hosmer’s return to antislaveryism” (Reinhard, 108). Roberts’ “New School Methodism” is reprinted various places, including B. T. Roberts, *Why Another Sect: Containing a Review of Articles by Bishop Simpson and Others on the Free Methodist Church* (Rochester, NY: “The Earnest Christian” Publishing House, 1879), 85-96; Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 112-21; Wilson T. Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church of North America* (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1915), 1:96-103; and Leslie R. Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness: A Historical Interpretation of Free Methodism’s First Century* (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1960), 573-78.

departures from “Old School Methodism,” including the identification of sanctification with justification. Later, after establishing the monthly journal *The Earnest Christian* in 1860, Roberts would continue periodically to editorialize against the pew rental system.

In “New School Methodism” Roberts argued that a “new theory of religion” was being spread in the conference by “a class of preachers,” numbering about thirty, “whose teaching is very different from that of the fathers of Methodism.” The conference was divided. “Two distinct parties exist,” and the controversy concerned “nothing less than the nature itself of Christianity.”

The key theological errors of these New School Methodists, Roberts judged, were putting good works in the place of faith in Christ and holding that justification and sanctification were the same. What, then, are the results? Roberts says:

Differing thus in their views of religion, the Old and New School Methodists necessarily differed in their measures for its promotion. The latter build stock Churches, and furnish them with pews to accommodate a select congregation; and with organs, melodeons, violins, and professional singers, to execute difficult pieces of music for a fashionable audience. The former favor free Churches, congregational singing, and spirituality, simplicity and fervency in worship. They endeavor to promote revivals, deep and thorough; such as . . . have made Methodism the leading denomination of the land. The leaders of the New Divinity movement are not remarkable for promoting revivals. . . . When these desire to raise money for the benefit of the Church, they have recourse to the selling of pews to the highest bidder; to parties of pleasure, oyster suppers, fairs, grab-bags, festivals and lotteries; the others for this purpose, appeal to the love the people bear to Christ. In short, the Old School Methodists rely . . . upon the agency of the Holy Ghost, and the purity of the Church. The New School Methodists appear to depend upon the patronage of the worldly, the favor of the proud and aspiring; and the various artifices of worldly policy.²⁶

The special mission of Methodism, Roberts says, is “not to gather into her fold the proud and fashionable, the devotees of pleasure and ambition, but ‘to spread Scriptural holiness over these lands.’ ”²⁷

²⁶Marston, 576.

²⁷Ibid., 578.

Roberts here says nothing specifically about the gospel for the poor, though he warns that “prosperity is producing upon us, as a denomination, the same intoxicating effect that it too often does upon individuals and societies.” His main concern in “New School Methodism” was the drift away from historic Methodism in both doctrine and practice. Roberts most clearly articulates his concern with preaching the gospel to the poor in his article “Free Churches,” which appeared in the first issue of *The Earnest Christian* in 1860. This piece functions practically as a manifesto for the Free Methodist Church, formed several months later. It became, in fact, the basis of the introductory statement inserted in early editions of the *Free Methodist Discipline* (quoted above).

In “Free Churches,” Roberts argues that the church has a special and specific commission from Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to the poor. Preceding the article, in a brief piece entitled “Object and Scope of This Magazine,” Roberts says that his intent is “to publish a revival journal” promoting “Experimental Religion,” “the doctrine of Christian Holiness, as taught by Wesley and Fletcher,” and “the claims of the neglected poor.” He writes:

*The claims of the neglected poor, the class to which Christ and the Apostles belonged, the class for whose special benefit the Gospel was designed, . . . will be advocated with all the candor and ability we can command. In order that the masses, who have a peculiar claim to the Gospel of Christ may be reached, the necessity of plain Churches, with the seats free, of plainness of dress, of spirituality and simplicity in worship, will, we trust, be set forth with convincing arguments.*²⁸

Roberts argues further in “Free Churches” that, if Christianity prevailed in its purity, it “would bring Paradise back to earth.” But it is being corrupted by a number of things, and in particular the growing practice of pew rental. This practice is “wrong in principle, and bad in tendency.” Not some but “*all* churches should be free”; “. . . our houses of worship should be, like the grace we preach, and the air we breathe, free to all.” Then Roberts gives his central argument.

Free Churches are essential to reach the masses.

The wealth of the world is in the hands of a few. In every country the poor abound. . . . Sin has diffused itself every where, often causing poverty and suffering.

²⁸B. T. Roberts, “Object and Scope of This Magazine,” *The Earnest Christian* (January, 1860), 1-2.

God assured his ancient people, favored above all others with precautions against want, that "the poor shall never cease out of the land." These are the ones upon whom the ills of life fall with crushing weight. Extortion wrings from them their scanty pittance. The law may endeavor to protect them; but they are without the means to obtain redress at her courts. If famine visits the land, she comes unbidden to their table, and remains their guest until they are consumed.

The provisions of the gospel are for all. The "glad tidings" must be proclaimed to every individual of the human race. God sends THE TRUE LIGHT to illuminate and melt every heart. It visits the palace and the dungeon, saluting the kind and the captive. The good news falls soothingly upon the ear of the victim of slavery, and tells of a happy land, beyond the grave, where the crack of the driver's whip, and the baying of blood-hounds are never heard. The master is assured, that though he be a sinner above all other sinners, yet even he, by doing works meet for repentance, may be forgiven, and gain heaven. To civilized and savage, bond and free, black and white, the ignorant and the learned, is freely offered the great salvation.

But for whose benefit are special efforts to be put forth?

Who must be *particularly* cared for? Jesus settles this question. He leaves no room for cavil. When John sent to know who he was, Christ charged the messengers to return and show John the things which they had seen and heard. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up," and, as if all this would be insufficient to satisfy John of the validity of his claims, he adds, "AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM." This was the crowning proof that Jesus was the one that should come. It does not appear that after this John ever had any doubts of the Messiahship of Christ. He that so cared for the poor must be the one from God.

In this respect the church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it that the gospel is preached to the poor. With them, peculiar pains must be taken. The message of the minister must be adapted to their wants and conditions. The greatest trophies of saving grace must be sought among them. This was the view taken by the first heralds of the cross. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "for ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not

many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Similar statements in regard to the rich are not to be found in the Bible. On the contrary, the Apostle James asks the brethren, “do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? . . .” He also refers to it, as an undeniable fact, that the poor are elected to special privileges under the gospel dispensation. “Hearken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He had promised to them that love him?”

Thus the duty of preaching the gospel to the poor is enjoined, by the plainest precepts and examples. This is the standing proof of the Divine mission of the Church. In her regard for the poor, Christianity asserts her superiority to all systems of human origin. Human pride regards most the mere accidents of humanity; but God passes by these, and looks at that which is alone essential and imperishable. In his sight, position, power, and wealth, are the merest trifles. They do not add to the value or dignity of the possessor. God has magnified man by making him free and immortal. Like a good father, he provides for all his family, but in a special manner for the largest number, and the most destitute. He takes the most pains with those who by others are most neglected.²⁹

Here Roberts quotes three paragraphs from Stephen Olin, “that great, good man.” More important than questions of polity, Olin argues, is preaching the gospel to the poor: “There can be no [church] without a gospel, and a gospel for the poor.” If a church’s ministers “preach a saving gospel to the poor, . . . that is enough. It is an Apostolic church.” Roberts then applies this principle to the question of pew rental:

If the gospel is to be preached to the poor, then it follows, as a necessary consequence, that all the arrangements for preaching the gospel, should be so made as to secure this object. There must not be a mere incidental provision for having the poor hear the gospel; this is the main thing to be looked after.

²⁹B. T. Roberts, “Free Churches,” *The Earnest Christian* (January 1860), 7-8.

. . . Hence, houses of worship should be, not like the first-class car on a European railway, for the exclusive, but like the streets we walk, free for all. Their portals should be opened as wide for the common laborer, or the indigent widow, as for the assuming or the wealthy.³⁰

Roberts clearly is arguing here for a “preferential option for the poor,” though using other language. The gospel was designed for the “special benefit” of the poor, who have a “peculiar claim” to it. The poor have “special privileges” in the gospel, and therefore the church must exert “special efforts” and “peculiar pains” to reach them. As preaching the gospel to the poor was the “crowning proof” that Jesus was the Messiah, so the church’s faithfulness in reaching the poor is the essential sign that it truly is the church of Jesus Christ. The argument here is both christological and ecclesiological. God sent Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to the poor and gave the church the same commission. Roberts goes so far as to affirm (quoting Olin) that, while issues of doctrine and polity may be matters of legitimate dispute, there can be no doubt *here*. A church which does not preach the gospel to the poor is not the church of Jesus Christ.

What did Roberts mean by “preaching the gospel to the poor”? Clearly he meant primarily evangelism. Roberts understood evangelism, however, as more than the winning of converts. As a good Methodist and one committed to Wesley’s emphasis on sanctification and discipleship, Roberts understood the gospel to mean salvation from all sin, with inner cleansing and empowerment for Christ-like, self-sacrificing service. This is clear in Roberts’ statement that the mission of the Free Methodist Church was “to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity, and to preach the Gospel to the poor.” To “maintain the Bible standard of Christianity” appears to be equivalent to the common formulation, “to spread scriptural holiness over these lands.” The “Bible standard” for Roberts meant no compromise on the doctrine of entire sanctification or on the fundamental doctrines of justification and regeneration.³¹

Ten years later, in another editorial entitled “Free Churches,” Roberts wrote:

³⁰Ibid., 9.

³¹It may be that Roberts here prefers the wording “the Bible standard of Christianity” to the specific reference to “scriptural holiness” because he felt that the whole foundation of Methodist doctrine, not just entire sanctification, was at risk.

Where the object is to *introduce* the Gospel, no one thinks of selling the right to join in the public worship of God. But it is too often the case, that when a church has been built up and become financially strong under the free-seat system, a new and elegant house of worship must be erected, and the table of the changers of money introduced, and the seats sold, and God's poor shut out. This is dishonest. . . .

. . . If a Church must preach the Gospel to the poor to gain God's blessing, it must continue to do the same work to keep God's blessing. Turn the poor out of a church, and you turn Christ out. "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." That which is preached to the rich *exclusively* is not the Gospel. It may be faultless oratory, sound philosophy, refined morality, but it is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Where Jesus is, the poor hear him saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."³²

Turn the poor away and you turn away Christ, Roberts insists. Roberts' views are further illuminated by an editorial entitled "The Rich" in the January, 1870, *Earnest Christian*. Here Roberts argues:

There is no class of society in such imminent danger of eternal damnation as the rich. If any among them are saved, it will be like Lot coming out of Sodom—the exception not the rule. . . . It is not merely *trust* in riches that renders it so difficult to enter the kingdom of God, but *their possession*. Yet whoever possessed riches without trusting in them, at least for influence and consideration, if not for salvation? . . .

Jesus forbids his disciples to amass wealth. His language is plain. It requires a great deal of ingenuity to pervert it. . . .

. . . Must we take our choice between laying up treasures on earth or treasures in heaven? To do both is impossible. Deliberately take your choice. Not to choose is inevitably to drift into the current of worldliness—To choose the world is to choose sorrow, and trouble, and eternal death.

If you resolve to lay up treasures in Heaven, begin at once. Give yourself to God to do good to the utmost of your ability to your fellow-men. Adopt the motto of Wesley, "Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can."

In the light of these truths, we see the utter criminality of the course taken by the popular churches to secure the patron-

³²B. T. Roberts, "Free Churches," *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* (October, 1870), 128-29.

age of the rich. The very vices which ensure their damnation are encouraged.—Their love of distinction is gratified by being able to buy the exclusive right to the occupancy of the best pews in the house; and their pride is strengthened and encouraged by the splendor that surrounds them and the deference that is paid to them in the house of God. Plain, free churches are everywhere needed, quite as much to save the rich as to reach the masses and carry the Gospel to the poor.³³

In his focus on Jesus Christ as our model, Roberts linked poverty and community. When the first Christians shared their possessions, they were simply following Jesus' example. Roberts wrote in 1870:

When we see how the Saviour sanctified Poverty, by eating her bread and drinking her water—walking in her lowliest vales, and choosing His companions from her despised sons—we no longer wonder, that in the palmy days of Christianity, “as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” This also helps solve the mystery why the poor are generally so much more willing to receive the gospel in its purity than the rich. They can say, emphatically, “He was one of us.”³⁴

The Influence of Stephen Olin

Stephen Olin (1797-1851), president of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut during Roberts' student days there, clearly had a large impact on Roberts. A prominent preacher and educator in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Olin served as president of Wesleyan University from 1834 until his death at age fifty-four. He gave his blessing to John Wesley Redfield's remarkable revival on campus and in the Middletown community about 1847 which profoundly affected Roberts. As a

³³B. T. Roberts, “The Rich,” *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* (January 1870), 30-31. See also B. T. Roberts, “Gospel to the Rich,” *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* (February 1865), 60-62, where Roberts says, “You cannot at the same time be devoted to the acquisition of wealth and to the service of Christ,” but also: “A talent for business is as much the gift of God as a talent for preaching.” The “ability to get wealth” is to be used “for the good of your race,” but not for luxury or self-indulgence.

³⁴B. T. Roberts, “Riches and Poverty of Christ,” *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* (September, 1870), 72.

student Roberts may have heard Olin's sermon, "The Adaptation of the Gospel to the Poor," which Roberts later quoted.

Roberts entered Wesleyan University in the fall of 1845. Earlier that year President Olin had exhorted the university's graduating class: "It ought to be well understood that the multiplication of magnificent churches is daily making the line of demarcation between the rich and poor more and more palpable and impassable. . . . It should ever be kept in mind that such a church virtually writes above its sculptured portals an irrevocable prohibition to the poor."³⁵ There are "signs of apostleship older and surer than this mission to the rich," Olin continued—namely, to "appeal, as their Master did, to eminent success among the masses, and affirm like Him, that through their instrumentality 'the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.'"³⁶

Olin's sermon "The Adaptation of the Gospel to the Poor" uses the same text (Matt. 11:5) which is central to Roberts' key article, "Free Churches." Olin said that preaching the Gospel to the poor is a "*permanent* proof" of Christ's divinity and the truth of his doctrine. He added (in a statement Roberts later paraphrases): "The Father of all provides in the Gospel for all his family, and cares especially for the greatest number, and the most needy."³⁷ Olin's concluding section, "Inferences," begins with three paragraphs which Roberts quotes exactly in "Free Churches":

1. The Gospel is preached to the poor—to the masses. It is made for them—it suits them. Is it not for the rich—for the cultivated—the intellectual? Not as such. They must come down to the common platform. They must be saved just like so many plowmen or common day-laborers. They must feel themselves sinners—must repent—trust in Christ, like beggars—like publicans. Sometimes we hear men prate about "preaching that may do for common people, while it is good for nothing for the refined and the educated." This is a damn-

³⁵Stephen Olin, "Resources and Duties of Christian Young Men. A Discourse to the Graduating Class of the Wesleyan University, 1845," *The Works of Stephen Olin, D.D., LL.D.: Late President of the Wesleyan University* (New York: Harper, 1860), 2:144.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 146 (emphasis in the original).

³⁷Stephen Olin, "The Adaptation of the Gospel to the Poor," *The Works of Stephen Olin*, 1:341-42. Note the similar passage in Roberts, "Free Churches," above.

ing heresy. It is a ruinous delusion. All breathe the same air. All are of one blood. All die. There is precisely one Gospel for all; and that is the Gospel that the poor have preached to them. The poor are the favored ones. They are not called up. The great are called down. They may dress, and feed, and ride, and live in ways of their own choosing; but as to getting to heaven, there is only God's way—the way of the poor. They may fare sumptuously every day, but there is only one sort of Manna.

2. That *is* the Gospel which is effectually preached to the poor, and which converts the people. The result shows it. It has demonstration in its fruits. A great many things held and preached may be above the common mind—intricate—requiring logic and grasp of intellect to embrace them. They may be true—important, but they are not the Gospel—not its vital, central truths. Take them away, and the Gospel will remain. Add them and you do not help the Gospel. That is preached to the poor. Common people can understand it. This is a good test. All the rest is, at least, not essential.

3. There are hot controversies about the true Church. What constitutes it—what is essential to it—what vitiates it? These may be important questions, but there are more important ones. It may be that there can not be a Church without a bishop, or that there can. There can be none without a Gospel, and a Gospel for the poor. Does a Church preach the Gospel to the poor—preach it effectively? Does it convert and sanctify the people? Are its preaching, its forms, its doctrines adapted *especially* to these results? If not, we need not take the trouble of asking any more questions about it. It has missed the main matter. It does not do what Jesus did—what the apostles did. Is there a Church—a ministry—that converts, reforms, sanctifies the people? Do the poor really learn to love Christ? Do they live purely and die happy? I hope that Church conforms to the New Testament in its government and forms as far as may be. I trust it has nothing anti-Republican, or schismatic, or disorderly in its fundamental principles and policy. I wish its ministers may be men of the best training, and eloquent. I hope they worship in goodly temples, and all that; but I can not think or talk gravely about these matters on the Sabbath. They preach a saving Gospel to the poor, and that is enough. It is an apostolic Church. Christ is the corner-stone. The main thing is secured, thank God.³⁸

³⁸Ibid., 345-46. Cf. *The Earnest Christian* (January 1860), 8-9, where Roberts quotes this passage.

Roberts graduated from Wesleyan University in 1848 (a classmate of Daniel Steele) at the age of twenty-five and began his ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The influence of Olin apparently remained with him. A decade later, when Roberts affirmed the gospel to the poor as an argument against the pew-rental system, Olin became a primary source.³⁹

Roberts' Work Among the Poor

For Roberts, a preferential option for the poor was no mere theory. He practiced it in costly ways—most dramatically perhaps in 1860 when, after being expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church (surely an experience of marginalization!), he sold his own house in Buffalo so he could minister to the poor. From the proceeds of the sale Roberts bought a theatre building in downtown Buffalo, though the transaction left him with a worrisome debt. Roberts' wife Ellen⁴⁰ describes the incident:

My husband felt we must get a place for worship in the heart of the city, where the gospel could be preached to the poor. He could see no way of doing it except he gave our home toward it. It was all we had. I looked the matter over. We had three

³⁹Roberts was also in occasional contact with Bishop Thomas A. Morris (1794-1874) who was senior M. E. bishop from 1858 on. In November, 1856, Roberts wrote Morris about the divisions in the Genesee Conference, making some of the points which later appeared in "New School Methodism." Morris himself in 1854 published a sermon entitled "The Privileges of the Poor" (also based on Mt. 11:5) in which he observed: "While the Gospel is to be preached 'to every creature'—while it is 'glad tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people,' let it be specially observed for the honor of our holy religion, that 'the poor have the Gospel preached to them.' . . . the Lord sends his choice favors to the poorest of his subjects." Morris goes on to affirm that the biblical text means "those poor in regard to temporal blessings," not just the spiritually poor (T. A. Morris, Sermon XVII, "The Privileges of the Poor," in Morris, *Sermons on Various Subjects*, Cincinnati: L. Swordstedt & A. Poe, Methodist Book Concern, 1854, 177, 178). See Matthew Simpson, ed., *Cyclopedia of Methodism*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1880), 630-31; Zahniser, 347-49.

⁴⁰Ellen Lois Stowe (1825-1908) married B. T. Roberts in 1849 in New York City where she had been living with her uncle, the Rev. George Lane, Methodist book agent from 1844 to 1852. Ellen was strongly influenced by the Lanes and also to some extent by Phoebe and Walter Palmer who, like the Lanes, attended the Allen Street M. E. Church. She was related to Calvin Stowe, husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe and (on her mother's side) to Judge Lane, founder of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati (Carpenter, *Ellen Lois Roberts*, 18, 28).

children. I thought of the way the disciples were led, at that marvelous outpouring of the Spirit, when they “sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need.” . . . Let those who have prayed long for blessings not received, begin to feed the poor, clothe the naked, and yield themselves and their substance to the Lord as if they meant it, and He will pour them out blessings that will measure beyond their desires and expectations.⁴¹

Two years later, while serving as the Free Methodist Church’s first general superintendent, Roberts opened a mission above a saloon in Buffalo’s notorious Five Points area where, he said, “almost every building . . . had a brothel and a bar.” Roberts wrote in *The Earnest Christian*, “To the young women who become converted we furnish a home in our family, until the way is opened for them to take care of themselves in a respectable manner.”⁴² Since Roberts was traveling much of this time in the interests of the expanding denomination, it appears that his wife Ellen provided the primary leadership at the Five Points mission. Roberts wrote to her from Spencerport on May 2, 1862: “Darling, you have a great work to do for the Lord, and I pray often for you that you may have all the grace you need. . . . Look after your mission and have the brethren get new seats.”⁴³

It appears that Roberts in fact saw his work in leading early Free Methodism as a form of preaching the gospel to the poor. About the time of the formation of the denomination he wrote that it had become

necessary to provide a humble shelter for ourselves and for such poor, wayfaring pilgrims as may wish to journey with us to heaven. We are very firm in the conviction that it is the will of the Lord that we should establish free churches—the seats to be forever free—where the gospel can be preached to the poor.... We have no wealth; no sympathy from powerful ecclesiastical or political or secret societies to help on the enter-

⁴¹Ellen Lois Roberts, “Give and Receive,” article in *The Earnest Christian*, quoted in Adella Carpenter, *Ellen Lois Roberts: Life and Writings* (Chicago: Woman’s Missionary Society, Free Methodist Church, 1926), 162-63. The Roberts had purchased a home in Buffalo several years earlier since the Niagara Street M. E. Church, to which Roberts was appointed, had no parsonage.

⁴²B. T. Roberts, “Mission Field,” *The Earnest Christian* (June 1862), 187; Marston, 236, 446; Benson Roberts, 217-19, 308; Zahniser, 208-10.

⁴³Quoted in Benson Roberts, 294.

prise; but all these against us, so that if we succeed, it must be by the blessings of heaven upon our feeble endeavors.⁴⁴

This concern for the poor was not unrelated to Roberts' educational work. Ellen Roberts noted that not long after the formation of the Free Methodist Church her husband "began to talk about a school, where poor boys and girls could be helped to an education."⁴⁵

Roberts as Economic Reformer

Roberts' theology and praxis were not confined to personal evangelism or rescue work or denomination building, however. He called for national economic reform, particularly in light of the disputed monetary question and the amassing of huge sums of capital and political influence by rich businessmen. His 1886 book *First Lessons on Money* is partly an explanation of basic monetary economics, partly a call for fundamental economic reform. His main concern was that "the people should see to it that their representatives in Congress pass laws in their interest, and not in favor of the moneyed class and rich corporations in the injury of community generally."⁴⁶ "Some of the views presented are in advance of their times; but we trust they will be seen to be sound," he wrote in the Preface.

In his analysis, Roberts drew upon two of the leading young reform economists of the day, Richard T. Ely and Francis A. Walker. Ely (1854-1943) was a professor at Johns Hopkins University (1881-92), where one of his students was Woodrow Wilson, and later at the University of Wisconsin. He led in the development of the "new economics," claiming economics was less a matter of fixed laws and more of cultural patterns and government policy. Sharply critical of laissez-faire capitalism, Ely argued that society was an interdependent organism in which the state should play a leading role for the benefit of all. Wise policies would lead eventually, he thought, to a cooperative commonwealth.

A committed Christian, Ely promoted the views of English Christian Socialists and called for the church to take the lead in social reform. "It is the mission of Christianity to bring to pass here a kingdom of righteousness," he wrote in 1889. His first influential book, *The Past and Present of Political Economy*, was published two years before Robert's book.⁴⁷ Ely

⁴⁴Quoted in Carpenter, 75.

⁴⁵Ibid., 178.

⁴⁶B. T. Roberts, *First Lessons on Money* (Rochester, NY: B. T. Roberts, 1886), 160.

⁴⁷*Dictionary of American Biography*, 23:248-51.

was later to play a key role in rise of the Social Gospel in America and thus constitutes a theological link between Roberts and the later Social Gospel. Robert Handy includes Ely with Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch as seminal figures in the movement, describing Ely as its “most influential lay exponent,” one who “played a conspicuous role in the shaping of the social gospel.”⁴⁸

Francis Walker’s 1878 book, *Money*, was another of Robert’s main sources. Walker (1840-1897) was the son of businessman and economist Amasa Walker, one of the founders of Oberlin College. The younger Walker became a leading economist and statistician. As chief of the U. S. Bureau of Statistics he reformed the bureau and directed the 1880 census. Influential in Europe, particularly England, Walker became “unquestionably the most prominent and the best known of American writers” on economics, according to an 1897 report. As president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1881 to 1897, he set the school on a solid basis and saw its enrollment triple. A reformer and critic of laissez-faire business practices, Walker led in the newer inductive, historical approach to economics.⁴⁹

In *First Lessons on Money* Roberts quotes Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* as well as Ely, Walker, and other writers. Noting the political influence of money, Roberts protests that money power “controls legislation until it becomes so oppressive that the people rise up against its control. It places men, simply because they are rich, in official positions for which they are totally unfitted.”⁵⁰ The \$308,000,000 currently tied up in government bonds should be released for industrial development, he argued. “The resources of this country, to a great extent, are yet undeveloped. There are plenty of men willing to work but no man hires them. The capitalist, who should set the unemployed to building and manning ships, and railroads, and working mines and farms and factories, spends at his office an hour or two a day examining securities, reckoning his interest, and cutting off his coupons.” Releasing capital for productive industry

⁴⁸Robert T. Handy, ed., *The Social Gospel in America 1870-1920: Gladden, Ely, Rauschenbusch* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 15, 173. Handy quotes John Everett: “There was probably no other man of the period who had as much influence on the economic thinking of parsons and the general religious public” (John R. Everett, *Religion in Economics: A Study of John Bates Clark, Richard T. Ely, Simon N. Patten* [New York, 1946], 16).

⁴⁹*Dictionary of American Biography*, 10:338-44.

⁵⁰Roberts, *First Lessons on Money*, 16.

“would make many homes comfortable that are now destitute. It would increase immensely the wealth of the country, by encouraging labor, the only source of wealth.”⁵¹

Roberts argued that property and business should be spread equitably among the populace for the the best interest of all. “Good order and general prosperity prevail in our cities in proportion as the business is divided up among the inhabitants,” he wrote. “The greater the proportion of men who work for others, the greater danger there is of riotous disturbances. It is as advantageous to the city, as it is to the country, to have the property and the business divided up among a large number of owners.”⁵²

Roberts did not expect total economic equality, but he did see the Old Testament economy, and particularly the Jubilee laws, as providing principles for economic life. He wrote:

It is impossible that there should be an equality of property among a people free to act and possessing an equality of rights. If an equal division of the property of the country were made among the people, there would be great difference in the amounts which different persons would possess in a year afterward. In the old Jewish republic, the greatest possible precautions were taken that each family should possess a competence. The land was divided among them. Every one had a farm, a homestead, in the country. If one was compelled to sell his inheritance, he could alienate it from his family for only fifty years at the longest. At the year of jubilee debts were cancelled and inheritances restored. Yet in their palmyest days they had their poor among them. But they had none, while the republic lasted, enormously rich, and probably none who suffered from poverty. All, while obedient to God, were in comfortable circumstances.⁵³

Roberts argued that “vast accumulations of fortune in the hands of a few” were detrimental and were bringing civil unrest. “All laws which specially favor the gaining and the holding of great fortunes should be changed,” he said.⁵⁴ He called for regulations on joint stock companies, stock speculation, and monopolies. It should be illegal, for example, for the owners of the New York Central Railroad to own any part of the Erie

⁵¹Ibid., 75-76.

⁵²Ibid., 122-23.

⁵³Ibid., 121-22.

⁵⁴Ibid., 127.

or the West Shore railroads. Similarly, laws of inheritance should be much more restrictive:

Our laws should make provision for the breaking up of great estates upon the death of the owners. The steady aim of our Government should be to afford to all, every just and proper facility for acquiring a moderate competence. To do this, the whole bent of our laws must be unfavorable to the acquisition of a vast amount of property by any one person, and to the handing of it down unbroken from generation to generation.⁵⁵

Roberts' book amounts to a fairly radical challenge to the dominant business practices of the day. Many of his proposals were, however, enacted into law over the next generation, including the nation's first anti-trust legislation. It does not appear that the book had much impact within Free Methodism.⁵⁶

Holiness and the Poor

B. T. Roberts and Free Methodism were in a broad sense part of the Holiness Movement within American Methodism. This movement was committed to the doctrine of entire sanctification as taught by John Wesley (and as interpreted by the leaders of the movement).⁵⁷ Roberts shared the concern with sanctification. Yet, not everyone in the Holiness Movement shared Roberts' particular concern with the poor. In general, early Free Methodism espoused a more "radical" understanding of entire sanctification, as well as a more radical commitment to the poor.

We make several observations about how Roberts understood "the poor" and the church's special mission to them, relating these to the doctrine of sanctification.

1. By "the poor," Roberts meant "the masses," particularly in distinction from "the rich" who were gaining increased political and economic

⁵⁵Ibid., 142.

⁵⁶See, however, Marston, 391-97. Roberts includes seven suggestions on "how to make money" in his book: (1) Do not aim at getting rich; (2) Be diligent in business; (3) Be careful about going into debt; (4) Never become responsible for the debts of others; (5) Maintain good habits; (6) Be willing to commence business on a small scale; (7) Be benevolent in the use of money. He concludes with Wesley's three rules on money.

⁵⁷See especially Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980), and Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1974).

power in his day. For Roberts, the poor constituted at once a moral and economic category. He did not speak of a middle class, but rather saw society as divided largely between rich and poor. His concern seems to have been with those who suffer most, and especially with the victims of political and economic injustice.

2. Roberts' concern with the poor was related to his economic interests and theories. His economics were a part of his theology, as his book, *First Lessons on Money*, makes clear. In this book he presupposes the interrelationship of economic and spiritual principles and argues that economic justice is a primary duty of government.

3. Roberts' emphasis on simplicity, sobriety, and plainness of dress also needs to be understood in light of his concern for the poor. As Donald Dayton comments:

Prohibition was urged in part because [drinking] was perceived to generate poverty and to oppress especially the poor. Simple dress was adopted not primarily for modesty or simplicity, but in an effort to make the poor feel comfortable in church if they could not afford fine clothes or jewelry—a consistent Free Methodist dresses down to go to church! Congregational singing and the banishment of musical instruments from worship was an effort to maintain a more populist style against the emerging cultivated tastes for a “higher class” of music represented by choirs and paid musicians.⁵⁸

As the accent on the poor faded, plain dress tended to develop into a legalism, a sort of mark of spirituality. Even so, in Free Methodism's first half-century it also signalled solidarity—solidarity internally with one another, first of all, but also solidarity with the poor. Perhaps it is this, more than anything else, that accounts for the remarkable chain of Free Methodist city missions and rescue homes that grew up just before and after the turn of the century. It was common “for even small Free Methodist congregations to sponsor rescue missions or homes for unwed mothers, hold street meetings, or, at least, circulate religious literature among the poor.”⁵⁹

For the first two or three generations Free Methodism was primarily a church of the poor, or at least of the lower middle class. In many a town

⁵⁸Dayton, “Reclaiming Our Roots,” 9.

⁵⁹Kostlevy, 66. Kostlevy details some of this work. See also Howard Snyder, “A Heritage of Caring: Free Methodist Social Ministry” (unpublished outline, 1992).

or smaller city its plain wood-frame church building was found on the “wrong” side of the tracks. Kostlevy notes:

Free Methodists were generally lower-middle-class property owners, although poor people did make up a sizeable part of the total Church membership. Among the poor within the Free Methodist congregations, one could frequently include the pastor. The 1906 religious census indicated that Free Methodist pastors, with an annual salary of \$370 were, along with Wesleyan Methodist pastors, Salvation Army officers, and the pastors of a number of predominantly African American churches, the lowest paid clergy in America.⁶⁰

In other words, Free Methodists continued to be, in fact, socioeconomically more a church of the poor than of the rich or the upper middle class. Douglas Strong suggests this as one reason for greater sensitivity to the poor: “Since holiness churches were comprised of the economically poor more often than the increasingly-bourgeois mainline Methodist churches, the holiness folks more easily embraced the causes and struggles of their lower class constituency.”⁶¹ Yet, theologically, Free Methodists gradually forgot Roberts’ specific mission to the poor.⁶²

4. Roberts’ views on wealth, poverty, and preaching to the poor are essentially those of John Wesley. He saw himself as a defender of historic Methodism as much as a reformer. His concern was to be Wesleyan, and in fact his writings contain many echoes of Wesley’s comments on preaching to the poor and his warnings about the dangers of riches.

Did Roberts or other early Free Methodists make any specific theological connection between entire sanctification and evangelizing the poor? Or do these two concerns run, in effect, on separate tracks?

I cannot find that Roberts makes an explicit theological connection between the two themes, other than to claim that both are essential to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Roberts’ basic posture was that the Methodist

⁶⁰Kostlevy, 56-57.

⁶¹Douglas M. Strong, “‘The Deliverance of God’s Oppressed Poor’: The Ambivalent Legacy of Nineteenth Century North American Perfectionist Social Reform” (unpublished Working Group paper, 1992 Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies), 3.

⁶²Free Methodist history may helpfully be schematized as the movement phase (1860-90), the sect phase (1890-1950), and the denomination phase (1950 to the present). These phases are fairly marked in the church’s ethos, self-understanding, institutions, leading personalities, and even in its statistics.

Church in his day was departing from historic Methodism, and that both the gospel for the poor and entire sanctification were essential parts of the Wesleyan message. Thus we might well push the question back to Wesley himself. While that is beyond the scope of this paper, my view is that Wesley grounded both themes in his theology of God's grace, in salvation which is "free for all and free in all." This, of course, is based in Wesley's understanding of the gospel as found in Scripture and in the practice and teaching of Jesus Christ.

The first answer, then, to the conjunction of sanctification and concern for the poor in B. T. Roberts is that this was the tradition Roberts inherited and was committed to maintain. This is the gospel which must be preached. One could, of course, argue that an inherent logic links Roberts' concern for the poor and entire sanctification. The link is christological: Entire sanctification makes the believer like Jesus Christ, doing his works—and Jesus preached the gospel to the poor. "An individual who is holy cannot consistently belong to a Church that despises the poor," Roberts wrote.⁶³ Yet neither Roberts nor other early Free Methodists specifically developed this connection.⁶⁴ Perhaps partly for this reason, it was perfectly possible for the denomination to continue to espouse the doctrine of entire sanctification without stressing the corresponding accent on the gospel to the poor. The accent on the poor could drop out without doing any apparent damage to the doctrine of entire sanctification. This is, in fact, what happened in Free Methodism, particularly after Roberts' death in 1893.

Clearly Roberts had a broader theological, reform, and evangelistic vision than did the Free Methodist church generally. Once the denomination was formed, much energy went into developing denominational structures and patterns. Roberts was severely overworked, and there were few if any other leaders in the denomination who fully shared his vision. Within thirty years, and particularly after 1890, the denomination devel-

⁶³B. T. Roberts, *Holiness Teachings* (North Chili, NY: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1893), 71.

⁶⁴The connection is certainly implicit, however, in Roberts' writings. For instance: "St. Paul says, 'Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.' If we have the spirit of Christ we shall do according to our opportunities and circumstances the work that Christ did. His work among men was teaching the ignorant the way of salvation, preaching the gospel to the poor, and relieving the distressed" (B. T. Roberts, "Preface," in Jane Dunning, *Brands from the Burning: An Account of a Work among the Sick and Destitute in Connection with Providence Mission, New York City* [Chicago: T. B. Arnold, 1881], iii).

oped into an inwardly-focused counterculture with a considerably lessened reform and evangelistic focus.⁶⁵ The disciplines of early Free Methodism developed into legalisms. As this happened, most of the concern with preaching the gospel to the poor either waned or was channeled into the emerging foreign mission enterprise, scattered missions and rescue homes, or into the work of the Pentecost Bands. These Bands left the denomination in 1895 and became an independent movement.⁶⁶

A possible criticism of Roberts' theology would be this failure to develop an essential link between preaching the gospel to the poor and sanctification—or to speak more generally, the failure to fully develop this side of his soteriology. His concern with both the poor and with holiness were soteriologically based. But the link between them was not clarified. Yet this may be an unfair critique since Roberts intended simply to affirm the Methodist tradition which he had inherited.

There is little evidence that many of Roberts' early Free Methodist colleagues stressed preaching the gospel to the poor to the extent that he did. Apparently this concern was assumed to some degree in early Free Methodism and in Roberts' circles within Methodism prior to 1860. But it appears that an explicit, self-conscious commitment to preach the gospel to the poor never penetrated deeply into Free Methodist self-understanding, and the concern seems to have waned following Roberts' death.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Free Methodist growth was rapid in the 1860-90 period, but slowed considerably after 1890. According to denominational statistics, the denomination more than tripled in size from 1870 to 1890 (growing from 6,684 to 22,154 members), but grew to only 34,135 members in 1910 and 40,943 in 1930.

⁶⁶The Pentecost Bands, begun by Vivian A. Dake, were an evangelistic and church planting movement within Free Methodism involving several hundred young men and women (women outnumbering men in a proportion of about two to one). After withdrawing from the denomination in 1895 the group was renamed the Missionary Bands of the World, and eventually united with the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the 1950s. See Howard A. Snyder, "Radical Holiness Evangelism: Vivian A. Dake and the Pentecost Bands," paper presented at a conference of the Wesleyan-Holiness Studies Project, Asbury Theological Seminary, February, 1990.

⁶⁷This question deserves further research, however. It would require a thorough search of *The Earnest Christian* up to the time it ceased publication, and particularly of *The Free Methodist* (now continued as *Light and Life* magazine), as well as the fairly voluminous Free Methodist missionary and biographical literature. M'Geary's *Outline History* of the denomination says nothing specifically about the gospel to the poor and very little about the issue of pew rental, though it gives considerable attention to the secret society issue and some to abolitionism. "The real issue was between worldliness and formality on the one hand and a vital, Spirit-baptized type of religion on the other" (John S. M'Geary, *The Free Methodist Church: A Brief Outline History of its Origin and Development*, 3rd ed., Chicago: W. B. Rose, 1908, 1910, 20).

One who certainly did share Roberts' passion for the poor was the colorful "lay" evangelist, John Wesley Redfield. Redfield, who in many respects should be viewed as the co-founder of Free Methodism, had at least as great an impact on Roberts as did Stephen Olin. Many of the first Free Methodist churches sprang up in places where Redfield had held revivals in the late 1850s. Redfield shared many of Roberts' convictions, including abolitionism, simplicity, and the right of women to preach.⁶⁸ His impact on Free Methodism doubtlessly would have been much greater had he not died in 1863, at the age of fifty-three. Redfield's biographer, J. G. Terrill, who was converted under Redfield, notes: "He labored to bring all to the gospel level by noticing the poor, and especially the colored poor."⁶⁹ On one occasion in Cleveland Redfield helped an escaped slave flee across Lake Erie into Canada via the Underground Railroad. Redfield's view of this incident is instructive: "What had I to do with protecting my own freedom and rights when there stood my suffering Jesus in the person of this poor outcast. I seemed to hear his voice ringing in my ears, 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brothers you have done it unto me.'"⁷⁰

From early on in the history of Free Methodism, however, one senses a certain tension between mission to the poor and to "all classes." A. A. Phelps, for example, in an early article in *The Earnest Christian* speaks of the new denomination's being raised up "to seek the salvation of all classes," opening its doors "alike for the rich and the poor."⁷¹ It is instructive that a denominational pamphlet published in 1927, entitled *The WHAT and the WHY of Free Methodism*, shifts the emphasis from the poor to all people. The pamphlet asks: "What did the leaders of the church in its beginning conceive to be the mission of the Free Methodist Church?" Claiming to base its answer on "articles published in the *Earnest Christian* for 1860," the pamphlet states:

⁶⁸In a letter to Ellen Roberts in early 1860 Redfield said he was expecting a great revival and was "sure that God will open this era by means and instrumentalities quite out of the old stereotyped forms. Among these instrumentalities I believe woman is to take a very prominent part" (ibid., 438).

⁶⁹Joseph Goodwin Terrill, *The Life of Rev. John Wesley Redfield, M.D.* (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1889, 1912), 259.

⁷⁰Ibid., 71.

⁷¹A. A. Phelps, "Mission of the Free Methodist Church," *The Earnest Christian* (February, 1861), 48.

. . . the mission of the Free Methodist Church, negatively considered, was not to

1. Aim at numerical enlargement.
2. Not one of ecclesiastical rivalry.
3. Not comprehended in the idea of carnal warfare.

On the contrary, it was to

1. Exemplify an earnest, practical, saving Christianity among its own membership.
2. To publish an unmutilated gospel to others.
3. To seek the salvation of all classes.
4. Specifically, “to spread scriptural holiness over these lands.”⁷²

Intentionally or not, the specific emphasis on the poor drops out—even at a time when Free Methodists still clustered toward the lower end of the socioeconomic scale and there were very few wealthy persons among them.

The denominational mission statement adopted about 1980 reads: “The mission of the Free Methodist Church is to make known to people everywhere God’s call to wholeness through forgiveness and holiness in Jesus Christ, and to invite into membership and to equip for ministry all who respond in faith.”⁷³ Here the words “people everywhere” replace the earlier focus on the poor. In 1974 the original statement, which included reference to the mission of preaching the gospel to the poor, was consigned to an historical section at the back of the *Book of Discipline* and replaced by a new introductory section.

The Charism of Early Free Methodism

What does the concern with preaching the gospel to the poor suggest about the self-identity and mission of early Free Methodism?

The Second Vatican Council asked Catholic religious orders to seek renewal by studying the charism of their founders. The “Apostolic Exhor-

⁷²Executive Committee of the Free Methodist Church, *The WHAT and the WHY of Free Methodism* (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1927), 30-31. The 32-page pamphlet begins with sections reprinted from the Free Methodist *Discipline*, including the introductory section which affirms “preaching Gospel to the poor.” Though it claims this statement of mission comes from articles in *The Earnest Christian* in 1860, these points come directly from Phelps’ 1861 article, not from Roberts. By “an unmutilated Gospel” Phelps meant, he said, “the *anti-slavery* Gospel,” among other things.

⁷³*Yearbook 1988*, Free Methodist Church (Winona Lake, IN: Free Methodist World Headquarters, 1988), 5.

tation on the Renewal of Religious Life” urged members of religious orders “to reawaken hearts to truth and to divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders who were raised up by God within his Church.” Thus religious orders are “to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity.” Herein lies “one of the principles for the present renewal and one of the most secure criteria for judging what each institute should undertake,” according to Vatican II.⁷⁴

In the case of Free Methodism, the question would be whether the denomination (whose leaders have sometimes conceived it as an “order” within the larger church) has or had a “charism” to preach the gospel to the poor. Early Free Methodists announced to the world that the new denomination’s calling was to preach the gospel to the poor and to maintain the Bible standard of Christianity. The second part of this twofold mission was understood to include the first. Biblical Christianity is that expression of the gospel which preaches good news to the poor.

Just as many religious and social movements tend over time to depart from their original sense of calling, so did Free Methodism. Meanwhile, others today, ranging from liberation theologians to some within the Methodist traditions, call for a new “preferential option” for the poor. It remains to be seen whether this early charism of Free Methodism will experience a substantial rediscovery in the late 1990s and beyond.

But this raises a more basic question. Can preaching the gospel to the poor ever be anything less than the charism of the gospel itself?—and therefore of the church, in all its branches? Liberation theology insists it cannot, and this was certainly the position of Olin and Roberts. It seems, in fact, to have been the position of Jesus Christ. God’s grace (*charis*) in Jesus Christ is good news for the poor. A church which does not preach the gospel to the poor is apostate, not apostolic.

If the Free Methodist Church has a *particular* charism, it probably lies in the combination of preaching the gospel to the poor *and* maintaining “the Bible standard of Christianity” with its specifically Wesleyan accents of prevenient, converting, and sanctifying grace, the image of God, the atonement as moral, social, and cosmic healing, and the church as accountable, interdependent community—all grounded in earnest love for God and all people.

⁷⁴“Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life,” ¶ 11, in Austin P. Flannery, ed., *Documents of Vatican II* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 685.

RACE RELATIONS AND THE AMERICAN HOLINESS MOVEMENT

by

James Earl Massey

Some years ago I was privileged to take part in a special conference of Evangelicals, assigned to report about the contributions of African Americans to Evangelicalism—that perennially interesting and mosaic-like spiritual movement. It was not difficult to trace and comment on those contributions because, quite early in the history of the black presence in this land, blacks received the gospel of Christ with openness. They rigorously tested and proved its viability, and began passing on the evangelical witness with concern, creativity, and gusto.

As an African-American Christian, I felt an understandable pride as I handled my assignment.¹ The pride had to do with the three particular contributions I sought to highlight at the time. One was the widespread development of evangelical churches within the African American grouping; a second was the continuing influence on the Evangelical music scene of the black church tradition of celebrative and self-expressive worship music; and the third contribution was the courageously prophetic witness African-American believers have steadily made in calling white believers to become more socially responsible in their concern to evangelize. The 1970s had just ended, and that decade was a pregnant period of years during which Evangelical Christianity had grown faster in America

¹For a published report, see James Earl Massey, “The Black Contribution to Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicalism: Surviving Its Success*, edited by David A. Fraser (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 50-58.

than any other religious movement, with a grouping that then numbered more than forty million. Yes, I felt a distinct pride in reporting about how African-American believers had responded to the gospel, and had eagerly busied themselves in passing on the Evangelical heritage with ready faith, steady creativity, and acknowledged contagion.

Sensitizing Evangelicals

Among the more than forty million reported at that time as comprising Evangelical Christianity in America were many African-American believers. The membership of most of these was in black evangelical churches which gave them a spiritual home, a meaningful social setting, and a political base from which to engage the contrary forces and patterns of a racist society. Their history of organized separateness from white churches in groupings designated as “African Methodist” or “African Baptist,” etc., was due, in the main, to the problematic course of Evangelical Protestantism under the influence of those contrary forces and patterns in a racially partitioned society.²

Efforts to sensitize the evangelical conscience about racism and social implications of the faith have been as prolonged, persistent, and necessary as those to stimulate the national conscience. It is a matter of fact, and a matter for shame, that major changes regarding race relations and social action began taking place earlier on the social scene in America than they did within the churches of Evangelical Protestantism. To be sure, some change in evangelical social views was stimulated by Carl F. H. Henry since 1956 through his editorial writings in *Christianity Today* magazine and in 1964 through his pacesetting book *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*. Also in 1968 Sherwood Wirt called attention in his *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical* to several issues needing a decisively Christian response from evangelicals.³ But one must not overlook the fact that Carl Henry and Sherwood Wirt, among others, were writing and publishing their views to the church during the era of the Civil Rights

²Among the myriad of studies about this, see Albert J. Raboteau, “The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism: The Meaning of Slavery,” in Leonard I. Sweet, editor, *The Evangelical Tradition in America* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City: Anchor Press, Doubleday, Inc., 1973).

³See Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964); Sherwood Wirt, *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968).

Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Those were the strategic and stressful decades when the American social scene was being impacted by the charismatic presence of vocal and socially active African American leaders who unrelentingly kept calling the nation to make its “liberty and justice for all” motto a lived reality for all its citizens.

As for efforts to sensitize Evangelical believers for greater social and racial openness, I am reminded of something that happened during the first World Congress on Evangelism, a convention that brought evangelical leaders from around the world to Berlin, Germany, for a ten-day gathering in November, 1966. During the convention, those of us who were delegates heard many position papers which treated aspects of the Congress theme, “One Race, One Gospel, One Task.” But, as the Congress continued across those ten days, some of us who were African American noticed that no attention had been devoted in any of the position papers to the first part of the theme, “One Race.” Nor had any paper on that aspect been distributed to us for a private reading, as had some topics related to other aspects of the general theme. The Congress delegates had been drawn together from across the world, literally, and the vast assemblage represented the largest ecumenical and evangelical gathering of the Church since Pentecost in A.D. 33. Even though it reflected a great diversity of nationalities, geographical locations, and color distinctions, no major statement about the oneness of the human race had been given in any plenary session!

A few of us African-American delegates discussed this omission among ourselves and finally gained audience with Carl F. H. Henry, the Congress Chairman, to voice to him our question about this evident gap in planning. Interestingly, we later learned that some delegates from India, Africa, and South America had also noticed the omission. Chairman Henry listened to us with openness, and soon acknowledged to us that the planning committee had taken the “One Race” aspect of the general theme as a given, and therefore had not assigned anyone to treat it! Aware now of the problem as we had voiced it, he apologized on behalf of the planning committee and asked if we would be willing to work at developing a summary statement about “One Race” which could be included in the final report scheduled to be distributed to the world press as an outcome of the Congress. Although it was rather late in the day for anything like a major paper on the matter, six of us agreed to help develop such a statement.

Jimmy McDonald, Howard O. Jones, Bob Harrison, Ralph Bell, Louis Johnson, and I worked into the late hours of that night. We man-

aged to finish a clearly focused statement on race. Our statement underscored human equality as a biblical principle rooted in the oneness of the human family under God as Creator. We stressed the imperative of *agape* love in our dealings with all humans, and the need to reject racial and national barriers which forbid full fellowship and cooperative ministry in the Church. As it turned out, the section the six of us prepared about the world-wide problem of racism was undoubtedly the strongest statement evangelicals had ever made on the subject until that time.⁴ It was a basic statement that declared our biblically informed understanding about racism as an unjust attitude, a social evil, and a barrier to cooperative ministry as believers. Within another decade, by 1977, Evangelical Christianity in America would comprise a mosaic-like grouping of more than forty million members,⁵ but its influence as a leader in fostering racial understanding and social harmony in the land would, sad to say, still remain negligible.

Relations Within the American Holiness Movement

The story has not been very different with the churches which comprise what I refer to here as the American Holiness Movement. This movement is comprised of those church groups with a history of an emphasis on Christian holiness and with some historical relation to the transmission of this tradition through holiness associations and conventions. In fact, in tracing the patterned story of the Holiness Movement in America one will discover that the number of blacks involved in its life and witness has been even more disturbingly meager than the number of blacks in the Evangelical Movement.

A significant number of black evangelical leaders have had ministries which involved them steadily in both black and white settings throughout Evangelicalism. They comprise a very distinct group whose spiritual concerns and emphases are rooted in the theology and cultus of

⁴The full text of the Congress Statement was published in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, Volume I, Edited by Carl F. H. Henry and Stanley Mooneyham (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967), 5-7. Personal reports about the Congress were published in books written by two persons from among the six who prepared the statement about race. See Bob Harrison, with Jim Montgomery, *When God Was Black* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 145-146; James Earl Massey, *Concerning Christian Unity* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1979), 121-126.

⁵See the feature story in *Time Magazine*, December 26, 1977, 52-58.

the Bible school and biblical seminary movement which trained them. Although they have often differed with white evangelicals over how to answer certain social questions, and found it necessary to identify and sometimes redefine the issues for which white definitions were judged inadequate, they nevertheless have been respected and continued to serve as bridgebuilders between the races.⁶ The number of such leaders within the American Holiness Movement is considerably smaller. Let me trace the reason or reasons why I believe this has been, and continues to be so.

In my judgment, the black presence in the American Holiness Movement has been comparatively slight because this movement's major concerns have not seemed as appealing or germane to black believers as has the basic salvation emphasis articulated by the Evangelical Movement. Although it is clear that the Scriptures call for a dedicated life that honors God and the divine will—a call that is indeed known and heralded in the black churches, African Americans have been “grabbed” by other currents of truth and meaning in the Scriptures. One in particular is that strong and steady current in Old Testament thought that accents the importance of social regard and race uplift. When African-American Christians think and witness about renewal and restoration, or about Christian unity, they also envision what these should mean for those who have been victimized by a racist system. In addition, they reason that any personal quest for spiritual depth or closeness to God must inevitably include some concern for bettering the social process in America.

Given America's racist environment, one of the predominant issues with which African-American believers and their churches have been concerned is social survival. Along with the biblical message about salvation through faith in Jesus, they have been encouraged by the clarifying anthropology taught in the Scriptures, that validating message about all humans being children of God. Given our set of social circumstances in

⁶On this, see William H. Bentley, “Black Believers in the Black Community,” in *The Evangelicals*, edited by David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975); William H. Bentley, *National Black Evangelical Association: Reflections on the Evolution of a Concept of Ministry* (Chicago: 1979). See also Tom Skinner, *Black and Free* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968); William E. Pannell, *My Friend, the Enemy* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Inc., 1968); William E. Pannell, *The Coming Race Wars? A Cry for Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993); Howard O. Jones, *White Questions to a Black Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975); Samuel G. Hines, with Joe Allison, *Experience the Power* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1996).

the chequered course of American history, the concern of black believers has been for salvation and survival, with the social implications of the faith being viewed as far more germane than an emphasis on a strictly personal pietistic inwardness. This is not to say that a concern for the deeper life is neglected; it is rather to say that the social and the spiritual are viewed in a more related fashion by black believers than by most proponents of the Holiness tradition.⁷

The concern for freedom, social equality, and general race uplift has so absorbed the energies of black church leaders in particular and black churches in general that sometimes little energy has remained for much else. To sense the extent to which this has been the case, one need only explore the various histories of the black denominations, on the one hand, and the studies which report about black membership in predominately white denominations, on the other.⁸

By and large, African-American believers tend to honor and promote what Peter J. Paris has aptly described as “the black Christian tradition.” As Paris has explained it:

The tradition that has always been normative for the black churches and the black community is not the so-called Western Christian tradition per se, although this tradition is an important source for blacks. More accurately, the normative tradition for blacks is that tradition governed by the principle of nonracism which we call the black Christian tradition. The fundamental principle of the black Christian tradition is depicted most adequately in the biblical doctrine of the parent-hood of God and the kinship of all peoples—which is a version of the traditional sexist expression “the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men.”⁹

⁷This criticism does not apply to those proponents of Holiness who showed such social concern as to seek societal reform during the mid-nineteenth century. On this, see Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in the Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957).

⁸For examples, see the rather broad treatment of the major black Baptist groups in Leroy Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985), esp. ch. 2, 41-106, in which he details how the socio-political needs of blacks spawned the various conventions which reflect and promote the black Baptist tradition. See also James Melvin Washington, *Frustrated Fellowship: The Black Baptist Quest for Social Power* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986).

⁹Peter Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 10.

In contrast with the emphases highlighted in the Evangelical and Holiness traditions, *this* is the emphatic tradition that became institutionalized in the African-American churches.

To be sure, African American interest in revivalistic religion and a depth relationship with God has not been lacking, as those who have experienced a black worship service can readily testify. Nevertheless, blacks have never accented personal piety at the expense of a needed accent on the social meaning of a religious experience. The development of higher Christian graces, or a “closer walk with God” as it is popularly termed, continues as a concern and advisement among black evangelicals; but the perfectionist emphasis that prevailed in holiness circles in the nineteenth century did not gain as wide an appeal among blacks as among whites. For one thing, Christian perfectionism seemed “too Methodist-like” to those who were Baptist by orientation. For another, it seemed too unattainable to those who did not hear a clear enough explanation about the doctrine.

African-American believers always have insisted that true religion is essentially experiential. It has not been as necessary to blacks that there be a refined doctrinal system to expound this belief. Blacks were in tune with American revivalism at an early point in its development, and benefited greatly from its impacting influences, but they did not get as involved as whites in that wing of the American Holiness Movement which blended Pietism and Wesleyan perfectionism.¹⁰

The Church of God Movement (Anderson)

The following are holiness-teaching denominations which have had primary and extended contact with African Americans in the course of their history and witnessing in America: The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, The Church of the Nazarene, The Pilgrim Holiness Church, The Holiness Christian Church, The Salvation Army, and the Church of God (Anderson, IN.). These groups are also among the larger Holiness bodies registered in the nation. Although the separate history of each of these groups has not always reflected the best social arrangement with the blacks who became members in them, it is of interest to report that their black members did not break away from these groups to form independent organizations, as did those blacks who experienced segrega-

¹⁰On this blending of Pietism, revivalism, and Wesleyan perfectionism, see Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1980), esp. 3-10, 18-63.

tion in the Methodist Church, for example.¹¹ Perhaps among the reasons for their not breaking away might be the fact that most of the named groups have had so few black members in comparison with their white majorities.

A word is in order regarding the history of some of these groups in relating to African Americans. The Church of the Nazarene put forth well-planned and organized efforts during the 1940s to promote holiness evangelism among African Americans, but those efforts yielded rather meager results. In fact, during the total history of this group's contact with African Americans from the late nineteenth century to the early 1980s, there were never more than twelve black ministers associated with it.¹² The Salvation Army has not fared much better in attempts to promote the holiness theme among African Americans. Booker T. Washington, the noted Tuskegee educator and national race leader, was so impressed by the rich history of The Salvation Army in social outreach and group openness that in 1896 he wrote: "I have always had the greatest respect for the work of the Salvation Army, especially because I had noted that it draws no color line in religion."¹³ And yet, despite such an endorsement from a leading black educator and race statesman, The Salvation Army never experienced widespread success in gaining African American members or in holding them.

¹¹The experience of segregation within the Methodist Church led to the formation by blacks of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. On the origins of the A.M.E. Church, see Harry V. Richardson, *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as It Developed Among Blacks in America* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), esp. 76-116. On the origins of the A.M.E.Z. Church, see Richardson, 117-147, and William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (Charlotte: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, 1974).

¹²See W. T. Purkiser, *Called Unto Holiness*, Vol. 2, *The Second Twenty-Five Years, 1933-58* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1983), esp. 197-200. For two additional and earlier reports regarding efforts by The Church of the Nazarene to evangelize blacks, see Raymond W. Hurn, *Mission Possible: A Study of the Mission of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1973), esp. 84-85. See also Roger Eugene Bowman, *Color Us Christian: The Story of the Church of the Nazarene Among America's Blacks* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1975).

¹³Quoted by Edward H. McKinley, in his book, *Marching to Glory: The History of the Salvation Army in the United States of America, 1880-1980* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), see 53, note 41. For the story of Salvation Army efforts to win blacks, see 50-53, 150-151, 183-184, and 196-201.

Among those holiness-teaching groups that have had a rather prolonged contact with African Americans, the one that has been the most fruitful is the Church of God (Anderson, IN). In 1968 there was in this body a black membership of 16,703 within a total United States membership listing of 144,243. By 1974 the number of African American members had increased to nearly 20,000 among a total reported membership of 160,198. In 1980 the Church of God (Anderson) listed 472 predominantly black congregations, with 27,628 black members among a total membership in the United States of 179,137. These figures show a pattern of steady relationship between African Americans and the larger body of Church of God members in the United States and an instructive growth pattern among African Americans associated with the Church of God.

It is most enlightening to compare the race membership percentage in this holiness-teaching group with those percentages reflected within the main-line majority-white denominations, especially during the late 1970s when American Baptists reported a 12% black membership, the Episcopal Church 5%, the United Church of Christ 4.3%, the Disciples of Christ 3.8%, the United Methodist Church 3.5%, the United Presbyterian Church 2.7%, the Lutheran Church in America 1.7%, and the Southern Baptists a meager 1.0%.

African Americans are by far the largest ethnic minority within the Church of God (Anderson). In 1989, of 199,786 members listed for the Church of God in the United States, 37,435 were African Americans. The reason for this significant percentage is historical, theological, and social. It is due in no small measure to the appealing and promising unity ideal that is at the heart of the Church of God message; it is an ideal that has from this movement's beginning in 1880 been allied in the church's message and practices with the call to scriptural holiness. As church historian John W. V. Smith has explained it: "Many church groups avoided making a strong interracial stance. The Church of God reformation's message of unity of all believers, however, made a very strong interracial position inherent in the message itself."¹⁴

The message voiced by the Church of God about the unity of believers appealed strongly to African Americans who were otherwise restricted and segregated in a racist society. The message of unity provided promise for a needed affirmation of self-worth, on the one hand, and for needed

¹⁴John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity: A Centennial History of the Church of God* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1980), 162.

social togetherness, on the other. Unlike other church groups whose doctrinal positions accented non-relational themes, the central theme of the Church of God was, and remains, a relational one: believers belong together, united by love. Although social relations within the Church of God have witnessed the same problems and stresses all other church bodies have faced, the challenge of the biblical insistence on unity has always been present in the group's heritage and message as a prodding factor toward freeing its life from racist concerns in the national environment and toward reform of its life as people of God called to practice holiness. To be sure, evidences that some persons within its congregations have yielded to prevailing social patterns of race distancing and polarization can be documented in the history of the Church of God just as in the history of other church groups in America. Nevertheless, the unity ideal central to its heritage and reason for being has never allowed such lapses from the ideal to stand unchallenged.¹⁵

The two worlds of race have not yet disappeared from the Church of God, but some significant strides have been made in recent years which show an increased openness and intent to fulfill this movement's unity ideal. Among the many available evidences of this, the following will sufficiently illustrate this openness and intentionality. Since the early 1970s, several African Americans have served in full-time posts as staff persons for the major boards and general agencies of the Church of God. In 1988, an African American was elected by the General Assembly of the Church to serve as the body's executive secretary, a post that is the highest elective office within the church. Reelected following his first term, this leader continues to serve with distinction and wide regard. In June, 1989, the General Assembly of the church ratified an African-American educator, a former pastor within the group, to be dean of the church's graduate School of Theology. For many years in the recent past, the chair of the Board of Trustees of Anderson University, this movement's largest school, was a gifted black pastor and campus alumnus.

Like other church communions with a history within the American Holiness Movement, the Church of God (Anderson) is not yet perfected. It stands, along with these and multitudinous other religious bodies in

¹⁵For more about the history of race relations in the Church of God, see John W. V. Smith, *op. cit.*, esp. 161-169, 385, 389, and 403-406; David A. Telfer, *Red & Yellow, Black & White & Brown: Home Missions in the Church of God (Anderson: Warner Press, 1981)*, esp. 42-53. See also James Earl Massey, *African Americans and the Church of God: Aspects of A Social History* (forthcoming).

America, between the alternatives of advance and decay, fulfillment and failure, witness and waywardness, significance and selfishness. The twin concerns of holiness and unity beckon us to full openness and obedience to our reason for being. If our obedience is full, and if our experience of holiness is thoroughgoing, then renewal will be the result—and our continuing witness may yet prove convincing to many others. May it be so, to the good of all whose lives we touch, to the good of this socially fractured nation, to a divided Christendom that needs our witnessing presence, and to the greater glory of God.

FOUNDATIONS FOR RESPONDING TO RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

by

Dean Flemming

A context of religious pluralism is nothing new to the church. The apostolic community proclaimed the finality of Jesus Christ within a Greco-Roman world of “many gods and many lords” (1 Cor. 8:5). Christians in the Two- Thirds world have had to grapple with the reality of religious pluralism for centuries. In Asia, for example, where Christianity is in most cases a minority religion—and a relative latecomer at that—the issue cannot be ignored. In the West, however, it is only in the relatively recent past that Christians have come to recognize religious pluralism as a major challenge to the church.¹

At least two major developments have “forced the issue” for Western Christians. The first is the phenomenon of “globalization.” Advancements in communications, international travel and radical demographic changes have obliged Christians in the West to confront the reality of the world’s religions on a personal level.² Westerners are increasingly likely to have a

¹Max Warren observes that “The Accident of Europe’s isolation in the Middle Ages, and then its successful expansion in the following centuries, obscured the realities of religious pluralism from most Christians of the West” (*I Believe in the Great Commission*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, 153).

²For example, as of 1991 there were approximately six million Muslims in the United States, which makes the Islamic faith larger than most Protestant denominations (*Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1991, 85).

Muslim or Hindu colleague, classmate, or next-door neighbor. At the same time, the center of gravity for Christianity has shifted dramatically from the North and West to the South and East, so that it is no longer possible to determine what constitutes the so-called “Christian world.”

A second development arising from modernity in the West is that increasingly the ideology of pluralism has become virtually sacrosanct.³ In a “tolerant” age, religion becomes something private and compartmentalized. Each individual is free to choose whatever god is judged most convenient. In the marketplace of beliefs and religious claims, the customer is king. This pluralistic mentality has dominated much of recent scholarly discussion of the relationship between Christianity and the world religions and has tended to set the agenda for approaching the issue.⁴ Any claims for Christian uniqueness are considered to be carry-overs of “triumphalism” or “imperialism.” Since all religious truth is held to be relative and culturally conditioned, no one religion can claim to be more valid than any other.⁵

Evangelical Christians have been relatively slow to grapple with the theological issues raised by the reality of religious pluralism. Many have seemed content to follow the traditional understandings that regard other religions simply as “demonic delusions” or merely as “human efforts to find the truth.” It is automatically assumed that all of their adherents are

³See Os Guinness, “The Impact of Modernization,” in ed. J. D. Douglas, *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1990), 286.

⁴The literature on the subject of religious pluralism is extensive. Note especially J. Hick and P. F. Knitter, eds. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988); P. F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985); G. Richards, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London: Routledge, 1989); D. G. Dawe and J. B. Carman, eds., *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978); G. F. Anderson and T. F. Stransky, eds., *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983); *Mission Trends No. 5: Faith Meets Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981); *International Review of Mission* 77 (July, 1988); H. Cox, *Many Mansions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); G. D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

⁵For a critique of this position, see esp. G. D'Costa, ed., *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990); L. Newbingin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); “Religious Pluralism and the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13 (April, 1989), 50-54; H. Netland, “Exclusivism, Tolerance, and Truth,” *Missiology* 15 (April, 1987), 77-95.

destined for eternal perdition. Others have concentrated on developing strategies for evangelizing people of other faiths without doing the difficult thinking that provides a coherent biblical and theological framework for those efforts. Yet, can we be content simply to disagree with the answers that others give to these issues without attempting to offer a clear biblical-theological analysis as an alternative?

It is encouraging that evangelical thinkers have begun to reflect more seriously on the challenge of religious pluralism. This is evidenced by the appearance of a number of recent studies on the subject.⁶ Much of the discussion has focused on the perennial question of the fate of the unevangelized. Evangelicals have tended to separate into the traditional “restrictivist” and the more open “inclusivist” camps.⁷ Each uses Scripture to back its claims. Wesleyans have commonly—although not universally—been sympathetic to an “inclusivist” position that allows the possibility of salvation among the unevangelized and a more open attitude toward the role of other religions in God’s dealings with humankind.⁸ John Wesley

⁶See, e.g., W. V. Crockett and J. G. Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); H. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); C. H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religious Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); A. D. Clarke and B. W. Winter, eds., *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); J. Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); *Proceedings of the Wheaton Theology Conference: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism: An Evangelical Analysis and Response* (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton Theology Conference, 1992); K. Gnanakan, *The Pluralistic Predicament* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1992).

⁷The terms are used by J. Sanders, *No Other Name*. According to Sanders, “restrictivists” hold that access to salvation is limited to those who hear the preaching of the gospel (4, 37), while “inclusivists” “affirm the particularity and finality of salvation only in Christ but deny that knowledge of this work is necessary for salvation” (215); cf. W. Gary Phillips, “Evangelicals and Pluralism: Current Options,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 64:3 (1992), 229-244; C. Pinnock, *Wideness*, 14f. Among current evangelical thinkers, Sanders and Pinnock are undoubtedly the most articulate spokespersons for the “inclusivist” position. Evangelical inclusivism is to be distinguished from broader definitions of “inclusivism” which hold that Christ is “the norm that brings about salvation through all religions,” K. Gnanakan, *Predicament*, 71.

⁸E.g., H. R. Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1988), 166ff.; F. T. Cunningham, “Christ, the Word, The Light and the Message: A Wesleyan Reflection on the World Mission,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (January, 1991), 104-110.

(particularly the mature Wesley) is often cited, no doubt accurately, as a forerunner of this view.⁹ Yet we must ask whether the position of Wesley and the new evangelical “inclusivists” is consistent with the overall teaching of Scripture, particularly in light of recent defenses of the restrictivist position.¹⁰

In order to answer this question it is necessary to place the specific issue of the destiny of the unevangelized within the broader context of the Bible’s attitude toward other religions. One of the clear needs in the current debate is a solid exegetical and biblical theological framework to guide our approach to these issues. While other factors should provide input into the task of formulating an appropriate response to religious pluralism, the perspective of Scripture is surely foundational.¹¹ This study will attempt to survey the biblical foundations for an appropriate Wesleyan response to the challenge of religious pluralism.

The Bible And Religions

A. Old Testament. Any attempt to find a solution to the problem posed by religious pluralism must take into account the total biblical-theological witness, rather than focus simply on the teachings of isolated texts. In the Old Testament we find a clear tension between the universal and the particular in God’s dealings with humankind. Genesis 1-11 begin with a universal perspective, which sees God as the Creator who desires that all people enter into a relationship of holy love with him. After the fall, God continues to deal with all people in both judgment and redemption and establishes a covenant with Noah that embraces the whole of humanity.

Then the perspective narrows. The Babel story in Genesis 11 makes it clear that the entire human family has refused to worship its Creator. In

⁹For an excellent study of the development of Wesley’s thought on the question, see R. L. Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation Through Other Religions,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring-Fall 1992), 7-29; see also “Clark Pinnock on World Religions: Evangelical Precedents?,” in *Proceedings of the Wheaton Theology Conference*, 208-215; *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), esp. 32-34; cf. J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 249-251; C. Pinnock, *Wideness*, 158.

¹⁰See especially the collection of essays in *Through No Fault of Their Own?*, eds. W. V. Crockett and J. G. Sigountos, the majority of which follow a more restrictivist approach to the question of the fate of the unevangelized.

¹¹Wesleyans would generally view human experience, a rigorous analysis of the arguments (reason), and the insights of Christian tradition as important considerations.

response to universal rebellion and idolatry, God chooses a single individual, Abraham, and through him initiates a covenant relationship with his own people Israel. The so-called “scandal of particularity” has begun. Yet, in spite of the fact that this is the dominant emphasis from this point on in the Old Testament history of salvation, God uses the particular in order to accomplish his universal purposes. God chooses a people, not for their own sake, but so that through them “all peoples on earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

In pre-exilic times, Israel continually struggled with the tendency toward idolatry and pluralism in the face of other religions in the surrounding cultures.¹² The recurring failures and declines in both the period of the judges and the monarchy are due in great measure to the attraction of other deities in a pluralistic environment. In contrast, a theme of exclusivism of worship emerges which is characteristic of the Old Testament’s radical monotheism. For example, Yahweh brings judgment on the gods of Egypt (Num. 33:4). The people are warned not to follow the detestable religious practices of the Canaanites which the Lord hates (Deut. 12:31). The Psalmist affirms that “all the gods of the nations are idols” (96:5). The prophets repeatedly mock the worship of false gods made with human hands (e.g., Isa. 40:19-20; 44:9ff.; Jer. 10:1-16; 51:17-18; cf. 1 Kings 18:27ff). Idolaters are portrayed as blinded and deceived (Isa. 44:18, 20; cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). In general we find a negative evaluation of human religions and worship. This is a natural corollary of the dominant emphasis in the Old Testament on God’s sovereign choice of Israel and the exclusive allegiance to Yahweh demanded by the covenant relationship.

Yet, there is another side to the picture, one in which God’s Self-revelation is not limited to the community of Israel.¹³ Here and there throughout the story of God’s dealings with the chosen people, we find “God-fearing” Gentiles who have responded to God independent of God’s covenant with Israel. One notable case is the somewhat mysterious figure of the Canaanite priest Melchizedek, who is called “a priest of God Most High” (*El Elyon*) and blesses Abraham in the name of “God Most High,

¹²See esp. Richard S. Hess, “Yahweh and His Asherah? Epigraphic Evidence for Religious Pluralism in Old Testament Times,” in *One God, One Lord*, 5-42.

¹³See C. Chapman, “The Challenge of Other Religions,” in *Proclaim Christ Until He Comes*, 180; B. Nicholls, “The Exclusiveness and Inclusiveness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” unpublished paper presented at the ATA Theological Consultation, Sept. 1990, Seoul, Korea, 4f.; J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 218ff.

Creator of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:19-20). Walter Brueggemann points out that the title *El Elyon* is not a name for the God of Israel, but rather the high god of the Canaanite pantheon. It is only in Abraham’s response (v. 22) that the “God Most High” worshiped by the Canaanite Melchizedek is identified as “Yahweh, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.” Abraham reveals the true identity of the Creator God that Melchizedek has been worshiping all along (cf. Acts 17:22ff). God is Yahweh, the God of Israel.¹⁴ This implies that Melchizedek, prior to his encounter with Abraham (and perhaps others in Canaan like him who worshiped *El*) was worshiping the true God, albeit with a limited understanding.¹⁵ We should not forget that Abraham himself was called by God out of a pagan Semitic culture.¹⁶

We can mention other Gentile “God-fearers” as well. God reveals himself to outsiders like Abimelech, king of Gerar, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the form of a dream (Gen. 20:3; Daniel 4). The Midianite priest Jethro becomes Moses’ father-in-law and offers sacrifices to the God of Moses. After the Exodus, he encounters Moses at Horeb and, using God’s covenant name, praises *Yahweh* for his deliverance (Ex. 18:10-11). The language of Jethro’s confession (“Now I know. . . .” cf. 1 Kings 17:24), as well as his overall portrayal in the passage, does not suggest a conversion from paganism, but a deepening of understanding on the part of a previous worshipper of Yahweh.¹⁷

¹⁴W. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, in *Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 135-137.

¹⁵J. E. Goldingay and C. J. H. Wright, “‘Yahweh Our God Yahweh One’: The Oneness of God in the Old Testament,” in *One God, One Lord*, 48.

¹⁶For a discussion of this point, see K. Runia, “The Gospel and Religious Pluralism,” paper delivered at the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission Consultation, Wheaton College, June, 1990, 18ff.; published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 14 (October, 1990), 341-379. The use of the divine names in the Pentateuch is relevant here. Apparently God addressed Abraham and entered into covenant with him in terms of divine names that were a part of contemporary Semitic culture, e.g., *El*. This does not mean, however, that Abraham’s religion was syncretistic or that his faith remained at the level of popular cultural understandings of deity. God “accommodates” divine Self-revelation to familiar religious language and symbols in preparation for transforming acts of redemption and revelation of God’s true name and character. C. J. H. Wright, “The Christian and Other Religions: the Biblical Evidence,” *Themelios* 9 (January 1984), 6f.

¹⁷R. B. Widbin, “Salvation for People Outside Israel’s Covenant?”, in *Through No Fault of Their Own*, 81; cf. B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 329.

When the people of Israel prepare to enter Canaan, the curious figure of Balaam appears on the scene. Although he is a pagan Mesopotamian diviner, Yahweh communicates to him (Num. 22:18-20) and uses him to speak his word of blessing to Israel (23:3ff.).¹⁸ Job lives in the land of Uz, perhaps during the time of the patriarchs, yet apparently having no contact with them.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Yahweh speaks to him directly and calls him “my servant” and “a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). When the Syrian officer Naaman asks Elisha for permission to worship in the temple of Rimmon, the Aramean storm god, as part of his official duties, he receives the surprising reply, “Go in peace” (2 Kings 5:18-19).

A thread of biblical “inclusiveness” can likewise be detected in the Old Testament prophets. Jonah, God’s reluctant missionary, must learn the hard way that the people of Nineveh in Assyria are more obedient to Yahweh than his own people and his own prophet. Although they apparently do not know his covenant name and thus do not consciously relate to *Yahweh* in the same way as Jonah does, their repentance and faith in God (*’elohim*; 3:5, 7-9) are graciously accepted by the one true Lord.²⁰

Amos affirms that Yahweh holds all nations, including Israel, under his judgment (1:3-2:16). In an intriguing passage, Amos shatters Israel’s pride in its unique status by indicating that Yahweh has been active in the history of other nations as well: “‘Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?’ declares the Lord, ‘Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?’” (Amos 9:7). The eschatological promise of Isaiah finds Egypt and Assyria worshipping together along with Israel as the “people” and “handiwork” of Yahweh and as a “blessing on the earth” (Isa. 19:23-25).²¹ Malachi challenges the corrupt worship of Israel with the ironic statement: “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every

¹⁸Cf. R. F. Harrison, *Numbers* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 293ff.

¹⁹See H. H. Rowley, *Job*, NCBC, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 23.

²⁰J. E. Goldingay and C. J. H. Wright, “Yahweh,” 50.

²¹C. J. H. Wright rightly cautions that it is hermeneutically invalid “to use Old Testament texts which look forward to all nations ultimately worshipping Yahweh as support for the view that all religions are in present reality the worship of the one divine Being,” “The Christian and Other Religions,” 10. However, it does attest to the prophet’s understanding of the universal lordship of Yahweh over all people.

place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of Hosts” (Mal. 1:11 RSV). This suggests that the sacrifices of pagan worshippers may be more acceptable to Yahweh than those of God’s disobedient chosen people.²²

Finally, the Old Testament Wisdom literature is not specifically tied to God’s particular revelation to the patriarchs and the prophets. It is based rather on a Creator theology that stresses the involvement of God’s Wisdom in all of creation (Prov. 3:19-20; 8:22-31).²³ Furthermore, as Goldingay and Wright observe, the Hebrew Wisdom writings evidence “particularly clear parallels with others from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt,” implying that “pagan thought has its own insight.”²⁴ The Wisdom literature recognizes that the created world and the insights, culture, and religion of God’s human creation reflect something of God’s truth, even if it must be purged of its idolatrous aspects.²⁵

The Old Testament thus reflects a tension in its attitude toward human religions. On one hand, it expresses the rebellion and idolatry of fallen humanity. On the other, human religions can be viewed positively as sources of insight and as preparations for faith in the true God. This latter perspective, which, although not dominant, is clearly present in the Old Testament, reflects the operation of God’s prevenient grace. The Old Testament writers see God’s grace at work outside of God’s special dealings with Israel, drawing people and nations to himself. It is noteworthy that the Old Testament never tries to directly answer the question, “Is

²²Joyce C. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 228f., renders the verb in the future (“my name will be great,” so NIV), and interprets the passage eschatologically, noting that it would otherwise mean that Malachi is the only biblical writer to sanction pagan sacrifice. However, C. D. Isbell, *Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 42, argues that the future tense is unwarranted, and takes it as a present (so RSV, JB) reference to what is already happening throughout the world. C. J. H. Wright comments that even if the verse is taken in a present sense, it would be “a rhetorical, ironic comparison intended rather to shame Israel than soberly to describe paganism,” “The Christian and Other Religions,” 10.

²³K. G. Howkins, “Non-Christian Religions: Some Biblical Guidelines,” in ed. P. Sookhdeo, *Jesus Christ the Only Way* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 66; J. E. Goldingay and C. J. H. Wright, “Yahweh,” 44.

²⁴J. E. Goldingay and C. J. H. Wright, “Yahweh,” 44. The authors cite the “Thirty Sayings” in Proverbs 22-24 as an example of “direct dependence” on pagan wisdom writings.

²⁵J. E. Goldingay and C. J. H. Wright, “Yahweh,” 44-45.

there salvation for those outside of Israel?" However, it is apparent that there are individuals who, although "outsiders," yet have an authentic relationship with the true God.

This does not mean that the Old Testament in any way allows for salvation coming to people *through* other religions or apart from the grace of the God of Israel. The faith of the outsider is not seen merely as an unconscious worship of the true God. These are not "anonymous Israelites," to use the current parlance. God's activity and Self-revelation in the cultural and religious context outside of Israel is intended as a preparation for God's historic revelation as Yahweh. The religions may offer a starting point, but they do not provide a finishing point. Nevertheless, the operation of God's grace in the Old Testament is clearly not limited to the community of Israel. In a similar sense, the church must recognize God's gracious activity beyond its boundaries in the cultures and religions of all people. This does not, however, deter the evangelistic responsibility to bring the saving revelation of God in Christ to people of other faiths.

B. New Testament. In the New Testament, we find a similar tension between the particular and the universal. God's plan of salvation narrows in its particularity until it focuses on one individual, Jesus Christ. God chose to reveal himself in a final sense at a moment in history in a particular cultural context, through the One whom Christians affirm "suffered under Pontius Pilate." Yet, once again, it is through the particular that God accomplishes his universal saving purpose.

The New Testament offer of salvation is universal and inclusive in its breadth. Paul describes Christ as the second Adam who represents a new humanity: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22; cf. Rom. 5:15ff). It is God's intention to reconcile all of creation under the headship of Christ (Eph. 1:9-10). The interplay between the "all" and the "one" is clearly evidenced in 1 Tim. 2:4-6, which declares that God "desires *everyone* to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also *one* mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for *all*" (NRSV, emphasis added). This tension between the universal and the particular, the exclusive and inclusive, should be maintained for an adequate biblical theology of religions.

1. **New Testament Exclusivism.** The first century church functioned in a cultural milieu that was fraught with a wide choice of gods and lords—from the Roman emperor to the traditional Greek and Egyptian

deities, to the worship of rocks, plants and animals.²⁶ Furthermore, the religious climate was generally characterized by an attitude of syncretistic toleration which permitted participation in various religions and made few exclusive claims.²⁷ It is against this pluralistic backdrop that the New Testament writers stress unequivocally the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. In the oft-quoted words of Peter: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12; cf. Jn. 14:6). Speaking to a context of religious pluralism in Corinth, Paul affirms the Old Testament perspective that the so-called gods of the pagan world are in fact non-existent beings, since “there is but one God, the Father . . .” and “but one Lord, Jesus Christ. . . .” (1 Cor. 8:5-6). He goes on to warn the believers in Corinth not to participate in feasts of idols, since the objects of pagan worship are in reality not the non-existent idols themselves, but demons (1 Cor. 10:18ff). This implies that there is a demonic element in non-Christian religious worship. In Colossians, he counters the competing claims of other intermediaries by stressing the exclusive supremacy of Christ, in whom *all* of God’s fullness dwells (1:19; 2:9-10).

Paul reminds the Ephesians that as pagans they were formerly “dead in transgressions and sins,” they “followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:1-2) and were “without hope and without God in the world” (2:12). This corresponds to Luke’s record of Paul’s testimony that the purpose of his Gentile mission was “to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:17f). The accommodation of the church in Pergamum (a center of religious pluralism in Asia Minor) to pagan teachings and practices is compared to Israel’s being led astray by Balaam into idolatry and immorality (Rev. 2:14ff). The New Testament nowhere contradicts the Old Testament understanding of human religions as idolatrous, distorted by sin, under satanic influence and unable to save.

To the extent that Christians in the West today share a pluralistic context in many ways analogous to that faced by the first-century Chris-

²⁶See, e.g., “Behind the Classical Facade: Local Religions of the Roman Empire,” in *One God, One Lord*, 85-100; T. Moritz, “‘Summing Up All Things’: Religious Pluralism and Universalism in Ephesians,” in *One God, One Lord*, 101-124; B. W. Winter, “In Public and in Private: Early Christians and Religious Pluralism,” in *One God, One Lord*, 125-148; D. A. Carson, “Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism,” in *God and Culture*, eds. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 43f; C. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

tians, the response of the New Testament writers to that environment can be applied in an increasingly direct way.²⁸ What then are the implications of such “exclusivism” for our understanding of religious pluralism?

First, in response to those who want to minimize the distinctiveness of the Christian witness in relation to other religions, it must be affirmed that the “scandal of particularity” lies at the very heart of the gospel. We hear frequent attempts to reinterpret the “exclusive” texts, often through some rather suspect exegesis. We are told that such statements are not meant to be taken at face value because they belong to the language of confession.²⁹ Paul Knitter argues, for instance, that Peter’s statement about “no other name” in Acts 4:12 is intended “not to rule out the possibility of other saviors, but to proclaim that this Lord Jesus was still alive and that it was he, not they, who was working such wonders in the community.”³⁰ Not only does this miss the plain meaning of Peter’s statement, but the overwhelming and consistent message of the biblical witness would not seem to allow any possibility whatever that there could be “other saviors.” On the contrary, the New Testament writers affirm in unison that apart from Jesus Christ there is no hope of present or future salvation (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4-5; Heb. 10:9-10). A Wesleyan soteriology would heartily affirm this understanding.

Secondly, however, having affirmed that salvation is by “no other name,” we must guard against an overly restrictive understanding of biblical exclusiveness. Evangelical theology of religions and missions in the past half century has borne the stamp of the notion of radical “discontinuity” between non-Christian religions and Christian revelation, as exempli-

²⁷Carson, “Christian Witness,” 44.

²⁸Carson, “Christian Witness,” 44f.

²⁹K. Stendahl, “Notes for Three Bible Studies,” in *Christ’s Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, 14f; P. J. Knitter, *No Other Name*, 184ff; S. W. Ariarajah, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992, 23ff).

³⁰P. J. Knitter, *No Other Name*, 185. Cf. C. Pinnock’s more balanced treatment of this passage (“Acts 4:12—No Other Name under Heaven” in *Through No Fault of Their Own*, 107-115, in which he acknowledges that Luke “makes a strong and definitely exclusive claim about the messianic, holistic salvation Jesus has brought into the world” (115), but that the passage addresses neither the question of the eschatological fate of the unevangelized nor the status of other religions. Pinnock argues that “Peter is magnifying a mighty act of God bringing in the kingdom, not discussing comparative religions” (111). This may be true; however, it does not mean that the passage is irrelevant to the discussion.

fied by Dutch missiologist Hendrik Kraemer.³¹ Kraemer argued that all religions, including Christianity, reflect human striving for self-justification and are thus characterized by a fundamental misdirection and error.³² Hence the attempt to find common ground between religion and revelation is misguided, since “there are no bridges from human religious consciousness to . . . Christ.”³³ Kraemer’s uncompromising defense of the uniqueness of Christ still speaks to a pluralistic world. Yet, can we remain content to look at the question of the role of other religions simply in the categories of discontinuity, or is there a form of continuity between them and faith in Christ? Are *all* human religious instincts merely human striving, and therefore misdirected? Is the revelation of God’s grace in Jesus Christ limited to those who explicitly hear the gospel? We must turn to the New Testament again to try to answer these questions.

2. *New Testament “Inclusivism.”* Since Jesus’ earthly ministry entailed a particularity that focused primarily on the house of Israel (Matt.15:24; cf. 10:5f), we do not find in the Synoptic Gospels much evidence of his attitude toward other religions. In general the Gospels give us a picture of redemption in which the historically particular revelation of God in Christ is in continuity with God’s Self-revelation to Israel. Nevertheless, Jesus was able to commend the “great faith” of the Roman centurion (10:8) and the Syro-Phoenician woman, both outside the stream of God’s special revelation to the Jews. Jesus immediately followed his endorsement of the faith of the centurion with an allusion to the inclusion of both Jew and Gentile in the messianic banquet in the kingdom of heaven (8:11).

Likewise, Matthew devotes considerable attention to the Magi who came from the East to worship the Christ child (2:1-12). It is likely that they were pagan astrologers whose religious culture prepared them in some way for a journey to Judea. They came with limited understanding,

³¹*The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House, 1938). Kraemer was deeply influenced by Karl Barth, who placed man’s religiosity in stark contrast to God’s unique revelation in Jesus Christ, and spoke in a celebrated comment of religion as “unbelief”; K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 12, 299ff.

³²H. Kraemer, *Why Christianity of All the Religions?*, ET (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 94ff; *Christian Message*, 139.

³³H. Kraemer, *Christian Message*, 132. In his later writings, Kraemer seems to show more openness to evidences of God’s working in other religions, and qualifies that he does not consider other religions to be erroneous in their totality (*Why Christianity of All the Religions?*, 93).

seeking to worship a king, not a savior. Yet Matthew records without embarrassment that God graciously revealed himself to pagan outsiders initially through their own religious “idols,” i.e., the stars, in order to draw them to his Son.³⁴ It seems clear from the example of the Magi and Jesus’ willingness to commend the faith of the Gentiles and build on it that “God works out his plans for the non-Christian in fulfilment of a quest that is already there.”³⁵

In the prologue to John’s Gospel we find reference to a general Self-revelation of God in the world outside of the flow of special revelation. John speaks of Christ, the *logos*, as the one who has been the light of all people from the time of creation (1:4). Further, the *logos* is “the true light which enlightens everyone” (1:9), which probably means that the light which came into the world in its fullness in the incarnation also extends some measure of divine illumination to every person.³⁶ This general enlightening work of Christ in the world, including presumably that in the religions of humankind, does not bestow on their adherents some type of saving knowledge of God, as is sometimes claimed. Nor can the *logos* simply be abstracted into a “Christ principle” that is divorced from the historical Christ event.³⁷ Nevertheless it does constitute an aspect

³⁴F. D. Bruner, *The Christbook: A Historical/Theological Commentary*. Matthew 1-12 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 46f.

³⁵K. Gnanakan, *Predicament*, 131.

³⁶K. G. Howkins, “Non-Christian Religions,” 65; J. R. W. Scott, *The Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975), 68. Commentators are divided as to whether the “light” in this verse refers to the light of illumination (Morris, Tasker; cf. v.4), or the light of judgment (Barrett, Carson, cf. 3:21). Perhaps the two understandings are not mutually exclusive, since the concept of the light is used in both senses in John. The light comes to humankind as both revelation and judgment. It seems preferable to take the phrase “coming into the world” with “the true light” rather than “every man.” For a discussion of the grammatical difficulties of this verse, see L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 93f.

³⁷The weakness of a “*Logos* Christology,” which has roots in the Greek Fathers (cf. Justin Martyr, *Apologia* I, 46) and to which John Sanders and Clark Pinnock have recently appealed to support the universal accessibility of salvation (*No Other Name*, 238ff; *Wideness*, 77f, 103f), is precisely at this point. The cosmic *Logos* that is “found” in other religions and philosophies is all too easily abstracted from the person of Jesus of Nazareth and thereby threatens to undercut the historical particularity of the saving event. John’s whole argument in the prologue is intended to lead to the climax that the “Word became flesh” (1:14). The Word who was in the world from the beginning and who illumines all peoples is one and the same Word who became enfleshed in Jesus. See C. J. H. Wright, “The Christian and Other Religions,” 12f; cf. J. E. Bradley, “*Logos* Christology and Religious Pluralism: A New Evangelical Proposal” in *Proceedings of the Wheaton Theological Conference*, 190-215.

of God's gracious activity—what Wesleyans would call prevenient grace.³⁸

In commenting on this passage, Floyd Cunningham notes that “there is a radiance from the Light sufficient to account for impulses in the religions and cultures of the world which seem to be in some accord with Revelation. . . . Wherever there is congruity, it comes by grace and is designed by God to serve as preparation for the Gospel.”³⁹ When people of other religions come to faith in Christ they do not meet a stranger, for they have already received the illuminating work of prevenient grace. At the same time, the fact that even the incarnate light was not received by “his own” people (1:10f.), who through the Old Testament revelation had received more illumination than followers of any other religion, reminds us that devotion to religion may lead people to reject the light of Christ. Thus religions are paradoxically both the arenas of divine enlightening and of darkness and rejection.

Luke's record of Paul's speeches in Lystra and Athens are important for any discussion of the relationship between Christ and other religions. In both cases Paul interacts with a context of religious pluralism.⁴⁰ Before a rather unsophisticated Gentile crowd in Lystra, who adhered to the popular religion of the Greek pantheon (14:11f), Paul uses their awareness of a Creator God as a point of contact. He directs them to the God who created and sustains the universe (14:15, 17). Although in the past God overlooked the Gentile errors that resulted from ignorance (v. 16), God “has not left himself without a witness” (v. 17a). This “witness” in creation should have led the Gentiles to turn from their worthless idols and worship the living God (v. 15). Paul does not say, however, that it is potentially salvific.

To a more sophisticated Gentile audience at the Areopagus, which included Stoics and Epicureans, Paul goes even further. On one hand, he is distressed by the idolatry and religious pluralism he discovers in Athens (17:16; 29). On the other hand, Paul takes a somewhat conciliatory and respectful stance toward their pagan religious life. He calls the Athenians “very religious” (v. 22), which is probably said in a neutral, not a disparaging sense.⁴¹ He finds a point of contact in the Athenians' worship of

³⁸For a discussion of the relationship between general revelation and prevenient grace, see H. R. Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 161-170.

³⁹F. T. Cunningham, “Christ,” 107f.

⁴⁰See B. W. Winter, “In Public and in Private,” 125-148.

⁴¹W. Foerster, *TDNT* 2, 20; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 355.

the “unknown god”: “Now what you worship as unknown I am going to proclaim to you” (v. 23). This does not mean that this “unknown” god and the living God are one and the same, i.e., that the Athenians were “anonymous Christians.”⁴²

However, Paul does recognize that there is something genuine in the religious life of the pagans, thanks to the grace of God.⁴³ Once again Paul takes up the theme of creation and God’s universal providence as a form of Self-revelation (vv. 24-26), with the purpose “that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him” (v. 27). In the process, he finds various points of contact with Greek philosophers that would have been familiar to his hearers, such as God’s self-sufficiency, providential care, and the notion that God is the source of all life (v. 25).⁴⁴ He even quotes with approval two Stoic poets who had insight into the nature of God (v. 28). Finally, Paul places all he has said about human religious searchings and God’s general revelation in the context of the decisive revelation of the Christian gospel, to which they point (vv. 30-31). The Athenians’ knowledge has stopped short of enabling them to find God. Although God has “overlooked” their ignorance in the past, “now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (v. 30), for God has appointed a day of judgment for all (v. 31).

It seems clear then that this passage does not see God’s final and definitive act in Jesus Christ as discontinuous with God’s gracious action in creation, providence, and even in the religious searchings of human beings. Instead, the gospel of Christ is portrayed as the fulfillment of people’s genuine seeking after God prompted by God’s prevenient, seeking grace. Paul does not hesitate to look for points of contact in the religion of the Athenians in order to establish common ground.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he does not allow for salvation through the Athenians’ religiosity or apart from Jesus Christ, as the conclusion to his speech confirms.⁴⁶

⁴²The phrase was popularized by Karl Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 115-134.

⁴³See J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 244-247.

⁴⁴For Greek parallels see H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 141ff; see also B. W. Winter, “In Public and Private,” 130ff.

⁴⁵C. Pinnock, *Wideness*, 365. Cf. K. G. Howkins, “Non-Christian Religions,” 60ff.

⁴⁶Cf. the treatment of this passage by D. L. Bock, who concludes that it supports an exclusivist answer to the question of the fate of the unevangelized, “Athenians Who Have Never Heard,” in *Through No Fault of Their Own*, 117-124.

Paul's missionary principles are instructive for our approach to people of other religions. He begins at a point of universality and commonality, i.e., creation and general revelation, and moves from there to the particular revelation of Jesus Christ. God has created all people in the divine image, with the capacity to respond to God. While fully recognizing the destructive effect of the fall, the existence of general revelation means that religion may reflect humanity's sincere response to God and desire to know him. Prior to any particular religious belief or practice, all people share a basic commonality as people made in the image of God, people who are, in religion as in all else, in *some* kind of relationship to the Creator.⁴⁷ This shared creaturehood might be a starting point for enabling nonbelievers to see the fulfillment of their longings in Christ.⁴⁸

Romans 1 and 2 are at the center of the debate concerning the significance of God's gracious activity outside of special revelation. The apostle Paul sees divine grace operating in two arenas: creation and conscience. In chapter one of Romans, he speaks of an objective knowledge of God ("what may be known" v. 19; "although they knew God," v. 21) which comes to people through the divine Self-revelation in creation. Using the language of Hellenistic religious philosophy that would be familiar to his Gentile readers,⁴⁹ Paul affirms that God's "eternal power" and "divine nature" are clearly perceived by people apart from special revelation (v. 20). There is a genuine knowledge of God available to all humanity, without distinction.

In chapter two, in a notoriously difficult passage, Paul says that Gentiles who do not possess the law on occasion do the "things of the law," i.e., certain of the law's requirements. When they do, they evidence that what God's law requires (the "work" of the law) is written on their hearts. This inner knowledge of right and wrong is also evidenced by the witness of their consciences, which has the function of passing judgment on whether or not they follow God's moral law (2:14-15). The inward moral consciousness to which this passage refers is not some innate human faculty, but rather the result of prevenient grace. The Holy Spirit by a convicting presence is at work among all peoples, even adherents of other religions, even those to whom the name of Christ has not yet been pro-

⁴⁷C. J. H. Wright, "The Christian and Other Religions," 5.

⁴⁸K. R. Gnanakan, "Keynote address presented to the Asia Theological Association Consultation held in Seoul, Korea September, 1990," unpublished paper, 4ff.

⁴⁹See J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 58.

claimed (Jn. 16:8). In the words of John Sanders: “The unevangelized are indeed ‘unreached’ by human messengers with the word of Christ, but they are not unreached by the Holy Spirit’s ministry of grace.”⁵⁰ Presumably, this happens not only directly through the individual conscience, but also in a collective sense, in cultures and religions (which normally are closely related). Where religions reflect moral truth or right action, grace is at work.⁵¹ The purpose of this activity of the Spirit is to lead people to Christ. In this sense, religion can function as a preparation for the gospel. This allows us to recognize that “whatever truth may be found in other religions is the result of the activity of prevenient grace in its revelatory function. The missionary can gratefully accept such truth and use it as a point of contact to demonstrate the fulfillment of those glimmers of truth by the fuller revelation in Christ.”⁵²

Yet, is this knowledge of God through general revelation potentially saving knowledge? This is a question that Paul does not address. His point in Romans 1 is that this knowledge comes to humanity with the result “that they might be without excuse” (v. 20). All people are guilty of rebelling against the light that is available to them, and are thereby justly condemned: “Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him” (1:21). As a result of the fall, they have chosen to worship creation rather than the Creator (v. 25). They have exchanged God’s glory for the image of mortal beings (v. 23). In general, the world religions do not predispose people to accept Christianity when confronted with it. Religiosity often becomes a means of escape from submitting to the Creator. At the same time, religion reflects human searching after God and rebellion against God. It is both a path to God and a stumblingblock to finding him.⁵³

But what of Paul’s argument in 2:14-15 that when Gentiles “do by nature things required by the law” they are “a law for themselves,” because they have the “work” of the law written on their hearts? It is sometimes suggested that here Paul implies that salvation could indeed come to unbelievers apart from the gospel if they receive knowledge of the law from their consciences and obey that knowledge.⁵⁴ Admittedly,

⁵⁰J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 237.

⁵¹F. T. Cunningham, “Christ,” 91.

⁵²H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 166; see also C. Pinnock, *Wideness*, 103f.

⁵³B. Nicholls, “Exclusiveness,” 8.

⁵⁴See H. R. Dunning, 168; C. Pinnock, *Wideness*, 33; J. Sanders, “Mercy to All,” 220-224.

this goes beyond his present argument. What is clear is that Paul does not allow that unbelievers can be saved by fulfilling the requirements of the law. That would go against the entire thrust of Romans 3 and numerous other statements by the apostle (e.g., Gal. 3:10ff).⁵⁵ Nowhere in the chapter does Paul argue or even assume that individuals are capable of fulfilling the law, and *thereby* being saved. Nor is he talking about a “hypothetical” offer of salvation for those who keep the law perfectly, since perfect obedience is not the issue here.⁵⁶

Rather, the point that Paul seems to be making in Romans 2 is that the Jews cannot claim any special privilege simply because they possess the law, since all are accountable for their sins and come under God’s judgment (v. 12)—Jews because they disobey the Torah and Gentiles because they know enough of the law of God “by nature” to be held responsible when they sin.⁵⁷ Whether Paul conceived of unevangelized Gentile “doers of the law” actually being saved, we cannot answer with confidence.⁵⁸ Romans 2 does not speak to this issue, but neither does it rule out the possibility. When Paul acknowledges that eternal life awaits those who persevere in “good work” (2:7; cf. 2:10, 13), he is stating a universal principle whose application is not limited to Gentile *Christians*.⁵⁹

Presumably, unevangelized Gentiles come under the same criteria of judgment and hope as Jews (2:7-8), since “God does not show favoritism”

⁵⁵There are scholars, of course, who simply charge Paul with inconsistent teaching: salvation by works in Romans 2 and salvation by faith in Romans 3. See E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 123-133; H. Räisänen, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 101-109.

⁵⁶The occurrence of *hotan* and *ta tou nomou* instead of simply “the law” in 2:14 implies that Paul is thinking of the occasional fulfillment of certain demands of the law by certain Gentiles, not perfect obedience. Further, see K. R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace—to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *NTS* 32 (1986), 79, 83. Those who support the “hypothetical” interpretation of Romans 2 include D. J. Moo, “Romans 2: Saved Apart from the Gospel?” in *Through No Fault of Their Own*, 145; B. Demarest, “General and Special Revelation: Epistemological Foundations of Religious Pluralism,” in *One God, One Lord*, 198; R. N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 121-122; H. Lietzmann, *An die Römer* (Tübingen: 1906), 13.

⁵⁷See E. Käsemann, *Romans*, ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 61ff.

⁵⁸This is in contrast to those who argue that Paul answers the question quite definitively either in a negative (e.g., D. Moo, “Saved,” 142-144) or a positive (e.g., J. Sanders, “Mercy,” 220ff.) direction.

⁵⁹J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 86, 98; contra C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 152ff., 173ff.; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 46f.; 59f.

(2:11). Under this criterion, those who respond to God's revelation with an "obedience of faith" (1:5; 16:26) from the heart presumably could be saved.⁶⁰ However, it must be reiterated that the "work" which leads to salvation is not a "works righteousness," but rather saving obedience in response to and as an evidence of God's grace in Christ.⁶¹ The entire thrust of the Apostle's argument in Romans and elsewhere affirms that it is faith in Jesus Christ which is the sole basis of any person's acceptance by God. If it is possible for such devout Gentiles, who stand outside of the stream of special revelation, to be saved, it is because they respond to the Holy Spirit's convicting work and God's grace according to the light they have received, and thus avail themselves of the merits of Christ.

We find, then, in both the New Testament and the Old, a tension between exclusiveness and universality. Human religions and cultures can be the arena of both sinful opposition to God and God's gracious activity that prepares people for the final and saving revelation in the Christ event.

The Status of the Unreached

The previous discussion raises the perennial and unavoidable question of the fate of the unevangelized. What of those people in other religions, before and after Christ, who have not had the opportunity to hear and respond to the Christian gospel? Are they necessarily excluded from salvation? Traditionally, many evangelical Christians have answered with a firm "yes." This position, which John Sanders terms "restrictivism,"⁶² has often been set forth as a primary motivation for missions. For example, the statement from the Congress of World Mission held in Chicago in 1960 laments: "In the years since the war, more than one billion souls have passed into eternity and more than half of these went to the torment of hell fire without even hearing of Jesus Christ, who He was, or why He died on the cross of Calvary."⁶³ The traditional evangelical view is often vigorously defended as the alternative to universalism.⁶⁴ Recently, how-

⁶⁰For a recent articulation of this position, see J. Sanders, "Mercy," 220-224.

⁶¹K. R. Snodgrass, "Justification," 84.

⁶²J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, chapter 2.

⁶³Quoted in K. Runia, "The Gospel and Religious Pluralism," 2.

⁶⁴E.g., H. Lindsell, "Universalism," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland*, J. D. Douglas, ed. (Minneapolis: World Wide Pub., 1975), 1213; C. G. Olson, *What in the World Is God Doing?* (Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel Pub., 1988), 33ff.; J. R. McQuilkin, "The Narrow Way," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 127-134. This position has been defended on a popular level by Dick Dowsett, *God, That's Not Fair!* (Kent, U.K.: OMF Books, 1982). See also the bibliography in J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 73-79.

ever, a number of evangelical thinkers have challenged this assessment and allowed that an unreached person may be saved if that individual repents and relies on the mercy of God through the atoning work of Christ, even if not aware directly of that work.⁶⁵

When we look for an answer to this problem, the difficulty we face is that the Bible never addresses directly the question of the fate of the unevangelized. Scripture does not give explicit guidance one way or the other. Although in the Old Testament we have seen people outside of Israel whose faith was accepted by God, there are no clear examples of conversion apart from the preaching of the gospel in the New Testament. Cornelius, the Gentile “God fearer,” is often portrayed as the leading New Testament example of a “non-Christian believer.”⁶⁶ In a recent defense of this position, Sanders confidently affirms that “Cornelius was a ‘saved’ *believer* before Peter arrived, but he became a Christian and received the fuller blessings of life in Christ only after Peter came” (emphasis in original).⁶⁷

It is less than clear, however, that Luke envisions such a distinction between “saved believer” and “Christian.” It is true that Cornelius is described as a pious and generous man who regularly prays to God (Acts 10:2, 22). God communicates to him through an angel and hears his prayers (10:3-7). Upon meeting him, Peter announces that God does not show favoritism, “but in every nation any one who fears him and does

⁶⁵E.g., J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, esp. 215-305; C. Pinnock, *Wideness*, passim., “Toward an Evangelical Theology,” *JETS* 33 (September, 1990), esp. 367f.; M. Erickson, “Hope for those Who Haven’t Heard? Yes, but—”, *EMQ* (April, 1975), 122-126; J. N. D. Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism* (Leicester: IVP Press, 1984), chapter 5; E. D. Osburn, “Those Who Have Never Heard: Have They No Hope?”, *JETS* 32 (Sept. 1989), 367-372; K. Runia, “The Gospel and Religious Pluralism,” 20ff. For additional proponents of this view, see the extensive historical bibliographies in J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 137-146, 267-280.

⁶⁶E.g., J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 64-67, 222-224; C. Pinnock, *Wideness*, 95f., 165f.; J. N. D. Anderson, 151. This has been the predominant interpretation of the Cornelius account within the holiness tradition, usually in support of finding a second crisis experience in Cornelius’ baptism with the Holy Spirit. See, e.g., J. K. Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1980), 48-52; D. S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1971), 120f; L. W. Wood, *Pentecostal Grace* (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury, 1980), 91. Wesley, however, considered Cornelius to be an “unbeliever,” *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, repr. (Salem, OH: Schmul, 1976), 302.

⁶⁷J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 66.

what is right is acceptable to him” (10:34-35, RSV). Yet, Luke’s point is that, in spite of all this, Cornelius still needed to hear the gospel and respond in faith. The word “acceptable” cannot be taken to mean “justified” or “saved” in an evangelical sense. It was only upon hearing the message of Christ from Peter (10:36) that he received forgiveness (10:43), salvation (11:14), and life (11:18).⁶⁸ Peter later explicitly links the Gentiles’ reception of the Spirit to their hearing and believing the gospel and the cleansing of their hearts by faith (15:7-9). Luke apparently does not see Cornelius as a “saved believer” in a full sense prior to his hearing and receiving the gospel.

Nevertheless, may it not be implied that Cornelius, the Jewish proselyte, and, by extension, people of other faiths who “fear God” and “do righteousness” are in a different category in God’s sight than those who do not evidence such faith?⁶⁹ Precisely what that category is we cannot know for certain. What is clear is that God communicated directly to Cornelius prior to his meeting with Peter and God heard his prayers and was pleased with his acts of charity. Surely this implies some type of special relationship with God.⁷⁰

God’s prevenient grace had long been at work in the heart of Cornelius, drawing him to himself, and preparing him for acceptance of the gospel when he heard it. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is working today in the hearts of people of all religions who are outside the sphere of the proclamation of the gospel. This phenomenon has been repeatedly confirmed by the experience of missionaries.⁷¹ The mission of the church is to take the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to those being prepared by God to receive it. Whether or not there will be “Corneliuses” who have not had a “Peter encounter” and yet will find acceptance at the final judgment is an open question in the hands of God.

Some see hope for the unreached in the analogy of the Old Testament saints, who were not saved by their works, but by God’s grace made

⁶⁸I. H. Marshall, *Acts*, 189f.; D. J. Williams, *Acts*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1985), 197; C. J. H. Wright, “The Christian and Other Religions,” 14.

⁶⁹Chapman, “Challenge,” 180; cf. K. Gnanakan, *Predicament*, 142.

⁷⁰S. W. Ariarajah, *Other Faiths*, 17f.

⁷¹E.g., the reflection of Norman Anderson, “I have never met a Muslim convert who regards the God he previously sought to worship as a wholly false God. Instead, he is filled with wonder and gratitude that he has now been brought to know that God as he really is, in Jesus Christ our Lord” (*Christianity*, 173).

available through the atonement of Christ, yet without knowing his identity.⁷² Appealing to Romans 3:25, which speaks of the God's forbearance of the sins of the Jews, E. D. Osburn asks: "If the eternal God, who does not necessarily view time sequentially, has applied Christ's blood to people of faith in the OT who [had] no knowledge of Jesus, why can he not do likewise for the unreached person today who has no explicit knowledge of Christ but may believe in the One who raised Jesus from the dead?"⁷³ This analogy is not perfect, because the Jews of the Old Testament were recipients of special revelation and had the Messianic prophecies. However, we must guard against limiting the grace of God. Those under the old covenant had an implicit faith in Christ that was credited to them as righteousness (Rom. 4:3). Might it not be possible for people today to come to a similar kind of implicit faith in Christ?

God graciously reveals himself to people through his Spirit in creation, conscience, culture, and even religion. It is not inconceivable that certain individuals might, in response to this grace, honestly seek after a yet unnamed God (cf. Acts 17:23), even acting contrary to the sinful in their religion and culture. Through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, might they not cast themselves on God's mercy in repentance and trust, and be saved through the merits of Christ, "who is the atoning sacrifice . . . for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2)?⁷⁴ Might they not through the Spirit evidence some measure of holiness and genuine spirituality in response to the gracious revelation they receive?⁷⁵ Can we exclude the possibility of salvation among those who are accepted by God on the basis of Christ's atonement without any explicit knowledge or assurance of that salvation?⁷⁶

⁷²J. N. D. Anderson, *Christianity*, 148f., 152f.; M. Erickson, "Hope," 125; J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 225ff.

⁷³E. D. Osburn, "Those Who Have Never Heard," 368.

⁷⁴See F. T. Cunningham, "Christ," 109.

⁷⁵Wesley's understanding of the integral relationship between present salvation (some measure of holiness) and future salvation led him, especially in his later period, to maintain that God will judge the "heathen" according to their response to the gracious "light" they have received, assuming at least a minimal degree of spirituality or holiness in their present lives. Cf. the sermons "On Faith," *Works*, bicentennial ed., 3:494, "On Charity," *Works*, 3:295f; "On Living Without God," *Works*, 4:174. This point is discussed by Maddox, "Wesley," 17f, (cf. *Responsible Grace*, 33f.) and F. T. Cunningham, "Inter-Religious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Perspective," unpub. paper," 10ff.

⁷⁶See F. T. Cunningham, "Inter-Religious Dialogue," 10f.

Ultimately these are questions that God alone has the right to answer.⁷⁷ While it is my sincerest hope and most earnest prayer that multitudes of pious seekers after God from other faiths and those who have had no opportunity to hear the gospel might stand among those who are redeemed by Christ's blood, such an assurance has not been clearly revealed to us.⁷⁸ The Bible leaves us no choice but to be "agnostics" when it comes to these questions. Perhaps there is some encouragement in the picture of unnumbered multitudes from every nation, tribe, and people gathered before the throne of God (Rev. 7:9) and people coming from every direction of the compass to take their places at the kingdom feast (Lk. 13:29). Jesus makes the point on more than one occasion that there will be surprises as to who is in heaven and who is not (Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46; Lk. 13:22-30). One thing the Scriptures do make clear is that if people are in heaven apart from the preaching of the gospel, it will not be on the basis of their sincerity or their own goodness or devotion to religious observance. It will be because the grace of God was active in their lives through the Holy Spirit, drawing them to Christ.⁷⁹

To admit the possibility of salvation apart from explicit knowledge of Jesus Christ is not to flirt with universalism. Neither does it diminish the urgency of the task of world evangelization. These common objections can be answered in at least two ways.

First, neither Scripture nor experience give us an assurance about the existence of large numbers of "implicit" Christians. Because of the universal presence of sin in human hearts and the blinding power of Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), people generally choose to suppress the truth and exchange it for a lie (Rom. 1:18ff). There is no room for optimism about the salvation of people in other religions like is characteristic of much post-Vatican II Roman Catholic thought. The religions of the world are not "ways of salvation,"⁸⁰ nor are they filled with "anonymous Christians."⁸¹ The vast

⁷⁷See L. Newbigin, *Gospel*, 177.

⁷⁸I must admit that I lack the confidence as a predictor of eternal destiny of both those who espouse the universalist and the restrictivist positions. For a more balanced appraisal of the fate of the unevangelized by a leading evangelical thinker, see J. R. W. Stott in *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*, eds. J. R. W. Stott and D. L. Edwards (London: Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988), 327, cited in J. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 145.

⁷⁹See K. Runia, "The Gospel and Religious Pluralism," 26.

⁸⁰Contra H. Küng, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 91, 104.

⁸¹See above, n. 42.

majority of people will need to hear the “word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17) and participate in a community of faith in order to be saved.⁸² It is still urgent that the church fulfill its mandate to be a sending and proclaiming community if people are to have a reasonable opportunity to believe (Rom. 10:14-15). The only way anyone can have assurance that he or she is redeemed is by responding in repentance and faith to the preaching of the Word.

Second, Christians commonly exhibit an overly-restrictive understanding of soteriology. Jesus’ commission to his followers (Matt. 23:16-20) is not simply to win converts, but to “make disciples” by baptizing and instructing them, i.e., to make Christlike citizens of the kingdom. Even if people would respond positively to God’s gracious revelation apart from preaching, they will remain “like the blind groping toward a dim light.” They would be believers without knowing the true source or nature of that light, and without the privileges of participating in the Christian community and entering into the full experience of God’s grace, power and holiness.⁸³ In this sense, the possibility of “implicit” Christians ought to be a motivation rather than a deterrent to missions, since people who have responded to God’s grace in a limited way are waiting for more light and a fuller experience of that grace. The Biblical mandate is to lead people to salvation in the fullest sense, which entails a life of discipleship and holiness. This applies equally to those who have heard and those who have not.

Conclusion

This overview makes it apparent that the biblical attitude toward religions is complex. Does the Bible view religion as the realm of demonic and idolatrous activity, or as the futile striving of humans to find God, or as a preparation for the gospel, or as an arena of grace leading toward the experience of salvation? To be faithful to the Scriptural witness we must answer affirmatively to each of these possibilities. An authentic biblical theology of religion must be multi-faceted enough to include all of these.

⁸²C. Pinnock goes too far in appealing to 1 Pet. 4:6 as a basis for the unevangelized having a “second chance” after death, based on the assumption that God will not reject sinners without knowing what their response to grace would have been (“Toward an Evangelical Theology,” 368).

⁸³W. V. Crockett and J. G. Sigountes, “Are the ‘Heathen’ Really Lost?” in *Through No Fault of Their Own*, 260.

There is a sense in which the world's religions are aligned with the powers of the present age and therefore evidence aspects of the demonic and sinful. There is a biblical exclusivism which must tenaciously maintain that salvation is not to be found in even the best of the religions. The dogma of religious pluralism must be lovingly but firmly confronted. There is no other path to God except the one that goes through Jesus Christ. We do not have the option or the justification for leaving people in their own religions and trusting that God will judge them justly in the end. People deserve to know the way to life, both for the present and the future. The mission of the church is clear.

At the same time, if we believe that God's prevenient grace is at work among peoples of other faiths, then we must be willing to recognize signs of grace wherever they are to be found: in their cultures, in their sacred writings, in their personal devotion and lifestyle, in their struggles for justice and righteousness. The biblical understanding of God's universal Self-revelation and ministry of grace leads to an attitude of hopeful expectancy concerning how the Holy Spirit is working among peoples of other faiths and leading them to Jesus Christ.⁸⁴ This suggests a more open attitude toward non-Christian religions and their adherents than has sometimes been evidenced among evangelicals. It upholds the historic tendency toward inclusivism among Wesleyans.

Even so, Wesleyans who accept an inclusivist stance toward the question of the unevangelized should be careful not to go beyond what careful exegesis of the Scripture will allow, prematurely turning possibilities into certainties.⁸⁵ On a practical level, a biblically-informed attitude toward non-Christian religions should lead us to pursue a greater understanding of them as well as personal relationships with peoples of other faiths. We need not reject dialogue simply because it has been misused at times, but we should see it as an opportunity for mutual understanding and witness to those of other faiths. In the words of Max Warren: "What a wonderful opportunity that religious pluralism offers to Christians and to everyone else to make a new discovery of Jesus Christ. How gratefully we should accept God's providential challenge."⁸⁶

⁸⁴John D. Ellenberger cites several concrete examples of the Holy Spirit's preparatory activity prior to any contact with the gospel message ("Is Hell a Proper Motivation for Missions," in *Through No Fault of Their Own*, 223).

⁸⁵See the valid caution of W. G. Phillips at this point ("Evangelicals and Religious Pluralism: Current Options," in *Proceedings*, 189).

⁸⁶M. Warren, *I Believe*, 170.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY? HISTORICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

by

Kenneth J. Collins

Sociologists, political scientists, theologians, and other observers of American culture are keenly aware that a remarkable phenomenon is now taking place: from the board rooms of major corporations to farmhouses in the Dakotas, from charismatic Catholics to the devotees of eastern religion, many people are enthusiastic—indeed eager to learn—about what they call “spirituality.” This cultural movement, so unlike the resurgence of religion during the 1950’s, is marked by elements of dissatisfaction and even protest. George Gallup, for instance, notes a shift from the mainline churches to more conservative ones, with evangelicals, pentecostals, and others among the winners. In fact, in his book *The People’s Religion* Gallup notes that “one of the top three reasons why Americans leave the church is that they want deeper spiritual meaning.”¹ Moreover, he points out that “Americans have become more critical of their churches and synagogues over the past decade. A large majority believes the churches are too concerned with internal organizational issues and not sufficiently concerned with spiritual matters.”²

Despite these trends, it would be a mistake to conclude that the contemporary interest in spirituality can be explained utterly in terms of established, traditional forms of religion. It cannot. Indeed, the term “spir-

¹George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli, *The People’s Religion* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1989), 144.

²*Ibid.*, 88.

ity” is currently being used to refer to elements of Marxism, feminist ideology, humanistic psychology and other nontraditional cultural expressions. It is as prevalent in twelve step programs as it is in some churches; it is found on the lips of agnostics as with believers. Not surprisingly, these trends have led to a virtual cacophony of voices in the public arena on the subject with the result that it is difficult to determine precisely what people mean by the term “spirituality.” As Sheldrake points out, “It appears that spirituality is one of those subjects whose meaning everyone claims to know until they have to define it.”³

In light of this situation, I will attempt to bring a measure of clarity to this subject by being attentive to historical considerations, etymology and church history in particular, as well as to methodological ones, that is, to three major classification schemes which are useful in encompassing the different referents for the term spirituality.

I. Historical Considerations

Our English word “spirituality” is actually a derivative of the Latin term *spiritualitas*,⁴ and like its cognates *spiritus* and *spiritualis*, is a suitable translation of the original Greek terms *pneuma* and *pneumatikos*.⁵ This means, then, that the adjective “spiritual,” as one scholar puts it, “is a Christian neologism, coined apparently by St. Paul to describe that which pertained to the Holy Spirit of God.”⁶ For example, in 1 Corinthians 2:15, the Apostle maintains that “Those who are spiritual (*pneumatikos*) discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny” (NRSV). Naturally, we must be careful not to read back into Pauline usage elements which are indicative of a later age. Thus, for Paul at least, the term *pneumatikos* is not informed by the distinction between the non-material and material, as it is in the twelfth century and following, but by

³Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (New York: Crossroad Books, 1992), 32.

⁴Sheldrake contends that the abstract noun *spiritualitas* did not make its appearance until the fifth century. He maintains that a letter once ascribed to St. Jerome exhorts the reader so to act as “to advance in ‘spirituality.’” Cf. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 35.

⁵Walter H. Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” *Studies in Religion, Sciences Religieuses* 12, no. 2 (1983): 130.

⁶Sandra M. Schneiders, “Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?,” *Horizons* 13, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 257.

the difference between “two ways of life.”⁷ The spiritual person, then, the *pneumatikos*, is under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the carnal person is not.

A. The Early Church. The theological meaning of spirituality, first developed by the Apostle Paul, continued throughout the early centuries of the church though it was refracted by various cultural considerations. Though the term spirituality did not yet refer almost exclusively to the nonmaterial, it began to take on aspects of a broader asceticism with the latter’s deprecation of both the body and its passions. Not only, for example, did Tertullian (170-220) take a dour view of marriage—“the difference between marriage and fornication was a matter of law, both being based on concupiscence”⁸—but nearly a century and a half later Ambrose began to attribute Jesus’ virginal birth to the need “to avoid the impurities (*vitia*) of conception.”⁹ Moreover, in the fourth century, this ascetic trend continued in Jerome’s celebration of the superiority of the celibate life over marriage in his piece *Adversus Jovinianum*, ideas which also found expression in the writings of Augustine.

In the East, ascetic trends were enhanced by two factors: first of all, by the rise of monasticism, a movement which essentially called for the abandonment of public life in its quest for holiness, and secondly by the development of Neoplatonic ideas in the writings of the Eastern Fathers, the Cappadocians in particular. The problem here, of course, was that the church’s understanding of *pneumatikos* was being deflected, at least in part, by philosophical trends which had little place for altruistic love. Nevertheless, during the patristic period through the eleventh century, the definition of the term spirituality actually changed very little. It continued to refer—sometimes despite broader cultural trends—to life according to the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

B. The Twelfth Century as Watershed. About the middle of the eleventh century, a new philosophical and theological movement emerged

⁷Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” 130. For more on this issue Cf. Sandra M. Schneiders, “Spirituality in the Academy,” in *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays*, ed. Bradley C. Hanson (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholar’s Press, 1990), 20; and Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 34.

⁸Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 110.

⁹*Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁰Schneiders, “Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?,” 258.

in the West known as Scholasticism. The principal aim of this school of thought was to integrate the truths of reason with those of revelation, to harmonize, in other words, the philosophical insights of Aristotle with the sapience of Augustine, the chief theological mentor of the age.

Guided by this integrative task, theologians of the twelfth century began to separate spiritual life from the rest of theology such that by the time of Thomas Aquinas, a century later, what would later be called spiritual theology was now a subdivision of moral theology.¹¹ No longer did spirituality relate to all of theology, but only to a part. Perhaps even more important for the task at hand, under the influence of Scholasticism, the term “spiritual” lost some of its theological meaning and began to take on a more philosophical one: that is, it no longer simply referred to two ways of life; instead, it now also distinguished the incorporeal from the material. Schneiders elaborates:

By the twelfth century, under the influence of philosophical developments in theology, we see the first use of the term “spiritual” to designate the intellectual creature in contrast to non-rational creation. In other words, spiritual is here contrasted to material. By the thirteenth century this profane, philosophical meaning stood side by side with the older religious meaning.¹²

This contrast of the spiritual to the material was further augmented by a revival of interest in the work of Pseudo Dionysius, an author who probably hailed from Syria in the fifth or early sixth century A.D.¹³ Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth century, for example, as well as Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth, all looked favorably on the contributions of this eastern writer. Moreover, since these early writings

¹¹Ibid., 260. Sheldrake makes a similar observation and notes that this process of separation, of subdivision, though it began in the twelfth century, took some time. Cf. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*, 41.

¹²Ibid., 259. For more on twelfth century trends in the area of spirituality. Cf. Bernard McGinn and Jean Leclercq, eds., *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1989).

¹³I use the phrase revival of interest here because the writings of Pseudo Dionysius were already well known and favored by Gregory the Great and Martin I. In fact, the Lateran Council of 649 approved his writings. Beyond this, of course, the translation of Pseudo-Dionysius by John Scotus Eriugena was already in existence in 862. Nevertheless, until the twelfth century the influence of this mystic author was largely indirect.

reflected the influence of Plotinus, Proclus, and Neoplatonism, it is not surprising to learn that during the Middle Ages there was a “gradual limitation of interest to interiority or subjective spiritual experience.”¹⁴ Indeed, this shift towards interior experience, with its turning away from the senses as well as from the operations of the logical mind (ratio), was likewise characteristic of the monasticism of this age which drank deeply from Dionysian wells. In time, monastic spirituality, with its emphasis on contemplation as opposed to praxis, would be presented as the ideal Christian way.¹⁵

C. Renaissance, Reformation, and Aftermath. By the time of the Renaissance, the fourteenth century in particular, Christendom had already witnessed the separation of moral theology (Christian ethics) from dogmatic theology (systematics), a trend noted earlier, but it also observed, as Principe points out, the differentiation of “spiritual, ascetical, and mystical theology, from all of these [disciplines] but especially from moral theology or Christian ethics.”¹⁶ This separation of spiritual theology from ethics resulted not only in a greater emphasis on contemplation, to the misprizing of mundane existence, but also to a speculative tendency—the latter which was clearly evident in the writings of Meister Eckhart.¹⁷

The *Devotio Moderna*, a pietistic movement which began in the Netherlands in the fourteenth century and which eventually spread into

¹⁴Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*, 44.

¹⁵Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 291. For more on the relationship between monasticism and spirituality see also the following: S. Harkianakis, “Monchtum und Spiritualitat,” *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift*, no. 4 (July-August 1974): 26-36.; Andrew Louth, “William of St Thierry and Cistercian Spirituality,” *The Downside Review* 102 (October 1984): 262-70.; Tadros Malaty, “Monasticism and Spiritual Life,” *Coptic Church Review: A Quarterly of Contemporary Patristic Studies* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 38-42.; and Alf Hardelin, “Monastische Theologie—eine “Praktische” Theologie vor der Scholastik,” *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 109, no. 4 (1987): 400-415.

¹⁶Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” p. 137. Bracketed material is mine.

¹⁷On a contemporary note, Matthew Fox, a Roman Catholic scholar, has used the writings of Eckhart as a resource for what he terms “Creation spirituality.” Cf. Matthew Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1983).

France, Germany, Spain and Italy, not only formed a contrast to the mystical piety of the mendicant orders, but also essentially rejected the mystical and speculative theology associated with Eckhart. This movement, which was founded by Geert Groote of Deventer, was associated with the Brethren of the Common Life and the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. It emphasized the practical service of God and neighbor where the contemplative life was not valued over the active. Nevertheless, Groote and others in the movement did not neglect the interior life but stressed the importance of “affectional” change as a result of the grace of God. Moreover, the spiritual classic, *The Imitation of Christ*, attributed to Thomas à Kempis, is characteristic of this movement with its emphasis on humility and other holy affections as well as on the humanity (imitatio Christi) of Christ.

During the Reformation of the sixteenth century, significant changes in the understanding of spiritual life took place. Martin Luther, for example, challenged the sharp distinction that had grown up between clergy, monks in particular, and the laity. Indeed, according to medieval thought, the highest form of Christian life was really only a possibility for those who had taken the cowl. Luther, on the other hand, a former monk himself, rejected this teaching in his doctrine of the priesthood of believers and thereby paved the way for the possibility that the spiritual life of those who had not taken vows would not only be encouraged, but also taken more seriously. Nevertheless the hope of this possibility was never fully realized in the Lutheran tradition due, in part, to Luther’s failure to articulate in his Galatians Commentary a tertius usus of the moral law.

Nevertheless, Luther’s thought is also significant because on the one hand he clearly rejected a speculative, Dionysian mysticism with its confidence that it could meet a virtually unmediated God (Deus Absconditus) in the depths of the soul, while on the other hand he was generally appreciative of the practical mysticism of Johannes Tauler, a disciple of Eckhart, and of the *Theologia Germanica*.¹⁸ For example, of the latter Luther wrote on one occasion, “To boast with my old fool, no book except the Bible and

¹⁸Brief works that are helpful in assessing Luther’s spirituality include the following: F. W. Kantzenbach, “Bild und Wort bei Luther and in der Sprache der Frömmigkeit,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 16, no. 1 (1974): 57-74.; Lawrence W. Denef, “Praying the Catechism: Spirituality as Luther Envisioned it,” *Lutheran Forum* 19, no. 4 (1985): 17-19.; Arthur Skevington Wood, “Spirit and Spirituality in Luther,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (October 1989): 311-33.

St. Augustine has come to my attention from which I have learned more about God, Christ, man, and all things.” To be sure, so impressed was Luther with this spiritual classic that he published an edition of the work himself and thereby made it available to a wider audience.

After the death of Luther, some of the energy and creativity of his spiritual theology dissipated at the hands of his followers, and a struggle ensued between the Gnesio-Lutherans, the “true Lutherans,” and the Philippists, those who looked to Philipp Melancthon with his more philosophical leanings. The conflict between these two factions was essentially brought to a close by the Formula Concord in 1577, but several theological problems remained. Accordingly, in the wake of this fresh round of creedalism, a Protestant Scholasticism set in. Here the spiritual life, the life of faith, was no longer understood in terms of *fiducia*, as it had been for Luther, but in terms of *fides*. In other words, Luther’s conception of faith as relational trust soon devolved into the intellectual assent given to creeds. Naturally a reaction set in, and the pietism of Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke in the seventeenth century served as a corrective by championing the notion that real faith is expressed not simply in knowing but also in practical deeds of love to one’s neighbor.

D. The Seventeenth Through the Nineteenth Century. In France during the seventeenth century, the word “spirituality” again took on some of its more theological meanings, and it often referred to a life of ongoing devotion. So conceived, spirituality highlighted the interior life with all its passions, dispositions and affections, and in a way not very dissimilar from that of the Pietists. A crucial difference which did emerge, however, was that the French use of the term, unlike that of Spener and Francke, was basically limited to the quest for Christian perfection.¹⁹ Here, then, one of the older meanings of the term, fostered in part by monasticism, continued to shine through.

Another important development which took place in the seventeenth century, but this time in Poland, was not simply the articulation of the essential ingredients of spirituality, but also the development of a discreet discipline whose subject matter involved the spiritual life itself.²⁰ But this

¹⁹Schneiders, “Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?,” 253-74.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 261. Indeed, Schneiders contends that *the discipline* of spirituality, as a distinct subject matter, was not named until 1655 by a Polish Franciscan named Dobrosielski.

involvement was not direct—the study of human spiritual *experience* itself—but indirect; that is, it entailed a consideration of *dogma* as it pertained to and informed spiritual life. In its early phases, this new discipline was often termed “ascetical theology,” or “mystical theology.” Given these developments, it is clear that by the seventeenth century the term “spirituality” had a least two referents: on the one hand it referred to the fostering of a distinct kind of life; on the other hand, it corresponded to the study of practical dogma which functioned in a normative way and thereby set the *Christian* parameters for the more general human spiritual experience.²¹

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the theological meaning of the term spirituality continued to highlight the distinction between the ordinary Christian life and the life of perfection.²² Nevertheless, significant developments during this century were taking place in England in particular. To illustrate, although John Wesley, one of the principal leaders of the great Evangelical Revival in Britain, rarely used the exact word “spirituality” in his pastoral and theological writings, he nevertheless crafted a practical theology, which he called “practical divinity,” which saw Christian perfection not simply as a possibility for an elite, composed largely of monks and clergy, but as a prospect for the common people as well. Put another way, those who lived in diverse stations of life, could aspire to Christian perfection, to the very highest spiritual life.

Beyond these theological considerations, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the *discipline* of spirituality was restructured such that now the more general term “spiritual theology” encompassed what an earlier age had called “ascetical” and “mystical” theology.²³

E. The Twentieth Century. The revived use of the term “spirituality” in English has been the result of the translation of the French word “spiritualite.”²⁴ Principe, for example, notes that the first English title

²¹For a much different contemporary view, one which downplays the normative value of doctrine and instead argues that experience generates doctrine Cf. Frederick Herzog, “A New Spirituality: Shaping Doctrine at the Grass Roots,” *Christian Century* 103, no. 23 (30 July - 6 August 1986): 680-81.

²²Interestingly enough, up until the latter part of the nineteenth century, the use of the term “spirituality” was found chiefly among French Catholics. Cf. Schneiders, “Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?,” 260.

²³Cf. Jordan Aumann, *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 218 ff.

²⁴Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” 127-41.

using the term did not appear until 1922 with the publication of the first volume of Pierre Pourrats's work, *Christian Spirituality*.²⁵ Through the 1980's spirituality was chiefly a Roman Catholic term, although it could be found in charismatic, pentecostal, and eastern mystical sources as well.²⁶ The mainline Protestant deficit here, according to some observers, was due in part to an overwrought fear of spiritual exercises that dates back to the sixteenth century. As Bloesch points out, "Protestantism has tended to regard the devotional life with suspicion partly because of the protest of the Reformation against works-righteousness."²⁷ In addition, as heirs of the social gospel, many mainline religious leaders were distrustful of any language which smacked of piety or inward religion. But such distrust would not last.

Indeed, recent mainline Protestant interest in the practice and discipline of spirituality has been spawned by a number of cultural movements, including the recent popularization of Jungian psychology and the American myth of self-fulfillment.²⁸ But perhaps even more significant for this renewed Protestant enthusiasm is the unfolding of post-modernism in a diversity of forms. More to the point, there are a growing number of thinkers who are critiquing the anthropology of modernity with all its reductionistic tendencies. That is, the picture of humanity which has emerged in the empiricism of Skinner and Marx as two more prominent examples is quietly being pushed aside in favor of models more appropriate to the fullness and complexity of a human being. Simply put, even some of those who have been disdainful of metaphysics in the past are beginning to realize that a human being is far more than our recent cultural constructs have allowed. The door for a reconsideration of what the ancients called *spiritualitas* is now open.

²⁵Ibid., 134.

²⁶David R. McMahill, "Blown Through the Wilderness: Questions About the Impact of Contemporary Spirituality on the Future of Mainline Protestantism," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register* 79 (Summer 1989): 82-83. See also Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (New York: Crossroad Books, 1992), 36.

²⁷Donald G. Bloesch, *The Crisis of Piety* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1988), 50.

²⁸McMahill, "Blown Through the Wilderness: Questions About the Impact of Contemporary Spirituality on the Future of Mainline Protestantism," 85-86.

II. Methodological Considerations

In light of the preceding historical considerations, it is clear that the term “spirituality” has both Christian origins as well as a rich historical development. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that spirituality is simply a Christian term or that its usage is merely the prerogative of the church. The term, as it is employed today, is far more broadly understood. There are, for instance, not only Jewish and Islamic spiritualities, but agnostic and atheistic spiritualities as well.

Sandra Scheiders, for instance, indicates that contemporary spirituality has three main referents: “(1) a fundamental *dimension* of the human being, (2) the lived *experience* which actualizes that dimension, and (3) the *academic discipline* which studies that experience.”²⁹ Few can doubt that the last two elements have been well explored throughout the history of the church. The first element, however, has not received extensive treatment—which it deserves—largely due to theological considerations, the doctrine of original sin in particular. Nevertheless, it is precisely this first element, spirituality as a fundamental dimension of all human beings, theists and atheists alike, which will help us to understand the broader scope of contemporary usage.

A. The Three Dimensions of Contemporary Spirituality.

1. Spirituality as the Nature of Human Beings. The first referent of the term spirituality, “a fundamental dimension of the human being,” suggests that homo sapiens are distinctly spiritual beings, *homo spiritualis*; that is, beings who are capable of transcendence, not simply cognitively in terms of intellectual abstractions, but also and more importantly in terms of person and being. Put another way, human beings are capable of receiving a call, an address from a transcendent “subject” whether that subject be understood as God, nature, an undifferentiated unity or as an aesthetic experience.³⁰ Therefore, to ignore or to deny outright this

²⁹Sandra M. Schneiders, “Spirituality in the Academy,” in *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays*, ed. Bradley C. Hanson (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press), 1990, 17. Emphasis is mine.

³⁰I use the phrase “transcendent subject” rather than “transcendent object” because the former suggests that it is God, or nature, or beauty which is active and which calls us out of our mundane existence to something “more.” The phrase transcendent object, on the other hand, suggests that the self is ever in control, the chief reference point, and that the transcendent dimension, then, is simply another object of its interests. Here one could rightly ask, then, if transcendence occurs at all.

dimension can only result in existential and spiritual atrophy. A clear depiction of the spiritual nature of human beings, so necessary in our empiricist age, emerges in the work of Evert Cousins, who in describing the task of Crossroad Books' grand publishing project, *World Spirituality*, writes:

The series focuses on that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions "the spirit." This spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension. . . .³¹

Some Protestants may have difficulty here with the notion that spirituality necessarily pertains to a fundamental dimension of a human being. They, perhaps, would like to insist that every discussion of spirituality necessarily presupposes divine activity in the form of grace. In this setting, Arminians would undoubtedly champion the salutary effects of prevenient grace and Calvinists those of common grace.³² But the capacity for transcending oneself, of receiving a call to some higher value or meaning, is not evidenced by theists alone. An atheist, for instance, who intentionally rejects the grace of God may lose him or herself in some lofty goal or purpose, experience transcendence, and thereby develop a genuine spirituality, broadly understood. In other words, inextricably linking spirituality, divine activity and grace presupposes theism, an assumption which is able to describe only a particular kind of spirituality as the term is used today. Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that human beings by themselves have a *natural* ability for transcending *into God*. Apart from sanctifying grace, the "subjects" of transcendence, which call us beyond ourselves, are always penultimate.

2. Spirituality as Experience. The second referent, "the lived experience which actualizes that dimension," is best explored in terms of a number of definitions which scholars have offered to come to terms with spiritual *experience*. Following in some respects the seminal work of

³¹Evert Cousins, "Preface," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq (New York: Crossroad Books, 1985) 1985, xi-xiv.

³²Ryrie denies that human beings are by nature spiritual in his confusion of spirituality with maturity. He maintains, for example, that "A new Christian cannot be called spiritual simply because he has not had sufficient time to grow and develop in Christian knowledge and experience." Cf. C. C. Ryrie, "What is Spirituality?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126 (July-September 1969): 204-13.

Zaehner, with some slight modifications, I will employ the categories of naturalistic, monistic, and theistic spirituality to describe the particular flavor expressed in each definition due to its respective ultimate or transcendent subject.³³ Put another way, the chief evoking value towards which one is directed determines, to a significant degree, the nature, the contours, of a particular spirituality.

(a) Naturalistic Spirituality. Examples of the first category, naturalistic spirituality, abound. Gordon Wakefield, for example, defines spirituality as follows: “This is a word which has come much into vogue to describe those attitudes, beliefs, and practices, which animate people’s lives and help them to reach out towards super-sensible realities.”³⁴ Here “super-sensible realities” can be interpreted in terms of a theistic dimension, to be sure, but this is not absolutely necessary. Indeed, “super-sensible realities” can be understood to include any of a number of values which are beyond the purview of empiricism such as human love, beauty, and the good. To illustrate, the aesthetic experience, the loss of a sense of self in the encounter of something “more,” may at times only have nature itself as its goal (as expressed, for example, in the writings of the Scottish poet James Thomson or in the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a key leader of the Romantic movement).³⁵ Again, the transcendental referent need not be understood in a theistic way, but there must be a real sense in which that referent is “beyond” us or is at least suggestive of an “other” towards which we are drawn.

In addition, Bradley Hanson explores spirituality in terms of a “person’s or community’s lifestyle that is lived according to a conviction about the nature and purpose of human life,”³⁶ and thereby accentuates

³³Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957). I have altered Zaehner’s categories somewhat from “panenhenic, monistic, theistic,” to “naturalistic, monistic, theistic.” Moreover, Zaehner works within the specific context of mysticism; I am working, on the other hand, within the broader category of spirituality.

³⁴Gordon S. Wakefield, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1983), 361.

³⁵Although Evans’ definition is properly placed under the heading of “monistic spirituality,” there are elements of it that resonate with the “naturalistic” one as well. He writes: “Spirit is the desire for nonphysical ecstatic intimacy with others: with the nonphysical aspect of other persons, works of art and nature. . . .” Cf. Donald Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 75.

³⁶Bradley Hanson, “Christian Spirituality and Spiritual Theology,” *Dialog* 21 (Summer 1982): 207.

the humanistic concerns of contemporary spirituality. In a similar vein, although Principe operates, no doubt, from the vantagepoint of theism, he leaves his definition of spirituality open enough to include any number of goals: "Spirituality . . . points to those aspects of a person's living a faith or commitment that concern his or her striving to attain the highest ideal or goal."³⁷ Principe's definition, since ideals and goals can be variously understood, resonates well with what is termed naturalistic spirituality.

(b) Monistic Spirituality. If, on the other hand, the transcendent dimension is conceived of not as an evoking "subject" but as an undifferentiated *unity* which is beyond the subject/object distinction, then this kind of spirituality is most suitably described as monistic. Such an understanding is exemplified in Hinduism, in its central premise that "Atman" (self) is Brahman (unity).³⁸ In Buddhism "undifferentiated unity" is not a *something* at all, but sheer nothingness.³⁹ In Christianity, according to some of its leading mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Jan van Ruysbroeck, it is the soul's union with God. Nevertheless, unlike Hinduism and Buddhism, Christianity's mystics have been careful not to suggest utter ontological union,⁴⁰ the loss of self in the abyss of God; instead, they write of the psychological and personal union of love.

In light of these considerations, mysticism, either as the realization of undifferentiated unity, as in Eastern religions, or as the approach to a union of love with God, as in Christian mysticism, is suitably placed under this broader heading of monistic spirituality.⁴¹ This means that,

³⁷Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," 139.

³⁸For two valuable pieces which compare Christian and Hindu spirituality Cf. Ian D. L. Clark, "Ananda [concepts of joy, bliss, and spirit in Christianity and Hinduism]," *Theology* 86 (January 1983): 15-19.; and Gerald J. Pillay, "Ritualistic Hinduism and Popular Pentecostalism: Two Religious Worldviews in Dynamic Relation [South Africa]," *Religion in Southern Africa* 6, no. 1 (January 1985): 29-45.

³⁹For two of the more helpful works which explore the spirituality of Christianity and Buddhism Cf. John Steffney, "Compassion in Mahayana Buddhism and Meister Eckhart," *Journal of Religious Thought* 31 (1974-1975): 64-77.; and Scott Cowdell, "Buddhism and Christianity," *Asia Journal of Theology* 4 (April 1990): 190-98.

⁴⁰Meister Eckhart, for example, maintained that there is a point in the soul, "ein punkt," whereby the soul still knows itself as other than God. Cf. Nicholas Watson, "The "Classics of Western Spirituality": Eckhart, Tauler, Ruysbroec [review article]," *King's Theological Review* 11 (Spring 1988): 19-25.

⁴¹For an evangelical critique of mysticism Cf. Winfried Corduan, *Mysticism: An Evangelical Option?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991); and Donald G. Bloesch, "Lost in the Mystical Myths: the Current Fascination with Spirituality," *Christianity Today* 35 (19 August 1991): 22-24.

although all mysticism is spiritual, not all spirituality is mystical. Simply put, mysticism in its emphasis on unity, ontological or otherwise, represents a distinct type of spirituality.

(c) **Theistic Spirituality.** Theistic spirituality views the transcendent subject as a personal God as expressed, for example, in the great monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Consequently, Christian spirituality today represents a subset of theistic spirituality, not its entirety, and theistic spirituality itself is a part of a broader phenomenon which includes the naturalistic and monistic varieties.⁴² Thus, Haddad's definition ("Spirituality is therefore the whole of human life in its efforts at being open to God"⁴³) is not quite accurate and, according to contemporary usage, is even presumptuous. If Haddad had wished to define *Christian* spirituality—which I believe was her intention—she should have parsed the category of spirituality in general (naturalistic, monistic, and theistic) and further specified the particular type of theistic spirituality she had in mind. Christian spirituality, in contradistinction to other kinds, is not simply the encounter of an amorphous personal God, but represents, more specifically, the revelation of God manifested in *Jesus Christ*. To avoid the problem of unwarranted generalization, McGinn defines Christian spirituality as "the lived experience of Christian belief,"⁴⁴ and Schneiders specifies as follows:

We might define Christian spirituality as that particular actualization of the capacity for self-transcendence that is constituted by the substantial gift of the Holy Spirit establishing a life-giving relationship with God in Christ within the believing community.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, this process of particularization is offered not to suggest that Christian spirituality is limited, incapable of addressing a universal realm, but only to indicate that such spirituality is distinct, unique in its

⁴²For an example of theistic spirituality, Christianity in particular, see my book *Soul Care: Deliverance and Renewal Through the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: BridgePoint Books, 1995).

⁴³Frieda Haddad, "Orthodox Spirituality: The Monastic Life," *The Ecumenical Review* 38, no. 1 (January 1986): 64.

⁴⁴Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, eds., *Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 1: *Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: Crossroad NY, 1987), xv.

⁴⁵Schneiders, "Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?," 266.

understanding of the transcendent, and that other varieties of spirituality exist as well, some of which are quite unlike Christianity.

Though obviously there are a variety of spiritualities in existence, many of them with a significant history, there is nevertheless a common thread which unites them all—the element of transcendence. Indeed, whether one is considering the spiritual path of Mahayana Buddhism or that of Christian monasticism, each underscores the importance of surpassing oneself into a wider circle of meaning. The four degrees of love enunciated by Bernard of Clairveaux, for example, chronicle the transition from a self-centered love, with all its limitations, to a love of self for the sake of God, quite a different thing. Moreover, John Toltschig, an eighteenth-century Moravian leader, undertook the practice of pastoral care in order “to lead people out of themselves, so that the word of power might break in on them and pierce them through.”⁴⁶ And on a more contemporary note, Donald Evans explores this same dynamic in the following way:

[What is necessary] is a letting go of my narcissism so that I am lived by the Source in all that I do and all that I experience. This contrast between self-separation and self-surrender is a contrast between two fundamental ways of being and of being conscious in the world. This contrast is the essential core of spirituality.⁴⁷

Macquarrie, describes “spirit” as the “capacity for going out of oneself and beyond oneself. . . .” Human beings “are not closed or shut up in themselves.”⁴⁸ In fact, so concerned is this British author with displaying this key characteristic of spirituality that he has even coined a new word, “exience” (“going out”) in order to capture the essential dynamic of spiritual existence.⁴⁹

The element of transcendence, however, must not be viewed simply in an individualistic way. The transcendence involved in spirituality not

⁴⁶Frank C. Senn, ed., *Protestant Spiritual Traditions* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 220.

⁴⁷Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature*, 3. One of the most extensive popular treatments on the theme of spirituality and narcissism is found in the work of Earl Jabay entitled *The Kingdom of Self*. Cf. Earl Jabay, *The Kingdom of Self* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos Press International, 1974). Bracketed material is mine.

⁴⁸John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1992), 44.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 45.

only involves going beyond ego-centric commitments, but socio-centric ones as well. Thus, on the social level, spirituality is an invitation, a call, to forsake selfish group commitments and the ethnocentrism which deflects the actualization of the very highest values in life such as the universal love of God. Put another way, spirituality, as it often is defined today, goes beyond the “tribalisms” of group life to enjoy a broader horizon of meaning.⁵⁰

3. Spirituality as a Discipline of Study. The third referent, spirituality as an academic discipline, underscores that spirituality, as it is used today, does not refer only to human experience and its transcendent subjects, but also to the deliberate and rational study of these elements. In the early part of the twentieth century this discipline was called “spiritual theology” and the contours of the field were aptly expressed in the works of Pierre Pourrat and Adolphe Tanquerey. Both of these Catholic scholars maintained that spiritual theology was a category, a subdivision, of dogmatic theology and that it had Christian perfection as its goal.⁵¹ This meant, of course, that theological considerations and dogma informed the discipline to a significant degree.

A dissenting voice to these early twentieth-century conceptions is found in the work of Sandra Schneiders, a contemporary scholar, who argues that, during the period of Vatican II and its aftermath, what earlier was referred to as “spiritual theology” was then transformed into “spirituality, a new discipline clearly distinct from its seminary predecessor.”⁵² Schneiders notes a number of shifts during this crucial period: spirituality was no longer an exclusively Roman Catholic phenomenon; spirituality was neither dogmatic nor prescriptive; the discipline was not merely concerned with perfection and therefore went beyond the bounds of a spiritual elite; and spirituality was not preoccupied only with the “interior life.”⁵³

Of all these preceding points, Schneiders takes great pains to emphasize the second, that spirituality as understood today is a “descriptive-crit-

⁵⁰Collins, *Soul Care: Deliverance and Renewal Through the Christian Life*, 52-54. For more on the concept of social transcendence. Cf. Marsha Sinetar, *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 51 ff.

⁵¹Schneiders, “Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?,” 262.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 264.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 264-65.

ical rather than prescriptive-normative discipline.”⁵⁴ This definition, which is perhaps more suited to what I have called naturalistic spirituality, is not capable of comprehending the richness and depth of spirituality as theistic experience, Christian in particular, since it excludes consideration of a “vertical” dimension of revelation in its nearly exclusive focus on *human experience*. In other words, Christian spiritual experience always involves an other, a revealing God, who is manifested in the human heart by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Dogmatic considerations, then, do function in a normative, prescriptive way in order to distinguish this kind of spiritual experience from all other kinds of experience. In other words, for Christians, theological elements are necessary both to guide and illuminate as they respond to the God who has been revealed in Jesus Christ. Simply put, a theology which is based on revelation indicates precisely what is “Christian” about this experience. To abandon this prescriptive role leaves us simply with human experience and thereby undermines the very notion that human beings can know God, as transcendent other, at all.

Moreover, our methodology must not exclude from the outset those particularizing and normative elements which bring respective transcendent subjects into focus. Indeed, the transcendent realm of a Christian theist is far different from that of a philosophical naturalist who enjoys spiritual experiences. Our methodology, then, must fully take into account the diverse ways in which transcendence is understood. This is the key to distinguishing one spirituality from another.

Schneider’s focus, however, seems to be elsewhere, not on the defining requisites or essentials of transcendent subjects, but on human experience in general. In her assessment, all that is left is the horizontal dimension; all that remains is all-too-human experience. Therefore, just as Christians should avoid a triumphalism that attempts to dominate the field by maintaining that Christianity has an exclusive or nearly exclusive claim to spirituality, so too should Christians avoid a methodology that virtually eliminates the distinctive contribution that Christianity has to make to this field.

Perhaps Schneiders and others have emphasized the descriptive nature of the discipline of spirituality in order that it might more easily gain entrance into the academy as a field of study in its own right. Clearly, if the emphasis is on spirituality as human experience, without a serious

⁵⁴Schneiders, “Spirituality in the Academy,” 32.

exploration of the diverse transcendent ends involved (God, undifferentiated unity, aesthetic experience, etc.), then many of the research methods already present in the academy, in the social sciences in particular, could be applied to the new discipline with equal rigor. Nevertheless, problems remain even at this level since the discipline of spirituality, according to Hanson and Evans, ever entails an existential element that will hardly be welcomed by the academy. Hanson writes:

This combination of serious reflection and strongly existential orientation distinguishes spirituality from all the disciplines in the natural sciences, social sciences, and religious studies that intend to be value neutral and objective.⁵⁵

For his part, Evans notes that spirituality necessarily commits a person to a process of personal transformation, a process which is often rejected outright in the academy in the name of scientific objectivity.⁵⁶ Evans approach, however, unlike that of some of his colleagues, is not to fall back on the notion that spirituality as a discipline is more akin to theology than anything else and is, therefore, rightly excluded in public discourse. Instead, he critiques the epistemological presuppositions and assumptions of the academy in terms of its impersonalism: that is, its “dogmatic rejection of any truth claim that requires personal transformation,”⁵⁷ and in terms of its perspectivalism which entails a “rejection of any truth claim based on direct experience of reality.”⁵⁸ In a real sense, Evans is wrestling with the methodological hegemony of scientific empiricism which has so swept the modern academy and which largely has excluded a serious examination of existential concerns.

Given these considerations, there seem to be at least two ways in which spirituality might emerge as a discipline in the academy. In the first scenario, the field would gain acceptance to the extent that it conformed to the methodology of empiricism. Here the stress would be on human

⁵⁵Bradley C. Hanson, “Spirituality as Spiritual Theology,” in *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays*, ed. Bradley C. Hanson (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990), 50.

⁵⁶Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature*, 147.

⁵⁷Ibid., 6. Hanson contends that “spirituality will not qualify as a “scientific” discipline among the pantheon of disciplines in religious studies; it belongs to what we in the West have called theology in the broad sense.” Cf. Hanson, “Spirituality as Spiritual Theology,” 50.

⁵⁸Ibid., 7.

experience and behaviors that could be both analyzed and quantified in light of appropriate theory. What would be lost, however, would be the elements of transcendence, and then one could rightfully ask, I suppose, whether one was really studying spirituality at all.

In the second scenario, the field would be welcomed as a critical discipline which would call into question the first principles of objectivism and, thereby, argue for a renewed appreciation not only for the various dimensions of human existence, some hitherto neglected, but also for a reconsideration of some of the epistemological assumptions that date back to Kant. But this would hardly be satisfactory to many in the academy, given its present constitution, since such an approach would permit a new discipline—not well developed in either definition or theory—to be a revolutionary discipline from the start.

In light of these scenarios, it is unlikely that spirituality will emerge as a full-fledged discipline in the academy any time soon. The methodological problems to be overcome, at least at this juncture, are simply too significant. In the meantime, however, scholars can give greater attention not only to the rich history of spirituality, but also to defining the subject more clearly in terms of a) human nature b) the range of human experience and c) its potential as a discipline. In this endeavor, they may plant the seeds for future prodigious growth; in this task, they may achieve greater definitional precision; in this labor, they may yet reap a harvest unexpected.

GLOSSOLALIA AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PENTECOSTAL CLAIM

by

D. William Faupel

In 1947, Assemblies of God historian Carl Brumback observed:

If speaking in tongues were taken out of the Pentecostal movement, perhaps nine-tenths of the opposition would disappear; Pentecost might possibly become the most popular religious movement in the Protestant world.¹

From the perspective of the 1990s it is clear that Brumback was prophetic. Pentecostalism as a world-wide phenomenon has exploded. In 1984 Vinson Synan estimated that there were 51 million Pentecostal adherents, making this movement the single largest Protestant tradition.² Ten years later Harvey Cox claimed that the number had soared to 410 million, with 20 million adherents being added every year.³ Since 1960, the practice of glossolalia also has spread in the form of the Charismatic Movement throughout the Protestant world and within the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions as well.

¹Carl Brumback, *“What Meaneth This?” A Pentecostal Answer to a Pentecostal Question* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1947), 115.

²Vinson Synan, *In the Latter Days: The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1984), 17.

³Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1994), xv.

To the Wesleyan community, Pentecostalism's "success" has been acknowledged with mixed emotions which are deeply rooted. On the one hand, there is rejoicing that the Pentecostal Movement is being used to advance God's kingdom. At the same time, Wesleyan leaders remain troubled as Pentecostal practice penetrates the worship experience of many of their own adherents. This anxious feeling undoubtedly is exacerbated by the growing awareness of the close relationship the two movements share both historically and theologically.

Since the publication of Synan's *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement* in 1971, Wesleyans for the most part have acknowledged that Pentecostalism is the product of their own holiness tradition of the 19th century.⁴ Later, Donald Dayton's *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*,⁵ appearing in 1987, traced the theological development within this historical context. Both works focus on the continuities of the two movements. Grant Wacker more recently has analyzed the points of contention that led Pentecostalism to separate from the Holiness Movement. After examining the enflamed rhetoric adherents of each side hurled at the other, he nonetheless concludes:

Except for the specific question of tongues, it is difficult to think of any point of doctrine, lifestyle, or cultural orientation that Pentecostals failed to share with a majority of their . . . holiness forebears.⁶

Even the restoration of the gift of tongues had been anticipated by most holiness advocates as part of the end-time revival which they felt was coming at the turn of the twentieth century. W. B. Godby, an evangelist of the Methodist Church South, was typical when he wrote: "This Gift (of Tongues) is destined to play a conspicuous part in the evangelization of the heathen world amid the glorious prophetic fulfillment of the latter days."⁷ He then cited evidence that the gift was already being restored,

⁴Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1971.

⁵Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1987.

⁶Grant Wacker, "The Travail of a Broken Family: Radical Evangelical Responses to Early Pentecostalism." Unpublished paper given at the twenty-third annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Guadalajara, Mexico, November 11-13, 1993, 19. This article in a revised form has been accepted for publication in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. This remarkably even-handed article paints an empathetic picture of the pain adherents of both movements experienced in the separation from each other.

⁷W. B. Godby, *Spiritual Gifts and Graces* (Cincinnati, OH: God's Revivalist Office, [1896]), 43.

describing an account in the work of Bishop William Taylor where a woman missionary, not knowing the African languages, found that she could preach fluently in the native tongue when arriving at her station.⁸

Despite such anticipation, within months of the outbreak of the revival at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California, in 1906, Wesleyan leaders were denouncing Pentecostalism as a spurious work of the devil. Why was this so? Why did two movements that held so much in common, including an anticipation of the restoration of glossolalia, divide so deeply and so bitterly?

Part of the answer to this question was precisely the conviction by Wesleyan and other Evangelical leaders that the gift of tongues would be restored as “missionary languages” to enable the rapid evangelization of the world before the end of the church age. Early Pentecostal adherents, of course, shared this perspective. Indeed, they claimed that the gift of tongues they received was in fact one of the languages understood by people who “heard the message” even though they themselves had no previous knowledge of the language through which it was conveyed.

Investigations by Evangelical and Wesleyan leaders called this claim into question. It was in large part on the basis of such research that they concluded that Pentecostalism was a spurious counterfeit produced by Satan. This article seeks to examine the historical evidence of the early Pentecostal claim, trace the movement’s subsequent understanding of the nature and purpose of glossolalia, and evaluate its initial claim.

The Initial Pentecostal Claim

At the outset of the Pentecostal revival, adherents believed that glossolalia had been given for three purposes: (1) as the eschatological sign that initiated the era of the Latter Rain; (2) as the seal of the Holy Spirit that ensured membership in the Bride of Christ; and (3) as the means by which God’s final message could be proclaimed to the nations.⁹ Of these expectations, the last one proved to be the most controversial. Missionaries went forth, first from Los Angeles, and later from other Pentecostal centers, confident that they were able speak in a foreign language at

⁸Ibid.

⁹See my article “The Function of ‘Models’ in the Interpretation of Pentecostal Thought,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* I (Spring, 1980), 51-71, for the conceptual framework in which the phenomenon was understood.

will.¹⁰ Charles Fox Parham, the initial Pentecostal theologian, held this view until the end of his life.¹¹ His most famous comment on the subject appears in his account of the coming of the Holy Spirit to Bethel College.

I had felt for years that any missionary going to the foreign field should preach in the language of the natives. That if God had ever equipped His ministers in that way He could do it today. That if Balaam's mule could stop in the middle of the road and give the first preacher that went out for money a "bawling out" in Arabic, that anybody today ought to be able to preach in any language of the world if they had horse sense enough to let God use their tongue and throat.¹²

After Parham was discredited as the leader of the Pentecostal revival in 1906, his successor of the Apostolic Faith work in Texas, W. F. Carothers, maintained the same conviction, although he expressed it in more cautious terms:

Just what part the gift of tongues is to fill in the evangelization of heathen countries is a matter for faith as yet. It scarcely seems from the evidence at hand to have had much to do with foreign mission work in the New Testament times, and yet, in view of the apparent utility of the gift in that sphere and of the wonderful missionary spirit that comes with Pentecost, we are

¹⁰While historians of Pentecostalism have acknowledged the presence of this view, they have failed to recognize that this was the prevailing understanding at the outset of the revival. For example, the respected British Pentecostal theologian Donald Gee observed in 1941: "In those early days of the movement there was a tendency to seek after identification of the languages spoken, doubtless because of traditional, but mistaken and unscriptural views that the gift of tongues was "for preaching the gospel to the heathen" (Donald Gee, *The Pentecostal Movement*, London, ENG: Elim Publishing House, 1941, 2). Other Pentecostal historians making similar statements include, Carl Brumback, "*Suddenly . . . From Heaven*": *A History of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 112; and Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 111.

¹¹Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 111.

¹²Charles Fox Parham, "The Latter Rain: The Story of the Original Apostolic or Pentecostal Movement," *Selected Sermons of the Late Charles F. Parham and Sarah E. Parham, Co-Founders of the Original Apostolic Faith Movement*, comp. Robert L. Parham (Baxter Springs, KN: Apostolic Faith Bible College, 1941), 75-6.

expecting the gift to be copiously used in the foreign field. We shall soon know.¹³

William Seymour carried the same conviction with him when he left Parham's work in Houston, Texas, to go to Los Angeles, California. Shortly after the revival broke out at the Azusa Street Mission, his new magazine, *The Apostolic Faith*, confidently declared: "Missionaries for the foreign field, equipped with several languages, are now on their way and others are waiting for the way to open and for the Lord to say 'Go' "¹⁴ A month earlier, this same periodical had asserted:

The gift of languages is given with the commission "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." The Lord has given languages to the unlearned, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Zulu and languages of Africa, Hindu and Bengals and dialects of the Indians, Exquimaux, the deaf mute language, and, in fact, the Holy Ghost speaks all the languages of the world through his children.¹⁵

When A. H. Post, who had pastored Methodist churches in California for over thirty years, heard about the strange experiences that were taking place at the Azusa Mission, he went to investigate. He, too, was soon reporting that people were receiving actual languages for the purpose of world evangelization. "From here God has sent those living witnesses . . . into China, India, Africa and Jerusalem, each able to speak in any language to whom God sends."¹⁶

The Need For Reassessment

The initial expectation was soon dashed by bitter disappointment. S. C. Todd, a missionary with the Bible Missionary Society, investigated mission stations in China, India, and Japan where Pentecostals had come "expecting to be able to preach to the natives of those countries in their own tongues." By their own admission, he found that "in no single instance have they been able to do so."¹⁷

¹³W. F. Carothers, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues* (Houston, TX: The Author, 1906), 21.

¹⁴*The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles), I (October, 1906), 1.

¹⁵*The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles), I (September, 1906), 1.

¹⁶A. H. Post, *The Way of Faith and Neglected Themes*, reprinted in George F. Taylor, *The Spirit and the Bride* (Dunn, NC: The Author, 1907), 94.

¹⁷Cited in A. E. Seddon "Edward Irving and Unknown Tongues," *Homiletic Review* (February, 1909), 109.

All but a few Pentecostals were forced by the evidence to modify their view. A. G. Garr, the first missionary to leave Azusa, went to India fully expecting to preach in Hindustani. After a few months, he admitted his failure on this point, but nonetheless remained to carry on a successful ministry for several years, preaching to these British subjects in English.¹⁸ Even Charles Parham conceded: "To my knowledge not a single missionary in the foreign field speaks in the tongue of the natives as a gift from God."¹⁹ Yet Parham remained convinced from his own experience that actual languages were available: "For twenty-five years I have spoken and prayed in other languages to the conversion of foreigners in my meetings."²⁰ He was almost alone, however. Most Pentecostals came to echo the view of Herman Harvey, a minister who joined forces with Aimee Semple McPherson, when he acknowledged:

It is clearly not the purpose of God to bestow a language that will work automatically upon heathen and sinners of other lands and tribes. When the Spirit was first poured out in California a few years ago a sad mistake was made by some who acted upon the belief that all they had to do was to reach some heathen land and the language would always be the very dialect needed.²¹

Despite this disconfirmation and reassessment, successful missionary activity was carried on unabated by adherents of the movement. Though disappointed, they were not shaken in their primary belief that God had called them to bear witness to the nations. Unable to speak the languages of the natives, the early Pentecostal missionaries went to existing mission stations. In many cases they were successful in persuading these, in whole or in part, to accept the Pentecostal message.²² Having secured this alternate means to proclaim their message, they remained confident that they were being faithful to the command of the Gospel and that, through their efforts, they were hastening the end of the age.

¹⁸*Twentieth Anniversary of the Garr Auditorium* (Charlotte, NC: n.p., 1950), 3.

¹⁹Charles F. Parham, *The Apostolic Faith* (Baxter Springs), XXV (June, 1925), 2.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 2.

²¹Herman L. Harvey, "The Gift of Tongues," *The Bridal Call* (April, 1919), 7-8.

²²See chapter five, "Birth: The Emergence and Spread of Pentecostalism."

The disconfirmation of the initial expectation for glossolalia forced adherents to reexamine the Scriptures to discover a more “biblical understanding” that squared with the reality of their experience. The 1934 exposition of Harold Horton has remained the prevailing view. He saw an eight-fold purpose for the use of glossolalia. These can be summarized in four categories: (1) The Scriptural evidence of Spirit Baptism; (2) Private edification; (3) Communal edification when interpreted; and (4) a sign to the unbeliever.²³

Thus, the emphasis shifted from a public prophetic understanding to a more personal devotional perspective. The view of tongues as *sign* and *seal*, while retained, was divested of its initial eschatological significance. Reports which have persisted that, on rare occasions, actual languages have been spoken, have been understood to be a “sign to the unbeliever.”

An Evaluation of the Early Twentieth-Century Claim

The advent of the “Charismatic Movement” in the 1960s, which introduced glossolalia throughout Christendom, has heightened interest in the nature of the phenomenon. The view that “tongues” are actual languages persists among adherents. Reports recur that, in some cases, these languages are understood by persons present.

Studies now completed or in progress have found no evidence that this phenomenon has either the form or the structure of human speech. Robert Anderson, who takes seriously though not uncritically these Pentecostal claims, cites several studies where tape recordings of glossolalia have been analyzed by linguists who found no resemblance to traditional human language in them.²⁴ The charismatic John Sherrill played forty different samples of tongue-speech to a group of linguists in New York City. Although they recognized language-like patterns, they were agreed that none of the tapes contained any of the languages with which they were familiar.²⁵

²³Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (London, ENG: F. J. Lamb, 1934), 137-144. More recent presentations expressing similar views include: Robert Chandler Dalton, “Interpretation of Glossolalia According to Present Pentecostal Theology and Exegesis,” *Tongues Like as of Fire: A Critical Study of Modern Tongue Movements in Light of Apostolic and Patristic Times* (1947). Reprint, Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1973), 104; and Carl Brumback, *What Meaneth This*, 261-337.

²⁴Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), 16-9.

²⁵John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1964), 112-3.

Linguist William J. Samarin concludes that, in the hundreds of examples he studied, all lacked several essential elements of languages: vocabulary, grammar, syntax, etc.²⁶ As a result of his study, he defined glossolalia as “a meaningless but phonologically structured human utterance believed by the speaker to be a real language but bearing no systematic resemblance to any natural language, living or dead.”²⁷

In the most comprehensive study of the phenomenon to date, Cyril Williams finds no first-hand evidence that actual language did occur and is most hesitant to accept the claims of second-hand testimony.²⁸ Although Walter Hollenweger has rightly cautioned that final judgment should be withheld until sufficient tape recordings are made and analyzed, it would appear from subsequent studies that this question is being answered in the negative.²⁹

In view of this accumulating evidence, how can one account for the thousands of reports that actual languages were uttered, unknown by the speaker but understood by an observer? Samarin maintains that these claims are not simply the result of deliberate fraud or pious deceit.³⁰ In an attempt at an alternate explanation, this writer has analyzed over two thousand accounts he has on file. These can be classified into four general categories: (1) accounts which are based on rumor and hearsay; (2) reports where the observer is a “believer”; (3) narratives where the observer is converted as a result of hearing a message in a recognized language; and (4) incidents where the observer appears to be uninterested in the content of the message. Attention is now directed to an evaluation of each category in turn.

1. Accounts Based on Rumor and Hearsay. A large number of the reports are based on third- and fourth-hand information. They are vague in detail. These narratives can be accounted for simply on the basis of the Pentecostal world-view and the reporter’s inclination to accept accounts without question. Such reports provide no basis on which to be accepted as evidence.

²⁶William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York, NY: Macmillan Company, 1972), 104-9.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 2.

²⁸Cyril G. Williams, *Tongues of the Spirit: A Study of Pentecostal Glossolalia and Related Phenomena* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), 184.

²⁹Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 342.

³⁰William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 110.

2. An Adherent's Testimony. The greatest number of accounts this writer has on file are of incidents where the message was understood by a Pentecostal believer. A typical example of this occurred at the Azusa Street Mission.

S. J. Mead, a missionary who labored for over twenty years in Liberia, attended the Azusa Street meetings. He heard many African dialects spoken with which he was familiar. A colored woman spoke at length in tongues as the Spirit was pleased to use her. Immediately after she had spoken, Brother Mead arose and interpreted the message and gave the name of the tribe in Africa that spoke the language.³¹

Samarin's analysis of recordings which he has heard led him to conclude that glossolalia often has many superficial similarities with those languages which the speaker is generally familiar, such as intonation, simple words and phrases, and syntax-like features.³²

The example cited above is subject to question in light of his findings. A "colored woman" is the speaker. It is quite possible that she was "generally familiar" with an African dialect and that in a state of altered consciousness, she could have reproduced general intonation, a few words or phrases, etc. The competence of Mead's ability to recognize "many African dialects" must also be questioned. Ian Stevenson's research leads him to conclude: "Persons only casually familiar with foreign languages . . . who perhaps studied them superficially in high school, but never mastered one—may easily mistake the semblance of a foreign language for the reality."³³ Given the initial Pentecostal world-view and its expectation for glossolalia, Mead would be predisposed to his conclusion based on a few words or general intonation.

Samarin cites a similar case that he was able to investigate. It involved a woman who had grown up in a Pentecostal church.

A man rose to give a message in tongues. She immediately recognized it as the language she had learned in Africa as a missionary several years before. And as he spoke, she under-

³¹Stanley H. Frodsham, "Pentecost in Los Angeles," *With Signs Following: The Story of the Pentecostal Revival in the Twentieth Century* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1928), 39.

³²William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 112.

³³Ian Stevenson, *Xenoglossy: A Review and Case Report* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1974), 11.

stood the sense of what he was saying. Immediately after the meeting was over, she met with her husband and son, who also spoke the language. All of them had been amazed to hear it from the lips of someone who could not possibly have had the opportunity to learn it as they had.³⁴

Talking with the woman later, Samarin discovered that, although she had some knowledge of the language, she spoke it with a heavy accent and did not know the intonations of its structure. Furthermore, the length of the discourse that she had recognized as the language was less than a minute, and she could only report that the man had been praising Jesus. After investigating several reports of a similar nature, Samarin concluded: "Cross-examination destroys the credibility of this sincere person who claimed to hear a language she personally knew."³⁵

3. A Convert's Testimony. The third category of tongue-speech which is recognized as known language involves an unbeliever of a non-English speaking origin who attends a Pentecostal meeting, hears an exhortation in his own language, and as a result, becomes a convert to the movement. A. W. Orwig summarized the countless such incidents which occurred at the Azusa Mission as follows:

Persons of many nationalities were also present, of which Los Angeles seems to be filled, representing all manner of religious beliefs. Sometimes these, many of them unsaved, would be seized with deep conviction for sin under the burning testimony of one of their own nationality, and at once heartily turn to the Lord. Occasionally, some foreigner, although somewhat understanding English, would hear a testimony of earnest exhortation in his native tongue from a person not at all acquainted with that language, thereby be pungently convicted that it was a call from God to repent of sin; often such repentance followed just as on the Day of Pentecost.³⁶

Many such accounts are of a second-hand nature and, like the first category, can be attributed to an uncritical acceptance of hearsay and rumor. The Pentecostal world-view predisposed the reporter to accept the claim without question. Others, like the summary cited, are eyewitness

³⁴William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 113-4.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 114.

³⁶A. W. Orwig, "Azusa Street Scenes," *The Apostolic Faith Restored*, ed. B. F. Lawrence (St. Louis, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1916), 78-9.

accounts and cannot be easily dismissed without challenging the integrity of the observer. Samarín's findings help to explain these cases. The "languages" heard in such instances are often those known by some members of the group. Although unknown by the speaker, this person would be "generally familiar" with the language and could have reproduced intonation, some words or phrases, etc.

There is a critical difference among the reports in this category, however. The person who understands the language is an unbeliever who does not share the Pentecostal world-view. Yet this person is convicted of sin and is converted as a result of the message.

Eddison Mosimann, a psychiatrist who studied the glossolalia phenomenon in Switzerland, provides a possible clue. His investigation stemmed from an interest raised in this subject when one of his patients, a Pentecostal, claimed that she heard real languages. In his investigation, Mosimann found that: (1) there were many reported cases of this occurrence among Pentecostals; (2) the people involved were absolutely sincere in their belief; (3) the message provided an answer to a crisis they were facing; and (4) the actual utterance, when analyzed, was no language at all. His conclusion was that the "miracle" was in the *hearing* rather than in the *speaking*.³⁷ Cyril Williams concurs. After extensive investigation, he concluded that auditory illusion is the most likely explanation in such cases.³⁸

As A. W. Orwig noted, Los Angeles was a microcosm of immigration that took place to the western and northern American cities at the turn of the twentieth century. The recently displaced immigrant experienced heightened intensification of the common psychological effects of urban life: "loneliness, alienation and despair."³⁹ An encounter by the Pentecostals must have been a refreshing release. Stanley Frodsham quotes an early eyewitness who attended the Azusa Mission:

It is noticeably free from all nationalistic feeling. If a Mexican or a German cannot speak English, he gets up and speaks in his own tongue and feels quite at home, for the spirit interprets through the face and the people say "Amen."⁴⁰

³⁷Eddison Mosimann, *Das Zungenreden geachtlich und psychologisch inter scicht* (Tubingen, West Germany: J. C. G. Mohr, 1911).

³⁸Cyril G. Williams, *Tongues of the Spirit*, 184.

³⁹Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 75-7, 146ff.

⁴⁰Stanley H. Frodsham, *With Signs Following*, 34.

In the emotionally charged atmosphere of the early Pentecostal revival where glossolalia was thought to be a known foreign language and where everyone found acceptance regardless of nationality, race, economic status, etc., it is not difficult to conceive that the lonely, alienated immigrants *heard* in their own language, a message consistent with that which the Pentecostals were proclaiming in English. Accepting the message, these persons were received into full fellowship of the community of faith. At last, they had found their new home.

Given the initial Pentecostal understanding for the purpose of glossolalia, the *speaker* of the utterance quite naturally felt God was issuing a call to take the Pentecostal to the country of the language which had been spoken. It was only as the missionaries arrived on site that they discovered what they had been able to do in their homeland, they could not reproduce on the mission field. Others, like Parham, who did not go abroad, could honestly believe until their dying day that they had, upon occasion, spoken an actual language which had been unquestionably confirmed by the subsequent conversion and testimony of an American immigrant.

4. An Outsider's Testimony. By far the smallest category of reports involves instances where an apparent disinterested observer heard a discourse in a language they understood but which was unknown to the speaker. One such incident occurred to John Follette, who at the time was a student at Elim Bible Institute in Rochester, New York. He gave a public utterance in tongues shortly after the Pentecostal revival swept this holiness school into the new movement in June, 1907. Elizabeth Baker, the leader of the school, gave the interpretation. She stated that he was seeing a vision of Christ's nativity. Follette was unable to speak in English at that point, but signified by gestures that she was correct. Following this sequence, he burst forth in song.

At the close of the service a lady and a gentleman who were present, called one of the sisters aside and asked, "Who was that young Jew who spoke and sang tonight?" He was told that there was no Jew present but that it was one of the students. With great surprise he informed us that he and his wife had understood several languages, among them the Hebrew, and, he said, "The young man spoke and sang in the most perfect Hebrew, and we understood every word he was saying, and the interpretation given was correct."⁴¹

⁴¹Elizabeth V. Baker, *Chronicles of a Faith Life* (Rochester, NY: The Author, 1916), 138-40.

It is, of course, impossible to cross-examine the participants of this account. It would appear, however, that the lady and gentleman were competent to understand Hebrew. There is no indication that they were facing a personal crisis or that they were converted to Pentecostalism as a result of this experience. The integrity of Mrs. Baker and the Reverend Follett is beyond question. The only credible explanation appears to be that in this case Hebrew was actually spoken.

In seeking to allow for the *possibility* that in a few instances, Pentecostals actually spoke in known languages, Robert Anderson offers the theory of cryptomnesia which he defines as “the ability to recall in a trace, a language which one has heard or seen but never consciously committed to memory.”⁴² To be operative, he suggests “cryptomnesia requires the deep state of dissociation that was quite common among the early Pentecostals.” He continued: “Today Pentecostals rarely achieve this state so it is not surprising that the available recordings of tongue-speech contain no language.”⁴³

Though it is true that trances were a common phenomenon in early Pentecostalism, the most credible reports of glossolalia as language came from instances where such a state of deep dissociation was not in evidence. Follette certainly experienced a degree of dissociation—he was experiencing a vision while speaking in tongues and was unable to speak in English for awhile after he was finished. However, he was sufficiently aware to comprehend and affirm by a gesture the interpretation Mrs. Baker was giving. This level of dissociation is quite common among charismatics. Since no tape recordings to date reveal evidence that language has been spoken, Anderson’s theoretical possibility for cases of cryptomnesia in early Pentecostalism cannot be validated.

Of the two thousand and more cases this investigator has analyzed, only six cannot be accounted for by some alternate explanation. These few cases are now impossible to investigate further and therefore stand as a haunting possibility that in rare instances when actual language, unknown to the speaker, might be uttered. However, in view of the lack of evidence from present day tongue-speech, and in light of the disconfirmation experienced by the early Pentecostal missionaries, it must be concluded that, if actual language ever has been spoken, it has been extremely rare.

⁴²Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 19.

⁴³Ibid.

Such an understanding does not deny that foreigners heard glossolalia in their own languages as reported in the Acts of the Apostles and in early Pentecostal literature.⁴⁴ It does not disconfirm glossolalia as a sign to the unbeliever. It reinforces the present Pentecostal understanding that one who speaks in tongues speaks not to other persons but to God. However, it removes glossolalia from the realm of known human languages and places it in the arena of the language of faith. Such an understanding was expressed by an early observer:

Those who speak in tongues seem to live in another world. The experience they have entered corresponds exactly with that which is described in the 10th chapter of Acts. The tongues they speak in do not seem to be intended as a means of communication between themselves and others, . . . rather it seems to be a means of communication between the soul and God.⁴⁵

Afterword

Almost one hundred years have now passed since glossolalia in its present form reemerged within the Church. Far from proving to be the “passing fad” that early opponents predicted, its presence and practice have become the norm for an ever-increasing percentage of Christendom. Wesleyans no longer view the phenomenon’s origin as from Satan; but at the same time they continue to question whether it reflects New Testament practice. The primary reason given is the conviction that biblical tongues were actual languages while the contemporary phenomenon is not.⁴⁶

⁴⁴For an excellent article arguing that the event which occurred on the day of Pentecost was a miracle of *hearing* rather than a miracle of *speaking*, see Jenny Everts, “Tongues or Languages? Contextual Consistency in the Translation of Acts 2” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology IV* (April, 1994), 71-80. Everts argues for this same understanding for the reports of glossolalia in early Pentecostalism in “Missionary Tongues?” unpublished paper given at the twenty-third annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Guadalajara, Mexico, November 11-13, 1993.

⁴⁵“The Promise of the Father and Speaking in Tongues in Chicago,” *Word and Work* (August, 1907), 207.

⁴⁶See, for example, *No Uncertain Sound: An Exegetical Study of I Corinthians 12, 13, 14* (Marion, IN: Weleyan Church Corporation, 1975), 60; and Richard S. Taylor, *Tongues: Their Purpose and Meaning* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1973), 7-15.

It should be clear from this article that this writer concurs that the available evidence suggests that the present practice of glossolalia is not known language. Charismatics and Pentecostals are gradually coming to accept this view. But the reverse question must also be addressed. Does the contemporary experience of Pentecostals suggest that glossolalia experienced in the New Testament also was not actual language? Though beyond the scope of this essay, this question can become one basis for future Wesleyan/Pentecostal dialog.

THIRD WAVE OF THE SPIRIT AND THE PENTECOSTALIZATION OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY: A WESLEYAN CRITIQUE

by

Laurence W. Wood

The greatest challenge to a self-understanding of the Wesleyan tradition today is the trend toward the “pentecostalization” of many Christian denominations throughout the world. By pentecostalization I mean placing the categories of spiritual gifts, physical manifestations, and spiritual warfare (demon possession) in the forefront of Christian meaning and ministry.

The choice to emphasize these things is a choice not to focus on the essentials of the gospel. None of these issues is distinctly Christian. They all can be developed without any reference to Jesus Christ. The focus of the gospel is spiritual formation. To emphasize *gifts, phenomena, and demon possession* is to de-emphasize the *gift* of the Spirit in justification and sanctification; it is to overdo issues which are secondary in the Scriptures. A choice to emphasize these pentecostal themes is a choice against a Wesleyan-evangelical-catholic interpretation of the Christian life.

This pentecostalizing process began in the early 1900s with the emergence of classical pentecostalism which arose out of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition in a revival meeting in Los Angeles, California. My purpose here is to show that these pentecostal distinctives may at times be legitimate aspects of ministry, but they are not the focal point of the gospel. My critique will indicate ways in which the Wesleyan movement needs to think of itself in the light of this pentecostalization. Otherwise, the distinctives of the Wesleyan tradition will be eroded.

A. The Wesleyan theological tradition has discouraged the tendency to redefine life in the Spirit in sub-Christian terms such as acquisition of personal power to perform miracles.

Understandably, the emphasis on power and the acquisition of gifts are attractive to those who feel deeply their brokenness because of abusive relationships and the resulting emotional deprivation and sense of personal insignificance. The drawing power of pentecostalism is undoubtedly related to the epidemic need for the masses of people in the world today to feel good about themselves. However, this anthropocentric focus may become a narcissistic substitute for the source of true spiritual identity, which is being renewed in the image of Christ.

To be sure, this tendency also can be seen in some instances in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. After all, the phrases “power from on high” and “the baptism with the Holy Ghost” are popular expressions used in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. This terminology contributed to the rise of pentecostalism with its emphasis on an emotionalist interpretation of Christian experience. The earliest pentecostals were members of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement, though they were largely from the economically lower class in American society (even as the earliest Methodists were). Unfortunately, their leadership was also largely uneducated. The appeal to the physical evidence of speaking in tongues, along with the outbursts of other emotional behaviors, served as a self-validating sign of their theological and biblical correctness. It should be noted, however, that pentecostals now have well-established Bible schools and colleges with highly educated scholars and some desire to reclaim their heritage as Wesleyans.¹

My criticism of pentecostalism is not its display of emotion, but its implied claim that its theology of the Holy Spirit can be proved through certain emotional behaviors. It may be appropriate to make a joyful noise with shouts of praise. Methodists have a long history of this practice. Yet, one should remember Paul’s words that worship should not foster confusion, but respect the principles of decency and order (1 Cor 14:40).

1. The pentecostalist concept of tongues tends toward a pagan practice of equating human speaking with divine speaking. The

¹One noteworthy pentecostal theologian/scholar who is seeking to integrate the theology of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) with its roots in Wesleyanism is Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality, A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

response of the Wesleyan tradition has been to issue a caution to pentecostalism and subsequently the charismatic movement. Any focus on the acquisition of spiritual gifts as the means of grace and as the goal of the Christian life tends toward the ecstatic experiences of paganism, which the Old Testament fought against and which Paul cautioned against.

To be sure, ecstatic experiences are not condemned by Paul in 1 Cor. 12-14, but the tone of his comments are largely negative. He downplays their importance and specifically exhorts the Corinthians to seek the fruit of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13). The gifts of the Spirit are not intended to be sought as such since they are given solely by divine choice (1 Cor. 12:11). The “love chapter” of 1 Cor. 13 is highlighted as the goal and essence of the Christian life. This *agape* love is not an emotional quality characteristic of an ecstatic experience, but an intellectual and spiritually-discerning quality of love which sanctifies the whole of human life.

In contrast to the universal seeking for the gift of forgiving and sanctifying love, the gifts of the Spirit are given solely by divine choice, not by human seeking. Nowhere does Paul command or encourage Christians to seek for spiritual gifts, though it is normal to desire spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:1).² Since the gift of tongues was so highly prized among the Corinthians, Paul could even wish that all the Corinthians had it (1 Cor. 14:5). Yet the gift of tongues is the least and most inconsequential of all the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:27-31). This is not to imply that *agape* love is without emotion, nor that ecstatic experience is unChristian. Indeed, emotion and ecstatic experiences are evident aspects of a biblical understanding of the Jewish and Christian experience.

The ecstatic responses of the Corinthian Christians were similar in kind to the ecstatic religions associated with fertility cults. Corinth was a center of pagan worship where the devotees became passionately immersed in the divine through acts of sacred prostitution with the priestesses. The gifts of the Spirit as appearing in Corinth, such as prophecy and healing, were not distinctly Christian. Seers, magicians, witch doctors, and divine healers in other religions are common, as in ancient pagan religions and in Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. They make many claims to marvelous healings.

²The popular catch-phrase “Be open to the gifts of the Spirit” is not biblical. We are to be open to God and allow the Spirit to develop the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. If we are “walking in the Spirit” as commanded in Gal. 5:16, we will be open to the will of God in all things. But to encourage believers to be open to the gifts of the Spirit implies that one should seek for them. To seek the gifts will result in imitations, as in Corinth.

One significant difference between pagan tongues-speaking and prophetic speaking in the Bible is described by Yehezkel Kaufmann: "Paganism . . . views the speech of the rapt prophet as the very utterance of a god who has taken possession of him. Even inarticulate words and sounds have value as the communication of the indwelling god." But in the Bible "we never hear of recording the words of ecstasies to discover their hidden divine meaning, as was done, for example, at the Delphic oracle." Nor do the prophets speak the exact words of God, but "the prophet repeats the word of God that came to him beforehand. He recounts his experience of the divine revelation . . . almost invariably in the past tense." There is first the revelation from God, and then the prophet's "embodiment of it in his utterance."³

2. The Word of God in Scripture is never in a pagan way identified with the exact words of a human being. There is a tendency toward paganism whenever the tongues-speaker believes that her or his words are the very words of God. The Fundamentalist-Reformed doctrine of inspiration, with its identification of the very words of the Bible with the very words of God, tends toward a pagan theory of inspiration. This is why the Wesleyan/Holiness theologian H. Orton Wiley says that revelation is "coincident with" but "not identical to" the Scriptures. The Scriptures, he says, are "the record" of revelation. In this sense, Wiley says the Scriptures are the Word of God because they "contain" the Word of God.⁴ B. B. Warfield was on firmer ground when he acknowledged that the truth of Christianity does not depend on any doctrine of inspiration, but on the independent facts of history.⁵ In an otherwise brilliant exposition of the doctrine of Scriptural inspiration, his need to see the words of Scripture to be exactly the words of God comes close to a mechanical and hence a pagan view of inspiration. This tendency can be seen especially in his literalistic exposition of the Scriptures as "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16).⁶

When Socrates defined the inspiration of the prophets and poets by the gods, he said in typical pagan fashion that "what they say is true, for a

³Yehezkel Kaufmann, trans. and abridged by Moshe Greenberg, *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 97.

⁴H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), I:125, 137.

⁵B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), 121.

⁶*Ibid.*, 133.

poet . . . is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him." They are "possessed" and in a state of "divine madness." Hence soothsayers and poets are not speaking themselves, but rather it is "the god himself who speaks, and through them becomes articulate to us."⁷

On the other hand, Paul says that the point of inspiration is that it secures the reliability and trustworthiness of the Scriptures for instruction in righteousness and doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16). He makes no claim that his words are literally the words of God. Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come upon them to remind them what he had taught them. They were to be witnesses and not "possessed mouthpieces" of the very words of God. A "witness" is someone who gives a report of what has been seen and heard. The apostolic "witness" was one who had seen and heard the Word of God grounded in the historical reality of Jesus and then "reported" what had become known. It was through the ordinary means of human understanding based on the facts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that served as the foundation for the apostolic inspired witness. Hence, any view of Scripture as literally being the exact words of God or any Christian gift of prophecy or tongues which claims to make one simply a mouthpiece of God is "enthusiasm" and "madness," terms which Socrates gladly embraced to describe the pagan understanding of inspiration.

Paul did not want to stifle the work of God in Corinth. Hence the advice Paul was giving in 1 Cor. 12-14 can be seen as unclear. Was tongues designed for believers or unbelievers? (1 Cor. 14:22). Was tongues an intelligible language (1 Cor. 14:21) or an ecstatic utterance (1 Cor. 14:2)? It would seem that Paul meant by "prophecy" intelligible proclamation and by "tongues" an unintelligible babble or meaningless sounds under the stress of unrestrained emotion. Hence this ecstatic utterance can be "interpreted" but not "translated" since there is no real linguistic communication.⁸ Paul did not want to de-Christianize these Corinthians, but neither did he not want to encourage the practice of tongues-speaking either. Pagan ecstatic utterance was apparently too easily replicated in Christian worship. Paul claimed that he spoke with more

⁷*The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: Random House, 1966), 220, 491.

⁸S. M. Gilmour, "Corinthians, First Letter to the," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), A-D, 684-692; Carl Tuland, "The Confusion about Tongues," *Christianity Today*, XIII:5(December 6, 1968), 208.

kinds of tongues (intelligible languages?) than any of them, and hence his advice was something that they should accept. The well-known motto of A. W. Tozer of the Christian Missionary and Alliance Church, “Encourage not, forbid not,” seems to express the intent of Paul’s thinking. It is remarkably unScriptural to take a minor, fringe practice, about which Paul’s tone of advice was overwhelmingly negative, and make it the essential meaning of the gospel.

This confusion over the possible meanings of speaking in ecstatic utterances was only one of many problems which Paul was seeking to resolve among the Corinthians. These problems were cited by Paul as evidence of spiritual immaturity and not the experience of those who are truly Spirit-endowed (1 Cor. 3:1; 14:20, 37). Throughout church history, the practice of speaking in tongues seems to have been associated with those movements which were experiencing much insecurity, distress, or persecution, and they generally were outside the mainstream of Christian belief and thinking (Montanists, Waldenses, Shakers, Mormons). Other religious phenomena have also surfaced, especially during the times of great spiritual awakenings.

B. Paroxysms often surfaced in the great revivals of the past, but they were downplayed and/or rejected.

1. John Wesley himself saw strange bodily and emotional responses (paroxysms) which occasioned disturbances in his meetings. There was a group of French Prophets who had fled to England in the 17th century because of persecution. They sought to win over the Methodists to their ecstatic form of faith. Some infiltrated the Fetter Lane Society in London. On one occasion Charles Wesley found himself in a situation where one became his bed-fellow. As they got ready for bed, Charles reports that this French Prophet “fell into violent agitations and gobbled like a turkey. I was frightened and began exorcising him with, ‘Thou deaf and dumb devil,’ etc. He soon recovered out of his fit of inspiration. I prayed and went to bed, not half-liking my bed-fellow. I did not sleep very sound with Satan so near me.”⁹

In his *Journal* John Wesley reported a few instances in the early years of the Methodist Revival when giggling erupted in some of his meetings. He described this laughing phenomenon as an evil which forcibly took hold of persons and caused them to act violently and be

⁹As quoted in Dallimore, I, 176.

almost strangled by the devil (Wednesday, May 21, 1740). In another incident, Wesley records in his Journal (Friday, May 9, 1740):

I was a little surprised at some, who were buffeted of Satan in an unusual manner, by such a spirit of laughter as they could in no wise resist, though it was pain and grief unto them. I could scarce have believed the account they gave me, had I not known the same thing ten or eleven years ago [1730, which was before his call to ministry and subsequent conversion]. Part of Sunday my brother and I then used to spend in walking in the meadows and singing psalms. But one day, just as we were beginning to sing, he burst out into a loud laughter. I asked him, if he was distracted; and he began to be very angry, and presently after [I also began] to laugh as loud as he. Nor could we possibly refrain, though we were ready to tear ourselves in pieces, but we were forced to go home without singing another line.

2. Peter Cartwright spoke out against paroxysms at Cane Ridge, Ky., where Presbyterians and Methodists came together for camp meeting services in 1801. In his autobiography, Peter Cartwright, the famous Methodist “backwoods preacher,” gives an extensive and vivid account of this revival. He describes it as a mighty work of the Spirit of God which affected more than twenty-five thousand people. He also describes a number of unusual phenomena (jerks, barking, running, jumping, fainting) which swept through the revival meeting; but he rejects these phenomena as having come from the Lord—except the “jerks” which he says were a judgment from God. While the lay people in general encouraged these behaviors, Cartwright says most Methodist ministers (including himself) spoke out against them. These kinds of behaviors came from people, he says, who were “weak minded, ignorant, and superstitious persons.” He comments further that the gift of prophecy “was the most troublesome delusion of all” because it “made such an appeal to the ignorance, superstition, and credulity of the people, even saint as well as sinner.”¹⁰

Peter Cartwright was not opposed to displays of emotion. He was one of the early Methodist preachers who was known for his fiery zeal and daring tactics. Yet his focus was not on alleged supernatural displays of divine power, but on the conversion of sinners. The primary means of

¹⁰*The Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, The Backwoods Preacher*, ed. W. P. Strickland (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1856), 51.

his evangelistic ministry was through the campmeeting experience. He judged that the “signs and wonders” which characterized many people at Cane Ridge were largely the product of hysteria, not the Holy Spirit.

3. Just as pentecostals believe that the gift of tongues was a sign of the baptism with the Spirit, similar physical phenomena are now being promoted in the Vineyard movement as evidence of the Holy Spirit. Such practices as being “slain in the Spirit,” barking, oinking, and roaring are alleged signs of the working of the Spirit. These behaviors are an expected part of the rapidly expanding Vineyard Christian Fellowship which began with the ministry of John Wimber in Anaheim, California, in 1977. Wimber’s ministry inspired the larger development of what Peter Wagner calls *The Third Wave of the Spirit* (also the title of his book). The First Wave was the pentecostals; the Second Wave is the charismatics; the Third Wave is the Vineyard movement. Whereas pentecostals and charismatics believe that the gift of tongues is a sign of the Spirit’s presence the “Third Wavers” believe that the gift of healing is the proof of the Spirit’s power in one’s life. Wagner’s book provides many stories of “power encounters,” although “the reader is given insufficient data to make an independent judgment as to the validity of the experiences. This creates an appearance of reality for what might be only wishful thinking.”¹¹ The “Third Wavers” have grown rapidly. It is reported that their membership in 1988 was in excess of 24 million.¹²

The prominent spokespersons for this movement include John Wimber, Peter Wagner, Charles Kraft, John White, and Don Williams. The prominence given by them to miraculous phenomena is clearly stated by Wimber when he describes his concept of “power evangelism” as a “spontaneous, Spirit-inspired, empowered presentation of the gospel . . . preceded and undergirded by supernatural demonstrations of God’s presence.” This action of the Spirit includes special communications from the Holy Spirit, healings, exorcisms, and other miraculous happenings.¹³ In the journal *Equipping the Saints* (Fall, 1994), Wimber admits that these phenomena are a controversial aspect of the Vineyard movement, but he justifies them on the ground that Jonathan Edwards supposedly encouraged them as valid expressions of the work of God. The difference

¹¹Ken Sarles, book review in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan.-Mar., 1990), 111.

¹²C. Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit, Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1988), 13.

¹³John Wimber (with Keith Springer), *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 35.

between the understanding of these excesses as they occurred in the past great revivals and as they occur in the Vineyard movement is that Wimber considers them normal and mainstream.

4. Some proponents of this so-called “Third Wave of the Spirit,” such as psychiatrist John White, are trying to reconfigure the history of revival moments as if paroxysms were an essential and expected part of the meaning of revival. Two biblical instances of being “slain in the Spirit” are examples of those who were overcome with fear because of the extraordinary nature of their visions (Dan. 10:9; Rev. 1:17), not signs of the coming of the Spirit in power. Both Daniel and John were told that their fear was not appropriate, but to arise and carry on with their divine assignments (Rev. 1:17; Dan. 10:10-12). The instance in John 18:6 was simply a case of wicked men being overcome with shock at the courage of Jesus.¹⁴

An obvious intent of White’s defense of the phenomena prevalent in the Vineyard movement is to encourage others to be open to these physical phenomena. White has put forth the best possible interpretation of the history of paroxysms, though not without forcing them to fit his analysis. His appeal for others to be open to “unusual experiences” concludes with the expectation that such phenomena will enhance one’s relationship with God, though he allows that one’s relationship to God does not depend upon these paroxysms. There is, however, a subtle suggestion which this psychiatrist unfairly plants in the minds of his readers that easily entices and misleads Christian people who want to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Suggestions to be open to hysterical experiences can become a form of manipulation and abuse, which White as a psychiatrist knows. To be sure, expressing one’s emotions is healthy spiritually and psychologically;

¹⁴John White, “Revival and the Spirit’s Power,” *The Kingdom and the Power*, ed. Gary Greig and Kelvin Springer (Regal Books, 1993), 313. John White’s reference to Wesley implies that such manifestations were a normal part of the Methodist revival. White writes: “In meetings conducted by the Wesleys, powerful manifestations of the Spirit of God were frequent. Imitations also occurred” (p. 291). This implies just the opposite of what really occurred; namely, that such manifestations occurred primarily in the early part of the Methodist Revival and were not signs of spiritual renewal but of conviction of sinfulness. John White believes that ultra emotionalism is a sign of the Spirit’s power in the life of the believer. Wesley never promoted such “signs” as evidence of the Spirit’s coming in power. In fact, he specifically warned against them in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, p. 59. Cf. Dallimore, 320-331.

but paroxysms are inappropriate and unhealthy expressions of emotions. While Jonathan Edwards reports phenomena happening in New England “as probable tokens of God’s presence,” these phenomena were incidental and not considered an inherent aspect of revival.¹⁵ For White, these phenomena are moved to center stage.

Don Williams believes that “signs and wonders” are not only proofs of revelation, but “they *are* revelation.” He says that these miraculous phenomena are normal experiences in the life of real Christians and not something extraordinary. If miracles are not regularly occurring in one’s life, this means one is faithless toward God.¹⁶ The Vineyard movement sees miraculous phenomena as a self-validating proof of Christian experience. Charles Kraft, a missions professor of anthropology at Fuller Theological Seminary, reports in *Theology, News, and Notes* (November 1987) that his own spiritual life became vital and meaningful only through observing religious phenomena when Wimber once taught a class on “Signs and Wonders” in 1982.

The President of Fuller Theological Seminary, along with other professors, now have put distance between themselves and the Vineyard movement by issuing an official task force report entitled *Ministry and the Miraculous*. It is openly critical of the “signs and wonders” movement, noting that this emphasis is not the focus of their seminary. This Fuller report considers the “signs and wonders” movement to be “uncongenial to the evangelical tradition.”¹⁷

5. John Wimber and his associates seem to be enamored with “power.” Their book titles highlight “power.” Note *Power Evangelism*, *Power Healing*, and *Christianity With Power*. Their understanding of “power” is not the New Testament meaning of being energized inwardly with the character of Christ. Rather, their description of power looks more like manipulation and control. The opening pages of Charles Kraft’s *Christianity With Power* begins with the concept of power defined as supernat-

¹⁵Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion* (New York: The American Tract Society, 1740), 258.

¹⁶*Signs, Wonders and the Kingdom of God* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1989), 31, 43, 110, 126. Cf. Tim Staffod’s book review of Don Williams, *Signs, Wonders and the Kingdom of God* in *Christianity Today* (November 17, 1989), 35.

¹⁷*Ministry and the Miraculous, A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary*, ed. Lewis B. Smedes with a Foreword by David Allan Hubbard (Pasadena, Ca: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1987), 27, 57, 64.

ural phenomena. He believes that if one is a power-filled Christian, one can expect God to be manifest in miracles on a regular basis. Kraft reports the powerlessness he felt as a missionary. Attending Wimber's "Signs and Wonders" class in 1982 brought him into higher dimensions of spiritual vitality. When he saw students apparently healed, his faith came alive. He admits that he now struggles with doubt and has to fight off the temptation to think that the alleged healings can be explained in normal, natural ways. But he has been successful in resisting these doubts, especially since learning that Wimber also struggles with such doubts.¹⁸

The "signs and wonders" movement inevitably plays into the hands of principled atheists (some are my friends) who would like to believe in God, but say they can't because of the suffering of innocent children and the extensive and pointless evil in the world. We do not have adequate answers for these dilemmas. We believe there are good reasons which God knows, even if we do not. We live by faith and trust in the "secret assistance of the Holy Spirit" (as Wesley said) in the daily affairs of our lives without demanding explicit and absolute proof for anything. We have adequate grounds for believing, and that is all that faith requires. The healing emphasis in the Vineyard movement undermines the meaning of faith because it is based on the power of "signs and wonders."

6. The underlying assumption in the Vineyard movement is that divine healings and exorcisms function as essential aids to faith. One of the evangelical themes of the Wesleyan Revival in England in the 18th century was the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to this Wesleyan emphasis, the Vineyard movement stresses miraculous phenomena as the proof of faith. Kraft claims that the "Third Wave of the Spirit" is different from pentecostalism because it sees healings as the primary evidence of the Spirit working in one's life rather than tongues.¹⁹

This fosters an attitude of codependency on God instead of a healthy-minded relationship. The purpose of one's relationship to God should not be built on the concept of what one can get out of it. The purpose of prayer, for example, is not to ask God to do those things for us which we really could do for ourselves. Kraft chided a "charismatic" believer for thinking first of depending on a doctor to treat his sprained ankle instead of turning to God for his supernatural assistance.²⁰

¹⁸Charles Kraft, *Christianity with Power* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), 7-9, 91-92.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, xi.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 29.

This concept of power is an unnatural application of the biblical principle of faith in divine healing. Even though Kraft believes in the value of medical doctors, this attitude fosters a superficial and hyper-spiritual notion of healing and perpetuates a childish dependency on God, as if God did not intend for us to take care of ourselves and each other in normal ways. To be sure, I believe that God does work miracles of healing for special reasons; but God does not suspend the normal operation of divine laws. God is not a wand-waving magician. Nor is God driven by the codependent need to provide people with quick fixes to their problems.

The late president of Asbury Theological Seminary, Frank Bateman Stanger, regularly preached on divine healing. He taught a special course and wrote a book on that subject. But his focus was on the spiritual and relational sources of healing provided in the larger context of the worshiping community. He specifically did not allow his ministry of healing to upstage the Wesleyan/Evangelical message. Nor did he embrace a “signs and wonders” mentality, as if the reality of God’s revelation were on trial. President Stanger’s ministry of healing was in keeping with the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition.

I was disappointed in reading *Christianity With Power* because Kraft emphasizes uncritical accounts of divine healing that encourage a codependent relationship to Christ. This intensifies the insecurities and immature thinking of God so prevalent in popular forms of Christianity. The reports of unsuccessful attempts to cast out a demon from a certain woman for a period of five hours is inhumane.²¹ If the woman was really demonized, is the power of Christ so weak? Was this woman not more likely suffering from an anxiety disorder which caused her enormous mental distress?

The accounts of healing which Kraft reports are riddled with evidence of gullibility. It is not a mark of spirituality to be uncritical and superstitious. Wesley, with logical and critical probing, evaluated the claims of many Methodist people who testified to having experienced the perfection of love in their lives. This critical evaluation was not looked upon by others as negative and unspiritual. But Kraft makes far too much of alleged claims of divine healing. Such credulity is not a mark of spirituality.

The question concerning how Kraft knows when a person is possessed of a demon raises another serious issue. Kraft claims that his

²¹Ibid., 170-71.

approach is “balanced,” unlike pentecostals and the typical television evangelist. His and Wimber’s “more balanced” approach even appeals to “academics,” Kraft claims.²² But there is lack of “balance” evidenced when Kraft portrays himself as having a special divine authority to act on behalf of God. “We have been given authority over diseases, affected body parts, damaged emotions, curses, bondages, and whatever other things the enemy uses to enslave people. So we command them to be well.”²³ The extreme to which he takes this “authority” is seen in his claim that “I bless” certain people and audiences.²⁴ I can understand that he would offer the blessing of the Lord. But to speak with “I bless you” borders on blasphemy. The consequences of this exaggerated claim of speaking directly for God is that some impressionable theological students are now beginning themselves to replicate this authoritarian style. Undoubtedly it gives them a sense of power and importance as they imitate a faculty member who has moved into extremism, but this will incapacitate students when as pastors they need to relate to people in a mature and responsible manner.

7. The “signs and wonders” emphasis of the Vineyard movement seems to have little in common with the “signs and wonders” of the New Testament. This phrase roots in the Old Testament designation of God’s miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. In every instance in the Old Testament where “signs and wonders” is used, it always recalls the original saving event of this redemption from Egypt (Dt. 6:20-24; 26:5-9; Josh. 24:17; Dt. 4:34; 7:19; 11:3; 29:3; Jer. 32:20-21; Acts 7:36). Peter was the first to link this designation of the Exodus event with Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:22). It was deliberately chosen to show that the Easter event is the New Testament counterpart to the Exodus event.

Throughout the New Testament, whenever the phrase “signs and wonders” occurs, it is used to show that the New Exodus has taken place (which the prophets had foretold would occur as the basis for the restoration of Israel—Ezek. 37:12). This New Exodus is the Easter Event. All the miracles of the New Testament are like signposts to indicate the arrival of the New Kingdom through Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. This is not suggest that the day of miracles is over, but rather to place the

²²Ibid., xii.

²³Ibid., 150.

²⁴Ibid., 13, 145, 151.

significance of this phrase in perspective. The miracles which accompanied the ministry of the apostles were an overflow of the larger meaning of Jesus' resurrection.

There were isolated miracles throughout the Bible, but there are three major periods of the history recorded in the Bible where there was a heavy concentration of miracles. One was the cluster of "signs and wonders" connected with the ministry of Moses in leading Israel out of the bondage of Egypt. A second concentration was connected with the ministry of Elijah and Elisha during the reign of Ahab and the near fatal crisis when Israel was almost overrun by the cult of Baal (1 Kings 18-20). The third is in the Gospels. These concentrations of miracles are *all connected primarily with the history of salvation*. By contrast, the "signs and wonders" in the Vineyard movement have cheapened the biblical meaning of this phrase by its application to the largely privileged, middle-class folks who supposedly are being healed from ordinary illnesses which sooner or later everyone is expected to have to bear.

If the "signs and wonders" movement of the "Third Wave of the Spirit" is an authentic return to the New Testament period of "signs and wonders," why not emphasize raising the dead? Jesus raised the dead (Luke 7:22). Jesus gave his disciples power to raise the dead as a wonderful sign of the Messianic kingdom (Matt. 10:8). One of the miracles performed by Elijah during the crisis of Baalism was to raise the widow's son (1 Kings 17:22). Jesus raised the widow's son (Lk. 7:14) and Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:44). These types of miracles are difficult to imitate or be mistaken, especially when one has been put in the grave for several days like Lazarus. One of the key proofs of Jesus' Sonship was his resurrection from the dead, something accessible to public scrutiny (1 Cor. 15:5-6). Peter raised Tabitha from the dead after she had been prepared for burial (Acts 9:40). Paul raised a young man who fell out of a window (20:10). Wagner does in fact report instances of resurrections. However, these do not seem to be directly related to the activity of the Vineyard movement, but ones about which he has heard.

C. S. Lewis in *Miracles* points out that God does not work miracles as if he freely pours them out like salt out of a shaker. Lewis shows that miracles and martyrdom relate closely.²⁵ The real miracles in today's world are needed in the difficult life-and-death "missionary" situations where there is victimization, including starvation, war, death, and the

²⁵C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947, 174.

slaughter of innocent children. Our lack of concern for the larger spiritual and social needs of our world is what we should be chided for, not because we as affluent Americans failed to pray over a sprained ankle.

The main focus of faith should not be asking God to give us proofs of his love through what he can do for us through miracles. God does not want us to be simply dependent servants, but loving friends (John 15:15). Friendship assumes affection for one another based on a mature degree of self-reliance. When one friend over-depends upon another person to meet needs, the relationship is too lopsided to be a mature friendship.

8. The Vineyard movement trivializes the meaning of friendship with God because it espouses a codependent relationship with Him. Friendship with God is established through the ordinary means of grace (prayer, the Scriptures, the sacraments, public worship, private devotions). The purpose of worship of God is not to participate mystically in God's oneness in the pantheistic sense of losing one's own identity and being merged into God. The purpose of worship is not to manipulate a sense of intimacy with God through creating an environment designed to generate emotional ecstasy.

Prayer choruses sometimes function like a magical mantra. When repeated often enough, they submerge one's own sense of consciousness into the larger feeling of cosmic oneness. This is not the purpose of divine worship. God is the One who confronts us as the divine other. Intimacy with God is not the loss of one's own personal identity, but the enrichment of our own personhood through establishing and developing a grace-enabled friendship with the Lord. The purpose of worship is to present each one mature in the Lord (Col. 1:28). The "spiritual worship" of God is "the renewing of our minds" and doing "the will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2). The promotion of an ecstatic feeling of oneness with God is more pantheistic than Christian and typifies the normal pagan view of worship where the devotee is absorbed into the divine. Though some may experience ecstasy and flights into spiritual realms unknown, this is the unusual and not normal meaning of worship (2 Cor. 12:1-6). Paul's exaltation into spiritual heights threatened his humility, and so God reminded him of his earthiness with a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7).

A healthy worshiping experience is designed to enhance one's friendship with God. When worship blurs the distinction between God and us through mystical absorption, we have abandoned the meaning of Christian worship. The practices of being "slain in the Spirit" and other paroxysms seem to fall into this category of sub-biblical worship. When

the use of prayer choruses manipulates worshipers into a frame of mind which makes them suggestible to losing consciousness and falling on the floor, this is not biblical worship. True worship involves the affirmation of one's personal identity through relationship to the Father through the Son by means of the Holy Spirit. Worship and intimacy with God is not fostered through falling unconscious on the floor. Worship is a total act of the whole person in friendship with God.

An unhealthy codependency is reflected in Kraft's statement that "if God is alive, he must still be revealing himself" in physical demonstrations of miracles.²⁶ The assumption is that, if God is not performing miraculous demonstrations as evidence of divine existence, then there is no awareness that God is real. This focus is not on healing hurting *people*, but rather on apologetics—to prove that God is alive today. Kraft admits that not everybody is healed, but, he says, at least there are enough people healed to prove that God is alive today. I call this type of apologetics "codependent" because it is a subtle form of attempting to control God by "commanding" him to prove his love to us. If Job had demanded this type of reassurance, he would never have survived his ordeal. If Jesus had felt that way in the Garden of Gethsemane, he would never have gone to the cross, but would have given up in despair before his enemies.

This emphasis upon the objective proofs of God's presence in the world as evidenced by his power to work miracles is a sub-biblical understanding of power. The "power from on high" which Jesus promised to his disciples (Acts 1:8) was divine energy (*dynamis*) which empowered them to live truly and completely as disciples and to become effective witnesses of God's reality in a hostile world. This "power" of the Holy Spirit is purifying power (Acts 15:8-9) which cleansed the disciples from their fears and prejudices and allowed them to be released from the threatening fear of their enemies. This "power from on high" was a power to love God truly and fully (Rom. 5:5). No longer did they "follow afar off," but boldly and with deep devotion and commitment they became witnesses of their Lord. The power of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost is the power to be true disciples (Jn. 14-17).

The concept of raw power as miraculous phenomena is more akin to a pagan notion than to the New Testament. Wimber interprets power as the phenomenal display of God's work in the world. It is the practical proof of the gospel. One reviewer rightly calls Wimber's approach "run-

²⁶Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 7.

away pragmatism” because “the usefulness of signs and wonders is so raw, so unvarnished, one can scarcely tell where pragmatism ends and manipulationism begins.”²⁷

9. The role of experience seems at times to be more decisive for “The Third Wave of the Spirit” than for the Scriptures. An appeal to phenomenal experience is an essential element for the Vineyard movement. In fact, the defenders of the movement appeal primarily to experience to justify its validity.²⁸

One of my personal friends went to Toronto to be a neutral observer of the Vineyard Church revival. He is a theologian in a United Methodist seminary, and one of his areas of expertise is in the history of revival movements. He believes that the “Toronto Revival” is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of many people, but he says, “It’s theology is absolutely terrible.”

The Wesleyan tradition should not be enticed to embrace the Vineyard movement because of its attempts to make God available in the everyday affairs of human life. Its theological deficiencies are most evident in its unacknowledged accommodation to the action-packed, thriller-motivated, emotion-filled movie culture which dominates the American way of life today. Unfortunately, it is boring for many people to go to a traditional church where one has to engage the mind in worship through the reading of the liturgy and hearing the Word of God expounded. After all, we are used to being entertained with powerful stories and dramatic scenes in the movies and on television. The Vineyard movement is a religious counterpart to this cultural trend which places more emphasis on experience than critical, objective truth.

What is so dangerous about the appeal to experience is that most anything can be defended according to experience. “To test the spirits” is to test the spirit of truth according to the apostolic witness which is based on objective, historical facts (1 John 4:1-5). Unless one’s experience can be seen as a confirmation of what is taught in Scripture, then any appeal to experience is hollow at best. In his sermon “The Witness of the Spirit” (Sermon XLV), Wesley says that any attempt to construct a doctrine from experience is fanaticism (“enthusiasm”). He argues that doctrine must be

²⁷Grant Wacker, “Wimber and Wonders—What about Miracles Today?” *The Reformed Theological Journal* (April 1987), 18.

²⁸Jack Hayford, “Our Stance before Almightyness,” *Ministries Today* (May/June 1995), 24-25.

derived from Scripture. Scripture alone is the immediate source of belief, though experience “confirms” that we have properly understood the Scriptures. No doubt today many are being brought to Christ and various paroxysms are functioning as aids in developing spiritual vitality. But this is not “the more excellent way” which Paul advocated in 1 Cor. 13:1—the way he contrasted with phenomenal manifestations.

The appeal to experience as the primary method of interpreting the Scriptures is liberalism to the core, except that classical liberalism (as in Schleiermacher) was based on a rationally enlightened understanding of experience. The inroads of an experienced-based theology leads in many directions—including to “New Age” thinking and eclectic religion. The longterm threat of pentecostalization is that its credulity may be setting itself up to be undermined by a more “enlightened” analysis of human experience and thus open the door to a new kind of sophisticated liberalism which will overthrow it. This happened to the German institutions of higher learning in the 18th century when the popular and subjectivistic forms of Pietism undermined the leadership of those who were committed to Lutheran Orthodoxy and hence weakened the theological leadership of the German universities. Enlightenment thinking then swept away both the Pietists and the Orthodox. History has a way of repeating its patterns of the past.

10. A case can be made that the pentecostalization of American Christianity is no less culturally conditioned than the various liberal theologies. It is a reflection of the general trend of our secular/pagan culture to trust “feeling,” “emotions,” and “passions” in making ultimate decisions about values and truth. The Fuller Report argues that the “signs and wonders” movement is culturally conditioned by the general American attitude that people have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—which implies that we have the right to live without inconvenience and suffering.

We as Christians actually are called “to a life of the cross, of self-denial, not to a life of reliance upon miracles to free us from the ailments and agonies that we are heir to on earth.”²⁹ The Fuller document further insists that “the gospel does not clearly vindicate itself to the world when ministers proclaim the occasional release of affluent individuals from bearable aches and pains while thousands of starving children call in vain to be fed and thousands of oppressed people plead in vain for justice.”³⁰

²⁹Report, *Ministry and the Miraculous*, 77-78.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 60.

The main point of the gospel is not miraculous phenomena. The Reformers of the church believed that “preoccupation with miracles seduced believers from the heart of the gospel’s spiritual message and moral mandate, and they returned the churches to the heart of the matter, justifying faith and sanctifying obedience.”³¹

11. The Wesleyan theological tradition has not understood “miracles” to be a primary focus of the gospel, though it certainly accepts that on occasion God may perform a miracle for a special purpose. The formation of Christian character in relationship to Christ, with the Scriptures, tradition, reason, and experience all interwoven, is the intent of the gospel. Spiritualistic movements in our day often prefer to look to their own experiences for theological understanding rather than to the Scriptures.

I have not found in Wesley’s writings indication that miraculous phenomena and ultra-emotionalism are evidences of a post-conversion experience of one having received the Holy Spirit. The decisive significance of Pentecost was not the “signs” and “gifts” of the Spirit, but the Spirit Himself. Wesley shows in his sermon on “Scriptural Christianity” that the gifts were operative before Pentecost, but the promise of the Spirit in the prophets was linked to the sanctification of Israel.

Jesus defined the work of the coming Holy Spirit in terms of “oneness,” “love,” and “sanctification.” Jesus does not link the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost primarily with the gifts of the Spirit or with physical manifestations (Jn. 14-17). To be sure, the gifts of the Spirit are important for “the common good” of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7) and should be exercised according to the principles set forth in Scripture. But it is a remarkable misreading of the book of Acts to focus on spiritual manifestations as the decisive work of the Holy Spirit. Peter pointedly defined the work of the Spirit of Pentecost in terms of “cleansing.” Paul’s description of “life in the Spirit” is related to sanctification (Gal. 5:13-26). When the whole of Paul’s writings is considered, there is relatively little reference to phenomena or gifts of the Spirit. His only reference to the gift of tongues was in a negative context where it was being abused. The decisive meaning of the Spirit’s coming in power is to enable disciples to live out the meaning of Christian character (cf. Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4, 4:31; Ezek. 36:24-26; Rom. 2:28; Acts 21:8). The Holy Spirit is called “Holy,” Wesley points out in his sermon “On Grieving the Holy Spirit” (CXXXV), because it is the Spirit’s task to make us holy (cf. Rom. 1:4).

³¹Ibid., 39.

Wesley observes that “God divided them [the gifts of the Spirit] with a sparing hand.” He suggests that “perhaps not one in a thousand” possessed the extraordinary gifts, and “probably none but the teachers in the Church, and only some of them (1 Cor. 12:28-30).” Wesley then says: “It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this that ‘they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.’ It was to give them (what none can deny to be essential to all Christians in all ages) the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit.”

Unusual behaviors occurred in the early stages of the Methodist Revival in Wesley’s time, but they were understood as pre-conversion struggles of those under conviction seeking to be freed from the power of evil (see Wesley’s *Journal* for April 21, 24, 29, May 1, 2, 20, 1939; May 9, 21, 1740). George Whitefield even chided Wesley for tolerating them.³² In his *Journal* (June 12, 1740) Charles Wesley wrote: “The power of the Lord was present in his word, both to wound and heal. The adversary roared in the midst of the congregation; for to him, and not to the God of order, do I imput those horrible outcries.” The occurrence of these emotional excesses disappeared early in the Wesleyan Revival. In this sense, the attempt to claim Wesley as support for the so-called “Third Wave of the Spirit” is intellectually dishonest.

Quite the contrary, Wesley in “Scriptural Christianity” explicitly warned against embracing phenomena as evidence of the Spirit. In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, he links the special giving of the Spirit of Pentecost in Acts 8, 10, 19 to “sanctifying grace.” In *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley’s entire account of the Wesleyan Revival is focused on the fruit of the Spirit as the single evidence of the work of the sanctifying Spirit. In Wesley’s writings there is no essential connection made between the converting and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and “miraculous” phenomena. Wesley never wrote any defense for paroxysms in his meetings, and he certainly did not promote them. He did in a plain-spoken manner speak out against fanaticism. His sermon “The Nature of Enthusiasm” is a vigorous example.

In accord with John Wesley, the Wesleyan tradition has stood against the excesses of emotionalism and has cautioned against allowing these natural human phenomena to become a substitute for the real evidence of the Spirit, namely, the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, etc. (Gal. 5:22-23). The power for human transfor-

³²Dallimore, 325, 328, 330.

mation resides in the love of God poured out in the believer's heart through the ordinary means of grace (prayer, reading and hearing the Word of God in Scripture, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and fellowshiping together in the Christian community and worship). Wesley insisted on these ordinary means of grace through "the secret assistance of the Holy Spirit" as the normal means through which the Holy Spirit works in the life of the Christian.

Subjective emotional phenomena can become replacements for liturgy and the sacraments—which ground experience in the objective historical events of salvation. To focus attention on an emotional overdose, as if one could bypass the ordinary means of grace and secure a quick fix through a self-validating ecstatic experience, is patently fanaticism. This is not at all to suggest that emotion should be repressed. Indeed, one fruit of the Spirit is joy. It is certainly understandable that at times one may be overcome with so much joy and emotion that there may be unusual forms of expression. But *to promote, to program, and to expect* certain emotional responses as the decisive evidence of the Holy Spirit is to detract from the true meaning of revival.

C. The most sinister feature of the pentecostalization of American Christianity is reflected in its unhealthy obsession with demon possession.

In his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth wrote: "The very thing which the demons are waiting for, especially in theology, is that we should find them dreadfully interesting and give them our serious and perhaps systematic attention."³³ While the Scriptures certainly do recognize that evil often deeply resides in the depth of one's being, there is little said in the actual preaching and teaching of Jesus about demon possession, though on occasion he cast them out. In fact, there are only five specific instances where the casting out of demons was accompanied with paroxysms. There is one in Matthew (9:32-33); there are four in Mark (1:23-36; 5:2-20; 7:25; 9:17-29). The two recorded in Luke (8:27-33; 9:37-43) are the same as in Mark (5:2-20; 9:17-29). There is not a single instance of demon possession in the Gospel of John.

Other references to Jesus or the disciples casting out demons seem to reflect a practice of delivering people who were suffering from a more

³³Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley and R. J. Ehrlich (T. & T. Clark, 1960), III, 3, 519.

generalized oppression of unclean spirits rather than to spectacular incidents involving paroxysms (Mark 6:7, 13). This was the general meaning of exorcisms in the Christian tradition in the 2nd and 3rd centuries according to *The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*. Jesus marginalized references to the demonic (Lk. 10:20). There is no reference to demon possession or instruction on how to deal with demons in the recorded sermons of the apostles in the Book of Acts. There is only one instance of demon possession in Acts (19:11-16). The substance of the apostolic preaching was the history of salvation which culminated in Easter and Pentecost, with an invitation for the people to “receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18).

To be sure, there were miraculous phenomena which accompanied the activity of the apostles. But these activities were not identified as the main focus of the gospel. Jesus made it clear that, even though one possesses the gifts of the Spirit and even has the ability to “cast out demons,” these phenomenal things do not qualify one for the Kingdom: “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not *prophesy* in your name, and *cast out demons* in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me’ ” (Matt. 7:22-23). The only qualification for entrance into the Kingdom of Christ is a relationship of obedience to and love for Christ (Matt. 7:24). There is no indication that miraculous phenomena are a necessary or even incidental requirement for membership in Christ’s Kingdom. Rather, the apostolic preaching concluded with a call for faith in Christ instead of an invitation for hearers to be exorcised of their demons. There was, in fact, a reluctance to speak about these supernatural phenomena in comparison to uplifting the person of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of God’s Spirit.

1. In an important sense, demonic powers were marginalized and demythologized in the New Testament. Demonic powers are down-sized in comparison to the popular and sensational notions widespread in Jesus’ day. In the pre-exilic writings of the Old Testament there is virtually no trace of teaching about an organized demonic realm. There is scarcely any acknowledgment of a spirit world other than Yahweh, though belief in demons and a spirit world was rampant among Israel’s pagan neighbors. The unique contribution of the Hebrew religion was its belief in the reality of God as a personal subject who created the world out of nothing and who transcends it. There is no other ancient religion which

developed this biblical idea of a self-existing God. No power can compete with Yahweh.

Jesus made little use of belief in demons to explain the nature of human behavior. In the strict sense of the term, he was not an exorcist. An exorcist is one who casts out devils through incantations and magical rituals. Jesus simply spoke words of freedom to those in bondage. This is why Jürgen Moltmann says that Jesus de-demonized the world. Healing occurs for people physically and emotionally when the stigma of the demonic is removed as their relationship to Christ and their fellow human beings is restored.³⁴ The source of evil in the world is identified as sin, that is, disobedience to God. The cure for evil is faith in Christ. His power over evil forces was his authority to rebuke wickedness because God alone is the source of wholeness and holiness and is sovereign over all creation.

Wickedness is demonic because it represents separation from God. Wickedness is a relational problem because it is alienation from God. The Fall is a fall away from God. Unlike Paul, Peter, James, and John who never mention demonic possession, what is now happening in the Vineyard movement is a re-mythologizing of the demonic and an upgrading of the status of the powers of evil as if Jesus and Satan were co-powers competing for control of God's universe. This is a resurgence of Persian dualism. This divine-demonic dualism is fundamentally contradictory to the teachings of the New Testament.

2. Because the demonic is identified with the irrational, it is easy to confuse it with negative and destructive human emotions such as insecurity and fears. Just as there are some people who claim their words and decisions come directly from God, as if their own human spirit were identified with the Holy Spirit, so there are those who mythologize the demonic by equating negative human emotions with Satanic possession.

Symptoms of demonic and other abnormal behavior resulting from damaged emotions are similar. Emotional deprivation results in repressed anger and anxious feelings. In order to deal with the loss of meaningful relationships with significant persons in their lives, people will often become very possessive and self-centered. Theologically, we call this self-centeredness pride. In the emotionally disturbed person, pride is intensified beyond the normal feeling of self-sufficiency. It is connected

³⁴Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Harper San Francisco, 1989), 109-110.

with deep-seated feelings of anger from personal injury which has been sustained unjustly. The consequence is irrational, driven behavior where one acts in an out-of-control manner.

This attitude of pride (self-centeredness) and sense of being driven and out of control (the sense of being “possessed”) corresponds to the irrational behavior which defines the meaning of the demonic. The origin of this drivenness and self-centeredness is the same, the loss of meaningful relationship. The fall of the king of Babylon, metaphorically called “O Day Star, son of Dawn” (wrongly translated “Lucifer” in the King James Version), is explained as a fall away from relationship with God through pride (Isaiah 14:12). The explanation for Adam’s fall away from God was pride (Gen. 3:5). The resulting behavior and loss of relationship with God was destructive and murderous behavior (Isaiah 14:12; Gen. 3:14-4:16). The Fall in each case uses the language of drivenness and being out of control (Gen. 3:24; Isaiah 14:12-21). It is as if people were “possessed” by an unnatural disposition which prohibited them from fulfilling their true nature.

The dysfunctional symptoms of being “cut off” and “cast away” (Isaiah 14:12, 19) from God are like the symptoms of those who have suffered the loss of meaningful relationship early in childhood and have experienced destructive emotions, feelings of unworthiness and a loss of personal identity. The difference is that the emotional death and destruction which small children feel is not their own choice. They are made to pay for the faults and failings of others.

In paganism, natural disasters are thought to be evidence of demonic fury and demons are mythical expressions for destructive emotions. Demons are thus mythical expressions for otherwise normal phenomena which produce fear. The demonic is largely a culturally conditioned concept borrowed from Zoroastrianism and is reinterpreted today to represent the split within one’s inner being which prevents one from feeling wholeness and personal integrity. This split divides one against oneself. Sometimes this inner division is so great that it leaves a person with severe pathological feelings of persecution, or they may become burdened with multiple personalities, or afflicted with a variety of anxiety disorders. This spiritual deformation fills one with fear. Fear is a feeling of distrust and insecurity because it is rooted in the loss of a meaningful relationship with other human beings and with God.

3. As our modern age is increasingly becoming more pagan, we can expect the return of superstitious fears. With the increase of dys-

functional families and broken relationships in our world today, we can expect more and more people to attend so-called deliverance meetings where self-styled exorcists will allegedly cast out their demons. This is an understandable mechanism for explaining their fears. Undoubtedly some will be helped by this mythologizing of their anxieties. Others will be disillusioned. Many will live in constant terror that demons may haunt and seize them.

I am sympathetic with those who embrace a psychological explanation for the demon phobia so widespread in popular Christianity. This is not because I wish to explain away spiritual warfare, but because I wish to emphasize human responsibility. Of course, one must recognize the existence of evil powers, which the Bible teaches; but to picture them literally as gremlin-like creatures inhabiting human bodies is mythical. To ascribe negative human emotions and behavior to demon possession is superstition. It is as if one is not taking seriously the emotional pain and hurts which afflict people with damaged emotions. Indeed, those who are afflicted with anxiety know only too well how real is their struggle for survival. The emotional deprivation and loss of hope is a life-and-death warfare. Only through the grace of God can one be delivered from an alienated self.

This psychological re-interpretation of the demonic does not mean that one is resorting to a spiritualizing and allegorizing of theology, as if one could pick and choose what one wants to accept from Scripture. What is intellectually compelling about belief in the God of Jesus Christ, and what preserves orthodox faith from the atheistic critique, is the history of saving events culminating in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. This core of salvation history is open to historical criticism and can be established with a remarkable degree of probability. There is not only this objective basis for faith in rational argumentation. There also is the personal and existential dimension of faith. All that contributes to the meaning of personhood is derived from the gospel. The basic ingredient of our feeling of personal wholeness is a trust in the goodness and meaning of the universe.

4. Stories of demon-possession found in the writings of the Vineyard movement often sound like action-packed movie thrillers. Bizarre stories are told in Kraft's book, *Defeating Dark Angels*. He regularly talks to demons and gets information from them. He knows their names. He has provided a long list of their names, which correspond to the names of emotions for the most part. He is able to distinguish between those who are very weak demons and those who are very strong.

Julie was a thirty-five-year-old missionary. She was the daughter of an alcoholic and suffering from depression. Kraft says “it was clear” that she “was inhabited by a demon.” This demon spoke German, and because they were unable to understand him, they were not able to get adequate information from him in order to cast him out. So they located an English-speaking demon who informed them that its demon leader was a spirit of control. By pressure and wearing down the demons, they were able to cast them out and free this poor soul from depression.³⁵ One wonders if this could be an instance of abusive behavior on the part of a minister who has controlling power over the life of an innocent person.

Kraft thinks that what is needed is a paradigm shift in our worldview which will allow for these myths to be literally believed. But a more responsible evaluation is contained in the Fuller Report: “The burgeoning ministries of miraculous healing could signal a paradigm-shift away from the biblical world.”³⁶ When Kraft reports that artifacts (two rings and a necklace) from Brazil were literally housing evil spirits, one can easily conclude that such a worldview is animism and paganism. Kraft’s seminary colleague and friend, Peter Wagner, says that innocent tourists have picked up demons as they visited pagan temples.

What is appalling is the careless manner in which the word “research” is used. Wagner speaks of his alleged research into the reports of healing and demon possessions,³⁷ but there is no evidence of research other than his own uncritical opinions which he offers without adequate support. What is surprising is that Kraft and Wagner are supposedly committed to critical scholarship, but their approach to Christianity seems more like a pathological and emotionally unbalanced fantasy.

5. Significant evangelical spokespersons have warned against overdoing the category of spiritual warfare. We have already noted that Fuller Theological Seminary has declared such an emphasis to be unfriendly to evangelical beliefs. Many others agree.

Dennis Kinlaw has written a compelling article entitled, “Putting Demons in Their Place.” He shows that any discussion of the demonic is complicated by the fact that fallen human beings have a natural affinity for evil. He cites Dorothy Sayers who says that, when a playwright introduces

³⁵Charles Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels: Breaking Demonic Oppression in the Believer’s Life* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publishers, 1992), 157-58.

³⁶*Ministry and the Miraculous*, 78.

³⁷Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Spirit*, 71.

the devil into the cast of characters, it is most difficult to keep the evil one from becoming the hero. Kinlaw, an Old Testament scholar, demonstrates the demythologized and marginalized interpretation of the demonic in the Old Testament in comparison with their pagan neighbors. In the Gospels, the demonic realm becomes more noticeable, perhaps because of Jesus' concession to popular superstition. From Romans and throughout the rest of the New Testament, the demonic recedes into the background. There is no word about demon possession and no explanation about exorcisms. This all came later in the Christian tradition after the New Testament writings. The message of the New Testament is that God alone is sovereign over the world, and human beings are responsible for their own evil.³⁸

Tony Campolo has warned the Evangelical community not "to overdo the Perreti thing." He shows that the powers of darkness are not "the little gremlins who hide behind doors or lurk in dark places waiting to get us." Evil forces are much subtle than that. They seek to destroy human life through "systems and structures" which are made to look attractive. They express themselves in destructive means through gangs, drugs, crime, witch-craft, covens, and through educational and social institutions. He says: "I am not sure little demons are lurking on shelves or hiding behind furniture waiting to get us. . . . What I do know is that there are many people in our world who have fallen under the influence of evil and need to be delivered from the powers of darkness."³⁹

Those who claim to be part of a "signs and wonders" movement have self-consciously and intentionally taken a position which in reality focuses attention away from the essence of the gospel. Of course, it is much less intimidating and far more sensational to focus on "signs and wonders" than on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2). Yet, from the earliest liturgy of the early Church Fathers through the present time, the work of the Holy Spirit is identified primarily with sanctification. Kraft intentionally sidelines sanctification as the meaning of the coming of the Spirit in favor of miraculous phenomena.⁴⁰

6. Pentecostal leaders themselves disagree with the overworked emphasis on so-called "signs and wonders" in the Vineyard move-

³⁸"Putting Demons in Their Place," *Christian Medical Society Journal* (Spring 1975), VI:2, 3-7.

³⁹Tony Campolo, *How To Be Pentecostal Without Speaking in Tongues* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1991), 133-147.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 167.

ment. Pentecostals admit their own responsibility for extremes which have occurred in their own tradition and which “surfaced in the charismatic renewal, and [have] appeared again in the so-called ‘Third Wave’ movement.”⁴¹ One Pentecostal leader, Donald Gee, says “ ‘signs and wonders’ are blessedly and truly Pentecostal,” but “they are divinely incidental. Their purpose is to ‘Confirm THE WORD’ (Mark 16:20).”⁴²

Cecil Robeck, a Pentecostal theologian and editor of *Pneuma, The Journal for the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, has warned that overdoing spiritual warfare is dangerous business. He quotes the same warning found in Karl Barth: “It has never been good for anyone . . . to look frequently or lengthily or seriously or systematically at demons. . . . It does not make the slightest impression on the demons if we do so, and there is the imminent danger in so doing we ourselves might become just a little more than a little demonic.”⁴³ Robeck says that if “one peers over the edge of the crater and into the darkness below, it seems the greater the chance of falling into the abyss.” From his own experience in the pentecostal tradition, Robeck observes how this has happened on many occasions.⁴⁴

7. Catholic Christianity interprets the coming of the Spirit in terms of strengthening and sanctifying grace (sealing or imprinting upon the believer the righteousness of Christ). This meaning of the coming of the Spirit with power to live the Christian life is reflected in the baptism liturgy in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, as seen in *The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome* (ca. 217 A.D.). After the new converts had been baptized with water (representing forgiveness of sins and regeneration), they were to dress and present themselves immediately to the bishop, who laid hands on them and sealed them with oil with these words: “Make them worthy to be filled with Thy Holy Spirit and send upon them Thy grace, that they may serve Thee according to Thy will.” Confirmation (as the bestowal of the Spirit was later called) was postponed for new converts after the 5th century A.D. to a later time subsequent to water baptism.

⁴¹Cecil Robeck, Jr., “Signs, Wonders, Warfare, and Witness,” *Pneuma, The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* (Spring 1991), 13:1, 2.

⁴²“Towards Toronto,” *Pentecost* 40 (June, 1957), 17, cited by Robeck in *Pneuma*.

⁴³Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 3, 519.

⁴⁴Robeck in *Pneuma*, 3.

Originally water baptism (Easter) and Spirit baptism (Pentecost) were separate components of one larger baptismal liturgy. This was the basis for the distinction which came to be made between water baptism and confirmation (laying on of hands). This is the meaning of the coming of the Spirit—to seal and to strengthen the believer. This twofold distinction was to become the historical and theological basis for the Wesleyan doctrine of two works of grace. But the Vineyard movement stresses the coming of the Spirit in terms of miraculous demonstrations which are pragmatic proofs of the gospel. The focus on spiritual gifts in pentecostalism and the charismatic movement is biblically-based, even if overworked. But the “signs and wonders” emphasis in the Vineyard movement, with its theology of the coming of the Spirit reflected in paroxysms and in miraculous events in order to provide objective proof of the truth of the gospel, is sub-biblical.

8. The dramatic phenomena emphasized in pentecostalism and now in the Vineyard movement are easily replicated from one place to another and are not even distinctly Christian. What cannot be counterfeited is the fruit of the Spirit. Fruit in a grocery store is called “produce.” It cannot be manufactured except as plastic decoration. The fruit of the Christian life can only be *produced* by the Holy Spirit, and that is the final test of Christian character. Patrick Sherry has shown in *Spirit, Saints, and Immortality* (1984) that the final proof of the truth of the Christian faith is demonstrated in the holy lives of the people of God (i.e., the sanctified ones).

The only religion with its essence being love is the Judeo-Christian faith. Other religions are based on fear. Emotional ecstasies in pagan religions are a normal way of seeking refuge from the fears and insecurities of human life. The mystery religions of the first century provided a powerful threat to Christianity because of their emotional appeal to the masses of the illiterate people of the Roman Empire. Christianity finally won out against the mystery religions because of its intellectual and historical foundation in objective reality.⁴⁵

Obviously the center of pagan religion at Corinth, with its appeal to meeting the emotional needs of its people, also posed a threat to Christians there. Some in the Corinthian Church were even cursing Jesus in tongues (1 Cor. 12:3). The elevation today of emotional and physical evi-

⁴⁵Cf. Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 9-10.

dences as the decisive feature of Christian revival is just as inappropriate today as it was to early Christians in the first century. Because language related to baptism and infilling of the Spirit sounds emotional, it can easily degenerate into excesses unless it is properly linked to the objective reality of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ.

Karl Barth admitted shortly before his death that he had never developed an adequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The reason, he said, was his fear of the subjectivism of Pietism and liberalism. He noted that the secularism of our day, its individualism and appeal to “feeling,” are an outgrowth of Pietism and Enlightenment rationalism. He pointed out that Enlightenment rationalism is a development out of the “autonomous” mystical implications of Pietism. Pietism preached a doctrine of the indwelling Spirit who became the self-authenticating principle of ultimate truth for the “autonomous” individual. Enlightenment rationalism is the secular version of Pietism. Reason and feeling are like two sides of the same coin. To avoid any possible thought that he was forming an alliance with liberalism, Barth avoided the subjective dimension of faith reflected in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Because of this neglect, he hoped that one of his own students would pick up where he left off and develop a more adequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Jürgen Moltmann is attempting to do just this.⁴⁶

The excesses of the Vineyard movement appear to be expressing the secular spirit of this age with its super-spiritualizing and emotionalizing of truth. Undoubtedly, the rationalistic skepticism of our secular age entices even sophisticated and rationalistic people to fall for the irrational as a compensation for their skepticism. Kraft calls for “a worldview shift” away from rationalism, but his obsession with power, demanding that God be revealed in miraculous phenomena, is an example of how skepticism turns itself into fanaticism and credulity. Hence, his worldview is a shift toward the pagan and secular.

Barth’s caution about emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit is well-placed. The trend to overdo the subjective and emotional interpretation of faith is strong in our narcissistic culture. The widespread skepticism and rationalism prevalent in our day snares many people into the compensation of fanaticism. The excesses of the current pentecostaliza-

⁴⁶Laurence Wood, “From Barth’s Trinitarian Christology to Moltmann’s Trinitarian Pneumatology, *The Asbury Theological Journal* 48:1(Spring 1993), 49-80.

tion of American Christianity is one such trend. We should not allow ourselves to be intimidated into silence about the work of the Holy Spirit. We must continue to strive for a balance which integrates the personal, subjective ministry of the Holy Spirit into the rational, objective history of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion. The gifts of the Spirit, physical/emotional manifestations, and spiritual warfare (demon possession) are not essential aspects of the gospel. These can be developed without any reference to the uniqueness of Christ. Whenever the Spirit is emphasized in isolation from Christ, the gifts of the Spirit will often be the focus rather than the fruit of the Spirit (sanctification). For the *Holy* Spirit is called *Holy* because his task is to make us holy by our being renewed in the image of Christ. None of the gifts of the Spirit has any essential connection to Christ. That is why Wesley, in his sermon on “Scriptural Christianity” (based on the text, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit”), says that the unique purpose of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost was to make us holy—to be like Christ.

The uniqueness of this gift of sanctification provided by the Holy Spirit was promised by the Old Testament prophets and became a reality at Pentecost with the disciples of our Lord (see Wesley’s sermon on “Christian Perfection” [II. 11]). That is why the Wesleyan tradition has always insisted on the essential connection between the gift of the Spirit and sanctification. Whenever there is an emphasis on the Holy Spirit that does not at the same time relate the *ministry of the Spirit* to the justifying and sanctifying *work of Christ*, there can only be a sub-biblical focus on gifts, manifestations, and spiritual warfare which detract from the rational, objective person of Jesus Christ.

WOMEN IN MINISTRY: A BIBLICAL VISION

by

Sharon Clark Pearson

Wesleyan theological tradition historically has held a “high view” of Scripture; that is a part of the ethos of our community. In a church tradition (with its community) that claims the integrity and authority of Scripture, questions of practice are taken seriously. The question of whether God ordains and blesses women in the practice of ministry (both in function and in office) is crucial to women because their personal and relational lives and their participation in the church have been defined and regulated by the interpretation of Scripture (as the lives of all of us should be). It is also a critical question for the church on many levels—if the church is serious about determining God’s will, and then, by the grace of God, doing it!

In the church, answers given to the question of God’s will concerning women seem to fall into three categories. Each of the three categories may be defined by their approach (perspective and procedures) to Biblical material. These distinctive approaches may be observed in the questions asked of Scripture, the principles exercised in the selection and evaluation (valuing) of biblical texts, the method applied in theological synthesis, and the subsequent proposed applications of conclusions. It may be further observed that the conclusions are significantly shaped by the “window” through which biblical texts are viewed.

Three Categories of Approach

One of these three approaches to the issue of women in ministry begins with a disclaimer. It either is inappropriate to address this question

to the Biblical materials, argues this position, or these materials are inadequate for the task. The question of women in institutionalized ministry is seen as foreign to Scripture, and/or the instruction of Scripture is determined to be of limited value in the debate (irrelevant or impossibly culture bound). The “window” through which Scripture is observed is a presupposition about the value of Scripture itself, or about the hermeneutic that governs the way Scripture is used. In this category, theologians may proceed with general perspectives such as the equality of women and men in creation or broad principles of social justice and equality. Such an approach is focused on appeals to reason or general revelation (natural theology) or limited to a reductional existentialism. Those in the Wesleyan tradition may critique this approach as weak in that it abandons the special revelation Scripture does offer. The presupposition of this category of thought may be defined as a pluralist¹ view of the authority of Scripture; Scripture is only one of several authorities which may be appealed to as equally valid in the discussion.

The second and third approaches to the issue of the place of women in the church share the conviction that Scripture is a source of special revelation (revealed theology). Of these two approaches, one may be identified by the value it attaches to biblical statements of propriety and convention, such as those in the station codes and statements of restriction of female participation in the church (1 Cor. 14; 1 Tim. 2). These texts are made the starting place or “window” through which other biblical materials are perceived and interpreted. While this category appeals to the authority of Scripture (and so is committed to a self-consciously “high view” of Scripture), its approach is limited by a “mechanical literalism.”

Methodologically, this category is inadequate in contextual investigation (literary and historical). Theologically, this approach is weakened by a restricted understanding of revelation as propositional statements. The presupposition of this category may be identified as a positivist view

¹This article is dedicated to Dr. Marie Strong, my mentor and model, who passed into eternity January 18, 1995, and is now enjoying her reward. As a minister of the gospel for sixty years and as a Bible professor for over thirty years at Church of God (Anderson) colleges, “mother” Marie lived out her ministry in a church body (Church of God) that has sought to be an expression of the vision this article represents. I also take this opportunity to thank Alan Padgett and Susie Stanley. Alan, in his insight, creativity, and kindness, helped to create the three “P” terms I use here. In the process, he helped me to sharpen my statements. Susie Stanley gave her time, intelligence, and heart in an initial discussion which helped to direct my focus.

of Scripture (not logical positivism) in that it would interpret *sola scriptura* to mean that Scripture is the exclusive authority for theology.² In this paper, biblical positivism is defined as a position which takes the Bible itself to be the “given,” the data or the evidence—and limited to that evidence alone as authority. In hermeneutical terms, this approach might be called monism and stands in contrast to the pluralism of the first approach.

The third category of approaches to the issue of women in ministry, precisely out of its commitment to Scriptural authority, attempts to incorporate the broad range of biblical evidence. The data considered to be important to the discussion includes such material as the biblical stories of the experience of the Jesus community and the early church. These stories are seen as reflections of the circumstances and the theologies of that church. The truly revolutionary practices of Jesus in relation to women, the participation of women alongside the apostle Paul in ministry, and the evidence of women’s participation (leadership) in worship services are all accepted as contributing factors in the dialogue. The rationale for such a program is that this evidence reflects the theological perspectives of the biblical writers. For example, the Lucan and Pauline writings present theologies of a new aeon in which social and religious barriers are superseded. Texts such as Acts 2:16-21, Galatians 3:28, and Ephesians 2 (which helps define the Galatians passage) are the “window” through which the biblical materials are perceived.

This third category is also committed to standard research into broader references which are used as sources by biblical writers. So, creation accounts and the station codes are investigated for the purpose of identifying God’s will as presented in the “whole council of Scripture.” This category is not only serious about inductive study of Scripture as primary authority, it is sensitive to experience, reason (analysis), and church tradition, *norms which are reflected in the biblical materials themselves*. The presupposition that governs this approach may be described as the primacist view of Scripture in the question of authority, which also allows the evidence of reason, the appeal of experience, and the instruction of

²I am working from Hepburn’s discussion of positivism and particularly from a specific statement made there: “The word ‘positive’ (probably deriving from a usage of Francis Bacon) is here contrasted with the conjectured: it is associated with the ‘given’, the data of the sciences” (*The Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 1969 ed., s.v. “Positivism” by R. W. Hepburn).

tradition. This position has been defined in Wesleyan circles as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.³

The second and third categories reflect the tension inherent in Scripture, the tension drawn between eschatological vision (Joel) and arguments of social propriety.⁴ Arguments of hierarchy and dominance/subordination stand alongside stories of revolutionary attitudes and practice in Jesus' ministry and in the participation of women in the ministry of the early church.

The following presentation on the issue of women in ministry is necessarily brief, but demonstrates the method of the third approach to Scripture.⁵ The synthesis derived from this work reflects the conviction that Scripture is relevant and does lend guidance and inspiration to practice in the church, in this case to the issue of women in ministry. The significance of this method is that it reflects the integrity of a Wesleyan approach to Scripture and a particular vision of the means of faithfulness to its authority.

The Case for Women in Ministry

All serious (and even not so serious) Bible students interpret Scripture according to some set of principles, even if they are tacit. When any question is asked of Scripture, certain principles are exercised in the selection, evaluation (valuing), theological synthesis, and proposed application of conclusions. All who read Scripture make choices between the instructions received therein. All decide what portion of the Scripture is timeless and always applicable and which passages are only cultural expressions of some larger question. For example, though many have read

³The argument for the primacy of Scripture does not allow for any negation of Scripture as authority. Thorsen's summary is helpful in establishing this point: "Neither Wesley nor the quadrilateral controverts the primacy of scriptural authority. Those who use the Wesleyan quadrilateral to diminish the primary authority of Scripture misinterpret Wesley's belief and Outler's intention in coining the term 'quadrilateral.' But, while Scripture is viewed as primary, it should not be considered exclusive. Such an understanding would be inappropriate for Wesley as well as for Christian antiquity and the Protestant Reformation" (Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990, 241).

⁴Those arguments are not simply for the sake of "propriety" however. In each case the purpose for the instruction has to do with a particular situation being addressed. See the following section on house or station codes.

⁵This presentation is a revision of my work "Biblical Precedents for Women in Ministry" in *Called to Minister, Empowered to Serve*, ed. Juanita Evans Leonard (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, Inc., 1989), 13-33.

the stated requirement that women wear a head covering in public worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16), there is no concern expressed in our churches that this injunction is to be obeyed by women today. It has been dismissed as circumstance-bound instruction that no longer applies (although the principle which governed the instruction should be interpreted and does apply). The question, then, is not whether to make such distinctions, which are in fact demanded by the nature of many of the texts in the New Testament—occasional letters—but where to draw the line in that process.

In making such a choice, two almost automatic instincts govern this writer. First, we are allowed to define an expression as limited to a particular circumstance (with a corresponding application) where we have a clear statement of such limits from that text or another. Second, an old dictum applies: Where the text speaks, we speak (without reservation). Where Scripture is silent, we speak only with a great deal of humility.

Another consideration in this discussion is that some of the questions we address to Scripture are foreign to it. These may be worked out only by implication. The question of women in ministry is not foreign to the New Testament, but is not answered explicitly therein. While it is clear that women participated in the ministry of the New Testament church, definition of the parameters of that participation is disputed. But, it must be remembered that interpreters all are working from the same limited evidence, and more, that the so-called “clear statements” limiting the participation of women are not clear at all. If they were, there would be no discussion.⁶

⁶Some, voicing a “positivist” view of Scripture, would claim that no discussion is necessary, not only from the vantage point of Scripture, but also by appealing to church history. I was recently made aware that some think of the issue of women in ministry as a recent concern arising out of the social impulse to radicalism beginning in the 1960s. A knowledge of Church history would correct such a misunderstanding, especially a history of the last 150 years. It is ironic that the issue arose primarily as a “low church” phenomenon in America, and as part of a reformation reaction to institutionalized and nominalized religion (“high church”) from the 1860s through the turn of the century (with the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana, coming to the strongest practical expression of that phenomenon; in 1925—32% of its pastors were women). As these “low church” denominations gained identity and later a certain respectability, radical reform was less a concern, and institutional survival more important. What made such movements (pentecostal, holiness, etc.) suspect to established denominations was precisely such practices as women in ministry, racial integration of worship services, and other “social justice” expressions. But today it is the older denominations which ordain women, and many with a fundamentalist/evangelical perspective seek to distance themselves from such “liberal” practices. On the history of this in the Church of God movement, see “Women in Ministry” in *Centering on Ministry* (Winter 1980, 5:2): 1-2, published by the Center for Pastoral Studies of Anderson University.

The method of this particular study is to begin by reviewing the information on women in general in the New Testament. That information was written, selected, and preserved in androcentric (man-centered) societies. It is remarkable that given the patriarchal world view of the societies in which these documents were written, women were included in the story at all. There is enough evidence available in the various accounts of women in the New Testament to indicate that women were an integral part of the life and ministry of the early church. The story of the church could not be told without including the stories of women.

Women in the Gospels

It is shortsighted to consider the place of women in the church without recalling Jesus' attitude and actions toward the women around him. Women as well as men were attracted to Jesus in his three short years of ministry. Among Jesus' rugged band of followers were a number of women. Jeremias calls this event, the fact of women following a teacher or rabbi, "an unprecedented happening in history of that time" (374). We know about these women from a few short references (Mark 15:40, 41; Luke 8:1-3). These women supported Jesus and his disciples financially. They were women with means and so probably came from an upper echelon of society. The Marcan account paints the poignant picture of these women, along with other women from Jerusalem, at the scene of Jesus' crucifixion. The three women named in that portrait visit the burial site after Sabbath to anoint their Lord's body for burial. And then, in a society where a woman's word was not allowed in court, they were commissioned by Jesus to be the first to proclaim the resurrection. Nothing was more natural than their being among the 120 who waited in the Upper Room for the power that would give fire to their lives and witness. The church from its inception included women.

Who were the women who sought Jesus out and became a part of the Gospel story because of his impact on their lives? They are the three who became known as leaders among the group of women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Salome). They are Mary and Martha, who, contrary to social rules, invited Jesus into their home. They include the woman unclean with her feminine infirmity and the despised Samaritan woman at the well who was the first commissioned by Jesus to "spread the Word." They are the Syro-Phoenician (Gentile) woman who asked him for "the crumbs" for her demon-possessed daughter and the woman who, in a prophetic act, anointed Jesus.

A significant aspect of every story is that it was ever recorded and preserved. In a culture where women were property⁷ and had no rights or privileges to call their own, these stories themselves would have opened the door of the church to criticism and even contempt. But what is most significant about these stories is that, in every case, Jesus crossed all lines of propriety—religious and social. His very actions were a challenge to the cherished traditions of his own people. He went so far as to commend women as examples of faith and spiritual vitality, women who no rabbi would teach, women who were not counted in the number of a synagogue, who were isolated to a separate court at the temple, and whose religious vows could be overturned by their husbands.

Along with stories of women who accompanied Jesus and his disciples is the story of Mary and Martha. Jesus teaches Mary as he would teach any man who would follow him—an unheard of breach of religious leadership. “Better to burn the Torah than to teach it to a woman.”⁸ Women were not educated in the Synagogue school nor at home. “He who teaches his daughter the law, teaches her lechery.”⁹ As if that were not enough, Jesus is recorded as having chided Martha for fulfilling her socially prescribed role instead of joining Mary (Luke 10:38-42).

The cumulative effect of such stories makes clear that Jesus broke custom in his championing of women as equally worthy of his concern and ministry. His evaluation of them far outstripped the most expansive and tolerant in his day and continually surprised even those who knew him well. The tone of his ministry was not to accept the status quo, but rather to model a new life and relationships to and for women. He challenged the sexist standards of his world—the lustful glance of an adulterous heart (Matthew 5:27-28.), the casual divorce, a male prerogative (Matthew 19:3-9),¹⁰ and the threat of capital punishment applied unfairly

⁷Women were listed as property along with cattle. See Georgia Harkness, *Women in Church and Society* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 42-52. In general, women did not have the right to personal property; it belonged to husband or father. Exceptions to such mores would have been restricted to the elite. Samuel Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 123.

⁸Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, as quoted in Jeremias’ *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 373.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰“The right to divorce was exclusively the husband’s” (Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 370). Jeremias adds that public stigma and the requirement that the financial agreement in the marriage contract be honored (that money be returned) acted as a deterrent for hasty divorce. Therefore, the Hillelite provision for capricious divorce was not necessarily fulfilled. This evidence does expose the attitudes of the day, however.

—only to the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11). The popular attitude of the day was that women were responsible for all sexual temptation (and therefore sexual sin). None of these stories would be approved, much less applauded outside of the early church that preserved them. Yet, somehow, the gospel could not be told without them. Such events were so integral to the reality of the Jesus community that they comprised a part of the gospel itself.

An anticipated response to the above review of evidence regarding women in ministry is the popular objection that none of the women following Jesus became one of his twelve disciples/apostles. None were accorded equality. It is not necessary to argue cultural expediency here. It is enough to respond that no Gentile or slave was allowed that privilege either, but that was not and is not used to exclude these disadvantaged groups from the leadership and offices of the church.

Women in the Early Church

Clearly, women were an integral part of the Jesus community that awaited the empowerment of the Spirit (Acts 1:14-15). And just as clearly, these women were among those who received the Spirit in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The emphasis of Peter's sermon is the universality of the Spirit's work; those who previously were not candidates to share in proclamation—the young, the woman, the slave—were now anointed to prophesy as witnesses of the work of the Messiah (Acts 1:8, 2:1-4; Luke 24:44-49). It was incredible that women were included in the Gospel accounts; it is also a wonder that the participation of women in the early church was recorded in Acts and the Epistles. Against cultural expediency and propriety, these stories continued to be told. A brief perusal of the evidence of this participation can be listed in two categories: (1) brief references included in such incidental fashion as lists of women; and (2) epistolary discussions of women's participation in ministry. We also will note (3) the household codes, (4) the argument from creation accounts, and (5) the relevance of emphasis on the eschatological age of the Spirit.

1. Lists of Women. The incidental and therefore brief references to women identified as participating in various aspects of the ministry of the church are powerful evidence of apostolic recognition of women in ministry. Why? Because at least one agenda for listing these women was to elicit recognition and support of their ministry in the church. Furthermore, these texts not only assume the role of such women, they exhort support of those women, and precisely in their roles as ministers.

In the book of *Acts* Philip the evangelist is noted with a reference to his four daughters who had the gift of prophesy (21:9). The Apostle Paul places this spiritual gift at the top of his list as the most valuable gift for edification of the church (1 Cor. 14:1). Mentioned in several epistles in the New Testament, another character, Priscilla, evidently bore quite a reputation (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:19). How many others were referred to as often or in such a variety of texts? Her distinction for the purposes of this study is that she, along with Aquila, taught Apollos (Acts 18:26). Against Rabbinic tradition that identified women as “the wife” of the man who is named, the Apostle Paul recognized Priscilla as prominent enough not only to be listed along with her husband, but also to be referred to first in the pair more often than not (four of six times, one of these occurring in 1 Timothy, which indicates her prominence as teacher in the pair). By calling Priscilla a “fellow worker” in Christ Jesus, the Apostle Paul accorded Priscilla an equal place among other such workers as Timothy (Romans 16:21), Titus (2 Cor. 8:23), Luke (Philemon 24), Apollos, Paul (1 Cor. 3:9), and others.

This term applied to Priscilla, “fellow worker,” was also applied to Euodia and Syntyche, leaders at Philippi. Phoebe is explicitly called a “minister” (a term historically translated as “servant” only in the case of Phoebe). The same term was applied to the leaders Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5), Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6), and Paul (1 Cor. 3:5). Along with the references to Phoebe and Prisca (Priscilla) in Paul’s closing instructions to the Romans, four other women are listed as having “worked very hard” in the Lord: Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis. The Apostle Paul applied this same description to the ministry of other leaders in the church (1 Cor. 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17). Finally, one of the two who Paul called “outstanding among the apostles” was a woman (Rom. 16:7). The name mentioned is Junias. David Scholer’s review of the evidence is most helpful:

Junias is a male name in English translations, but there is no evidence that such a male name existed in the first century A.D. Junia, a female name, was common, however. The Greek grammar of the sentence . . . means that the male and female forms of this name would be spelled identically. . . . Since Junia is the name attested in the first century and since the great church father . . . of the fourth century, John Chrysostom (no friend of women in history), understood the reference to be to a woman Junia, we ought to see it that way as well. In fact, it was not until the thirteenth century that she was changed to Junias (12-13).

It is obvious from these informal, uncontrived lists, that women played a significant role in the early church as leaders. Their function in ministry is defined in these places by the same terms applied to the ministry of men, and no gender distinction is made in role or function in the lists. Yet, despite the power of this evidence, it is clear that the record of women in ministry was more limited than that of men. The heroes of the biblical records are almost always men. It is probable that opportunity for participation in ministry was more limited for women.

2. Evidence of Participation. One of the strongest evidences for the participation of women in the worshipping community comes from the brief discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. This text makes explicit reference to women prophesying and praying in services of worship. The reference is incidental; the practice is not commented on. That makes a strong case for inclusion of women in these ministries in services of worship. Such participation by women is evidently assumed under the wide rubric of spiritual gifts and ministries which have been designated to all (regardless of religious, social, or gender distinctions) for “the common good” (12:7). Several arguments are made in this text; a brief perusal is all that the confines of this study will allow.

First Corinthians 11:2-16 has been debated at length. The breadth of the arguments are best explained as arising out of what appears to be a contradiction in the text between vv. 4-7 and vv. 10-12.¹¹ Verses 4-7 require that women submit to the norms of their culture regarding head covering: “every woman who prays or prophesies with her *kephale* (head) uncovered (the word “veil” does not occur in this text) dishonors her head . . . let her keep her head covered.”¹² Verses 10-12 are Paul’s corrective;

¹¹Alan Padgett provides a logical presentation of the contradiction and offers the conclusion that vv. 3-7b are Paul’s “description” of the Corinthian position, and vv. 7c-16 are Paul’s correctives (“Paul on Women in the Church: The Contradictions of Coiffure in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16” in JSNT 20 [1984]: 69-86—hereafter cited as “Women in the Church”). This follows a pattern common in Paul’s writings and certainly occurring in 1 Corinthians 6:12-17 and 8:4-13. Overviews of the debate on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 are presented by Linda Mercandante in her *From Hierarchy to Equality: A Comparison of Past and Present Interpretations of 1 Cor. 11:2-16* (Vancouver: Regent College, G-M-H Books, 1978) and by Ralph N. Schutt in his “A History of the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16” (MA Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978).

¹²Ibid. *Veil* or *kalymma* does not occur at all in this passage. See Padgett’s summary of the evidence in “Women in the Church.” Padgett points his readers to the original work in Jerome Murphy-O’Conner, “Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthi-

women may wear a covering over their heads or may not: "For this reason the woman ought to have *exousia* (power, right or freedom of choice, the ability to do something) over (covering) her head" (v. 10; cf. John 10:18, Acts 9:14, and Rev. 16:9 for the use of *exousia* with *echo*, and 1 Cor. 9 for *exousia*).¹³ The Greek term *authority* should be translated as it is—that women should have "authority" over their heads. It should not to be translated as sign of *authority* or veil.¹⁴

In this context, *exousia* not only symbolizes woman's (wife's) glorification (vs. shame) of man (husband), but also her authority to play an active role in worship. "That is, her veil (sic.) represents the new authority given to women under the new dispensation to do things which formerly had not been permitted" (Barrett 255). Following this line of reasoning, such an interpretation is substantiated by the two verses following his statement. Having argued for natural differences between man and woman, Paul now lays down a new principle of mutuality and interdependence based also on creation (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3-5).

Prior to the argument of verses 4-7, a basic assertion is made which often is raised in the discussion of women in ministry: "Now, I want you to realize that the *kephale* of every man is Christ, and the *kephale* of the woman is man, and the *kephale* of Christ is God." The normal meaning of

ans 11:2-16," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 483f. He also refers his readers to James B. Hurley, "Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women?," *WJT* 35 (1972-73):190-220; Abel Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple* (Lund: Gleerup, 1965), 161-66; W. J. Martin, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation," in W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (eds.), *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 233.

¹³Padgett, loc. cit., 71-2. The translation "sign"/"symbol" of authority is disallowed syntactically and semantically, and does not fit the context, which makes an egalitarian appeal. See Padgett's article for in-depth and orderly discussion of this text and possible translations. The phrase *dia tous angelous* is more problematic, but could mean human messengers such as Pricilla who may have visited the church in Corinth. Padgett offers this suggestion with the judgment that "this interpretation . . . [is] at least as plausible as others," 81-82. *Exousia* was a watchword at Corinth. In response to the misguided grasping for "power" of the Corinthians (or at least of some significant group in the community), as is revealed throughout this correspondence, Paul makes the statement of his own *modus operandi*—his personal example in 1 Cor. 9.

¹⁴As many commentators have recognized, the term is Paul's normal word for "authority" and includes the sense of active exercise (and not passive reception of it as some have claimed). See Scholer, "Women in Ministry," 17. See also Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 253-4 and M. D. Hooker, *New Testament Studies*, x, 410-416.

kephale, or *head*, in the New Testament is *source of being* or *origin*; the rarer meaning is *authority* or *dominion*. While it seems obvious that the argument is an appeal to some sort of order, the meaning and application of the statement is much less obvious. This statement is made in service of the argument about what women do with their *heads* in their exercise of ministry (public prayer and prophesy); to do so without a covering brings shame upon their heads.¹⁵ Whatever Paul's statement does mean, it in no way functions in this text to limit the participation or leadership of women in public worship.

The translation *origin* or *source of being*, rather than *authority* or *dominion* makes quite a different statement; when translated as *authority* /*dominion*, and so *lord*, this passage has been used to promote a sort of idolatry of men by women; women owe men what men owe Christ. But, while the text appeals to the order of creation from Genesis 2:18-23, it does not go so far as a straight parallel would allow. It does not claim that woman is the "image" as well as glory of man (11:7). Woman shares the image of God (and therefore is not more removed from God than man); this is a concession to Genesis 1:27 and 5:2 (Barrett 248, 249). Verse 8 restates the concept of *origin* or *source* in the order of creation.¹⁶

A question is raised when we are encountered by the words of 1 Cor. 14:33b-36, which some have read only as a limitation of the role of women in worship—only three chapters after women are casually recognized for their participation and leadership. The apparent discontinuity between these two passages also has been explained in a variety of ways.¹⁷ Here, the governing perspective offered is that chapter 14 is instruction to three groups of people: (1) the tongues-speakers (vv. 2, 5, 9-19, 27 ff.);

¹⁵*Head* may be a reference to the husband of the woman here. David W. J. Gill proposes that sociological factors of status and dress (including head coverings) are behind this text ("The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41.2 [1990]: 245-260). See also R. Oster "When men wore veils to worship: the historical context of 1 Corinthians 11:4" *NTS* 34 (1988): 481-505 and C. L. Thompson "Hairstyles, Headcoverings, and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth," *Biblical Archaeologist* 51:2 (1989): 99-115.

¹⁶Padgett argues that the headship statement is a reference to the position of the Corinthians Paul is attempting to correct: "Thus the debate between Paul and the Corinthians can be seen as a debate over the meaning of 'head' " ("Women in the Church," 78-81). This fits the context; vv. 10-12 are egalitarian statements.

¹⁷The summary and critique by Ralph P. Martin of a number of these attempts to explain the apparent inconsistency is helpful. See *The Spirit and the Congregation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1984), 84-88. But some insist that the text is an interpolation and so need not be explained as Paul's instruction. It seems best to begin with the text as it appears and evaluate all possible options for making sense of the text before speculating about its insertion into the letter.

(2) the prophets (vv. 3, 24, 29-32; and (3) the women (34f.). The regulations for each group are similar, including the explicit command to “be silent,” and the basic corrective requirement of “order” (Fiorenza 230).

It is important to recognize Paul’s use of the verb *lalein*, “speak,” in 1 Corinthians 14:34. It should be translated *inspired speech* or argumentative and distracting *debate* or *questioning*. The term used is not Paul’s usual term for preaching or prophesying, so there is no contradiction with the reference to women praying and prophesying in the eleventh chapter. No matter what final conclusion one places upon the instruction *to be silent*, it cannot be that women are not allowed to *pray* or *prophesy* in public worship. Ralph Martin’s argument is basic: “Paul remains committed to social egalitarianism in the gospel (Gal. 3:28), and there is the undeniable evidence of the role he accorded women colleagues (Phoebe, Prisca [Priscilla], the women of Philippi [Phil. 4:3] and the several coworkers in Rom. 16). It is “prima facie” unlikely he should state categorically “Let your women keep silent” in worship (85).

One of the proposed pictures drawn to explain this text and the larger context of this epistle is that of women who aspired to be charismatic teachers, claiming special revelations in inspired speech which were above the usual corrections of the congregation and apostolic teaching. Their claims were so inflated that the Apostle is led to sarcasm: Did the word of God originate with you? Are you the only people it has reached? In this scenario, the heretical teaching going on in the Corinthian congregation was a gnostic sort of teaching (cf. chapters 7 and 15).¹⁸ Whatever

¹⁸These women could be sharing in a claim of “special knowledge” which included speculations that there was no actual resurrection of the body but that a spiritual “resurrection” had already occurred at baptism. Such teaching could have prompted Paul’s extended reply, beginning with his question, “How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the body?” (15:12). Their denial of the resurrection lay in the claim that they were raised in baptism—they were “angelic beings” (13:1) after a misapplication of the words of Jesus recorded in Luke 20:35-36. It is also apparent that Paul was responding to a belief in sacramental efficacy (11:17-34; 10:1-22). Such a concept led to a confusion in the home; as resurrected beings they no longer participated in marriage obligations—they were attempting to live in a state of celibacy in marriage (7:3-5). These heretical teachers (women glossolalics) were to be kept “under control” as the “law” required (*nomos*, meaning *principle* and here referring to Paul’s teaching; cf. vs. 37). The meaning of “asking their husbands at home” is a response to the challenge these women presented to their husbands in public assembly. The verb *eperotan*, inquire after, is used in the sense of interrogation, in the same way as they challenged apostolic authority. This interpretation, offered by Martin, fits the larger portrait drawn of the Corinthian church and is supported by a parallel circumstance in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 where arrogant women aspired to be teachers of “things they know not” (teaching gnostic perspectives and presuming the right understanding of the faith) (*The Spirit and the Congregation*, 84-88).

sociological history this text is mirroring, Paul's correctives were not aimed at the total restriction of women's participation and ministry in Corinth anymore than he forbade tongues (14:39) or the ministry of prophesy in general. Women functioned with the gift to which Paul accorded highest (and corrective) value in that community (14:1). The Corinthian evidence displays a community in which women were participating in leadership in the community, some of whom required correction, not of that function, but for abuse of the function.

The above discussions of the participation of women in public worship and lists of women who led in the early church all bear evidence to the fact that women did function in ministry in the early church. While there is no claim to "office" here, there is no question but that "function" occurred. Use of the lists of women in this discussion is an appeal to at least some of the tradition and experience of the early church. Such information should be considered alongside what are considered to be propositional instructions.

3. The Use of Household Codes. One significant aspect of the argument against women in ministry is the appeal to the household codes located in the New Testament. These household codes, with their hierarchical order, were not created by the New Testament authors but rather are quoted from the Graeco-Roman culture of that day.¹⁹ The Greek philosopher Aristotle, who predated Christ by three and a half centuries, was the source of the formal arrangement of pairings based on this dominant/subordinate hierarchical model:

The primary and smallest parts of the household are "master" and "slave," "husband" and "wife," "father" and "children"

¹⁹The information about household codes is collected in the following two texts: John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) and David L. Balch *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 26, Chicago: Scholars Press, 1981). The articles most helpful for the argument developed here are by these same two scholars: John H. Elliott, "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: A Discussion with David Balch" in *Perspectives on First Peter*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 61-78, and David L. Balch, "Hellenization/Acculturation in 1 Peter" in the same text, 79-102. I agree with Balch on the meaning of the "household codes" in the text of 1 Peter as I have presented it in this paper. Much of the following discussion comes from information collected by Balch in his article "Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2:11-3:12," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 39/3 (1984): 161-173.

. . . Authority and subordination are conditions not only inevitable but also expedient. . . There is always found a ruling and a subject factor . . . between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject.²⁰

Aristotle expanded this household code to the realm of political life because in his thinking, “the household was a microcosm of the state.”²¹ He taught the authority/subordination model in the pairing of ruler/people. He promoted his social order as necessary to stability, harmony, and political security. Any threat to this Aristotelian value system was considered by the Roman Empire to be a threat to such stability and security. So, the Roman emperor Octavian instructed his soldiers to “allow no woman to make herself equal to a man” (Cassius 50.25.3, 28.3). What was the occasion for such an instruction? Antony and Cleopatra. David Balch reviews the problem as follows:

If democratic equality between husband and wife as it existed in Egypt were allowed to influence Roman households, the government would degenerate into a democracy; and the Romans believed this changed form of government would be morally worse than the aristocracy or monarchy which had brought them to power. The Egyptian Cleopatra’s goddess Isis, who “gave women the same power as men,” was perceived as a threat to continued Roman rule (*USQR* 162-3).

The rights of the one in authority were assumed. Tyranny was not criticized as an expression of that authority in the dominant culture as directed by Aristotle’s words: “For there is no such thing as injustice in the absolute sense towards what is one’s own.”²² In the same writing Aristotle assumes that since the one owned is “as it were a part of oneself and no one chooses to harm himself; hence there can be no injustice towards them and nothing just or unjust in the political sense.” He was advocating a benign tyranny based on inferior/superior natures. Yet, the Roman Stoic, Seneca, critiqued Roman treatment of slaves as “excessively haughty, cruel and insulting” (47.1 and 1).

²⁰Emphasis added. Aristotle, *Politics I*, 1253b 7-8; 1254a 22-23, 29-31; 1254b 13-21, trans. H. Rackham (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1932).

²¹See the discussion of Aristotelian political philosophy in David Balch’s “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2:11-3:12” in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 39:3 (1984): 161-3.

²²Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 1134b 9-18, trans. H. Rackham (LCL, Cambridge: Harvard University), 1956.

This lengthy look back is necessary for us to recover the impact of the household codes as used in the New Testament. The impact is that the Roman household codes were not simply adopted. They were adapted, that is, qualified in the earlier New Testament texts (in chronological order—Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:21-6:9, 1 Pet. 2:13-3:7). They were not accepted as absolutes, but critiqued even as they were appealed to. For example, in Colossians 3:18-4:1, the traditional pairings are each followed by an unthinkable modification, which in fact, points to a higher code of ethics than the one encapsulated in the original codes:

Wives be subject to husbands ___ husbands love wives.
Children obey parents ___ fathers do not provoke children.
Slaves obey masters ___ masters treat slaves justly.²³

The injunctions of the code in Ephesians are filled with new meaning as they appear under the revolutionary paragraph heading “submit to one another,” which is applied to all of the following discussion. The reason given there for submission is not an appeal to the superior or inferior nature of the other, but rather, reverence to Christ. It is impossible for the twentieth century student of the Bible to appreciate fully the newness of the relationship commanded of husbands and wives in Ephesians. Likewise, the command to Christian masters was full of the seeds of change: “treat your slaves in the same way” (i.e., by the same set of attitudes and conduct required of Christian slaves towards their masters). Such radical qualifications of the household codes are a class apart from any parallel in Greek philosophy, Stoicism, or Roman household codes (Balch 161). And the seeds of such thinking produced the fruit of the story of Paul, Onesimus, and Philemon.

First Peter also sets conditions on the household codes. In a setting of crisis, submission to human authority is for the Lord’s sake. Christians were suffering “unjustly” at the hands of tyrannical masters (2:19-20), husbands (3:6), and local government officials (2:14, 3:14,17). The purpose of the code in 1 Peter is not to insist on conformity to traditional values, but pragmatically to steer a prudent line. The appeal is for Christian commitment even when it involves suffering.²⁴ There was no question of

²³This is David Balch’s table expressing the household codes. This layout of the passage also reveals the qualification of each aspect of the code. See Balch, “Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority,” 161.

²⁴“Household codes” are better defined as “station codes” in 1 Peter. Submission to government is also enjoined.

an “inferior nature” being advanced here, for all are called to live as “servants of God” (2:16). Christ as the “Suffering Servant of God” is the model to follow (2:21-24). In the specific address to slaves in chapter two, the terms used elsewhere in the codes for *servant* (*doulos*) and *master* (*kurios*) are not used here. Rather, the terms *household servants* (*oiketai*) and *despots* (*despotai*) are used. The reason for the shift from the traditional use of the code language is that the author has already used the term *servant* to refer to every Christian (2:16) and *master* (or *Lord*) for God (2:15).

Roman rulers might not judge “justly” as God has ordained that they should (2:13-14) and as God himself does (2:21-23), but are to be submitted to for the Lord’s sake. Christian wives are to submit to pagan husbands for the purpose of evangelism (3:1-2) and are not to fear them (3:6). Christian husbands are called to a relationship with their wives quite different from the cultural norm. In fact, a most revolutionary concept appears here: the husband’s spiritual vitality is dependent upon the way he treats his wife.

The most significant critique of the husband-wife pair of the household code in 1 Peter would be immediately obvious to the original hearers of that epistle. And yet, without historical and cultural background, readers today would all but miss it. The Christian women addressed in 1 Peter 3 were married to pagan husbands. And yet, despite the norms of the Roman (and, in fact, Jewish) culture of that time, these women were allowed the freedom of religious choice by 1 Peter. That instruction went against the typical Roman perspective such as is expressed by Plutarch:

A wife should have no friends but those of her husband; and as the gods are the first of friends it is becoming for a wife to worship and know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find favor (Plutarch 140D, 140DE).

Even while addressing women in this text by appealing to the social code of the day, 1 Peter assumes their religious independence from their pagan husbands (cf. 1:18, 4:3, 4). These women were encouraged to keep their faith and not to fear their husbands, who likely had been expressing extreme displeasure and concern at their wives’ conversions. So, when those women heard this epistle in a service of worship, they heard a proclamation of freedom, religious responsibility, and increased value. Had their pagan husbands heard that same text, they would have heard

insubordination and anarchy. And how would they have heard the words addressed to their wives, “Do not give way to fear”? Oh, how differently this text is read today!

Many scholars have recognized the difference in the way the household codes are used in the Pastoral Epistles. The predominant attitudes of the culture of that day seem to be expressed in the way the codes are used in these letters.²⁵ Here there is no leveling instruction to the dominant members of the pairs such as is found in the Colossians or Ephesians texts. And yet, the motivation for use of the code is telling. Why should women and slaves be subject? So that the church may win the acceptance of society. But, this is still not the Roman appeal to an inborn nature which is superior or inferior. It is a pragmatic appeal like the exhortation to prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1-3. The purpose for the instruction is “that we may live peaceful and quiet lives” which will provide the opportunity for the salvation of all.

First Timothy 2:11-15 is the text most often quoted by those who believe that Scripture teaches the restriction of women’s ministry. In fact, it has been used by some as the defining text of the discussion of women’s place in the church. It seems that the reason the passage is given such priority is that it is judged by some to be a clear statement of instruction. Yet, the complexity and difficulty of the passage is mirrored in the disagreement it evokes among even conservative scholars. The presupposition one begins with radically affects the way this text is valued and investigated. If the text is adopted as a propositional statement, as Paul’s definitive (eternal and everywhere) word on restriction of the participation of women, then it follows that “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (2:12) is taken as “clear instruction.” However, the first level of investigation adopted here, literary and historical analysis, raises a number of serious challenges: the text is not at all “clear” in its meaning.

The first major challenge is that the interpretation of verse 12 depends on how one translates the verb *authentain* which is an *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. The translator must rely on other

²⁵It was not too much later that misogyny developed in full form both in Jewish and Christian literature. Plato’s low evaluation of women is well documented and the Greek culture certainly influenced these times. The Jewish Law that a woman was unclean during menstruation (Leviticus 15:19ff.) and the rabbinical speculations on the special culpability of woman in the Fall were developed into negative doctrines and attitudes by some early Church Fathers.

sources to determine possible meanings; there are four and each one radically affects the sense of the whole passage.²⁶ This difficulty is increased by the fact that the verb *didaskein* in 1 Timothy is always used in conjunction with another verb which qualifies its meaning (e.g., 1:3-4, 4:11, 6:2-3). Therefore, in verse 12, *authentein* qualifies the teaching; it refers to the negative content of the teaching and not to the activity of teaching itself. The Kroegers have concluded:

If the context of 1 Timothy 2:12 is neutral and refers only to the activity of teaching rather than to its positive or negative content, then it is the only time that *didaskein* is so used in the Pastorals. . . . It is in keeping with the other uses of *didaskein* to find in this directive a condemnation of their heterodoxy (81).

This interpretation is strengthened by recognition that the grammar of the sentence allows at least two interpretations. One of these is that it is an indirect statement with a repeated negative, in which case the emphasis of the sentence would be on the content of the teaching and not on the function of teaching.

Further difficulties are presented in the verses surrounding verse 12. In verse 11, the term for *silence* is not the term used in 1 Corinthians 14 and has five possible meanings, none of which is as strong as the term used in that letter. The best interpretation of the term is *quietness* or *in a quiet demeanor* (Fee 72). That is its sense also in the instruction just verses earlier in 1 Timothy which exhorts prayers “so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life . . .” (1 Tim. 2:2; cf. 2 Thess. 3:12 and 1 Thess. 4:11). The term does not mean verbal silence but an attitude of reverence or a state of peacefulness. The phrase “I do not permit” is better understood if translated “I am not permitting,” which suggests specific instruction for a particular circumstance (Fee 72).

For some, another problem in these verses is that Paul’s usual term for “man” is not used in 2:8-15. In the Pauline letters, *aner* or *man* occurs fifty times, and *gyne* or *woman* occurs fifty-four times in eleven texts. In each case, the terms refer to husbands and wives, and not male and female. This complicates the interpretation of “full submission”; to whom exactly are women to be in full submission? Their husbands? Men in gen-

²⁶The technical study of the use of this verb is meticulously presented in *I Suffer Not a Woman* by Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 79-104.

eral? True Christian teachers? The grammar of the sentence does not make the answer easy. Once again, the passage is not “clear.” Nevertheless, the best interpretation for the unit seems to be that these are general instructions directed to men and women. The conclusion selected here as best fitting the overall context is that women are to learn teaching quietly from true Christian teachers such as Timothy.

Finally, the relationship of verse 15 to the total passage is a puzzle; there is no consensus about the meaning of “she will be saved.” Contextual and historical studies identify the passage as one of the several responses of the letter to the false teachers at Ephesus. The content of the false teaching included misunderstanding of the Old Testament, speculative Jewish myths (genealogies) and asceticism. That false teaching was particularly attractive to women and to younger widows who avoided remarriage and had opened their homes to those who taught false doctrines (2:9-15, 5:11-15, 2 Tim. 3:6-7). Such teaching has been identified as a “precursor to Gnosticism”²⁷ and as doctrines based upon “perversions of the Adam and Eve saga,” with Eve as creator and spiritual illuminator of Adam and the serpent as offering “gnosis” to the world.²⁸ The influence of local goddess religions also is manifested in such teaching. All in all, the difficulties of this passage in 1 Timothy are best explained when the instruction is recognized as correction of false teaching and teachers at Ephesus.

Given just the few difficulties mentioned briefly above, it is remarkable and indefensible that verse 12, a difficult verse, and a single verse, would be given the status it has been given by some in the church. Even more, it is incredible that one single verse would be made the basis for any doctrine, especially one so critical in its impact on the church. Partic-

²⁷Alan Padgett presents a compelling presentation for typology as the interpretive approach governing verses 11-15. Both Eve and the Ephesian women are deceived and “saved through childbirth” recalls Genesis 3:15. Eve bears the seed that is at enmity with the serpent. Eve then is made both positive and negative type: “She is an example of deception in verses 13-14 and an example of salvation through childbirth in verse 15,” (“Wealthy Women at Ephesus,” in *Interpretation* 41:1989, 19-31).

²⁸Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger present a lengthy study of the cultural and historical influences behind the false teaching which included pagan goddess religions and Jewish mythologies and genealogies or origins as gnostic developments. They then read this passage, along with Padgett and others, as a refutation of false teaching (*I Suffer Not a Woman*, 19-23, 62-66, 88-98, 103-177). See also Samuel Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 191-193.

ularly if one counts the epistle as Pauline, these words must be weighed in light of the evidence that Paul allowed women in ministry, and further that he required submission to their leadership.²⁹

The second level of investigation which affects the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is to study the passage in the broad context of the appeals for submission in the station codes as used in the New Testament. The major difference between 1 Timothy 2 and the earlier appeals to the codes is that there is no reciprocity in this instruction.³⁰ And yet, even here in the most conservative expression of the code in the New Testament, the reason given for submission is not the nature of the creation, but rather the story of the Fall. This appeal to woman's greater culpability in the Fall cannot be taken as a theological absolute. The Genesis account itself (Genesis 3) does not assign such a meaning to the woman's succumbing first to temptation (only the man who is defending himself appeals to any "priority" of guilt!); punishment is equally assigned. And the Apostle Paul, when referring to the Fall, talks about Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-14). In fact, the claim made in 1 Timothy 2:14 that "Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" cannot be equated with the Genesis or Romans references to this event. It is much more like the rabbinical speculations of that time as expressed, for example, by Philo, the Apostle Paul's older contemporary:

. . . the woman, being imperfect and deprived "by nature," made the beginning of sinning; but man, as being the more excellent and perfect nature, was the first to set the example of blushing and being ashamed, and indeed of every good feeling and action.³¹

Long ago, Adolph von Harnack presented his theory to explain the changes in social attitudes from Jesus' followers and the earliest expres-

²⁹For example, Phoebe is called a *prostatis* (overseer, guardian, Rom. 16:1-2) which is the term used to indicate elders who *preside* (1 Tim. 5:17), *rule* (Rom. 12:8) or *hold authority over* (1 Thess. 5:12), and which occurs in short instructions to respect and honor leaders or elders.

³⁰The same is true of Titus 2:1-10. David Schroeder, "Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testament" (Diss., U. Hamburg, 1959) as summarized by Alan Padgett in "The Pauline Rationale for Submission: Biblical Feminism and the *hina* Clauses of Titus 2:1-10," *Evangelical Quarterly* 59(1987): 44. Padgett refers to the codes in the pastorals as "church codes" because they focus on relationships in the church (not the home).

³¹As quoted in Balch, 1981, 84.

sion of the church to Christianity as represented by the Pastoral epistles (1 Timothy and Titus). He observed the following progression: (1) the radical perspectives of Jesus, (2) unconventional freedom for women in the earliest congregations, (3) conditional appeals to the cultural norms by use of the household codes, and (4) uncritical acceptance of Graeco-Roman values. He called this progression an Hellenization process.³² While Harnack's theory may be rightly critiqued for not allowing for the different trajectories in a complex early history, his observation may be redirected in recognition of the appeals to accommodation for the sake of evangelism or, in the case of the Pastorals, social conservatism in reaction to heresy.

This process of accommodation may be observed in an historical glance at a comparable social issue, slavery. In the Old Testament some laws reflected the concern that Jews were never to forget that they were once slaves. In fact, the central story of the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) is the Exodus. God freed the Hebrew slaves from their Egyptian lords. Therefore, slavery was conditioned with many protections in Israel. Slaves were to be freed after six years of service, were to be sent off with blessings and liberal provisions for livelihood (Exodus 21:1-6, Deuteronomy 15:12-18). Slavery was not to become a perpetual institution. There was no elitism involved. This was quite a different expression from Aristotle's concept of a natural hierarchy. Such an historical and literary history surely influenced the thinking of the early church, but the attitudes and values of the church through time have often followed (or, even led) arguments for cultural expediency and orthopraxy (or in the case of segregation of the church along racial lines, arguments for the effectiveness of evangelism).³³

³²I am indebted also to Balch's summary of Harnack's work in "Early Christian Criticism" (Adolph von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908, I, 19, 31, 77, 314, and *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, New York: Russell and Russell, 1958, I, 45-57, 116-128; II, 169, 174).

³³It was not so long ago that Paul's words in Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3:22, and 1 Timothy 6:1-2 were used to support the institution of slavery in the United States of America and elsewhere, and that further, some church teaching included an Aristotelian philosophy of the natural inferiority of some peoples. Subordination to government has also been required by appeal to the station code texts. Martin Luther based his teaching on "Orders of Creation." This theory was behind the Lutheran support of the German state until the fall of the Hohenzollerns. As the Nazis gained power, German Christians justified the Nazi concept of the State by the same means. Karl Barth and other church leaders of the day critiqued such a use of Scripture to define a social order. See summary statement by Adam Miller in *The Role of Women in Today's World* (Anderson, IN: Commission on Social Concerns, 1978), 3-6.

Careful study of the household or station codes reveals a very different usage in the New Testament than is claimed in some popular teaching of today. While the codes may be expressing a “reversion to convention”³⁴ the motivation demonstrated in the New Testament was pragmatic concern and was not based upon some concept of natural order by creation. The popular interpretation of these codes today is more Aristotelian than Christian and ignores the impact of the spiritual qualifications placed upon them by the New Testament writers and the motivation for their use.

4. Argument from Creation Accounts. In the above examination, arguments from the creation accounts have been referred to briefly. The creation account of Genesis 1 presents a creation in which male and female are together created in the image of God (cf. 5:1-2). The second creation account, which Paul appealed to (Gen. 2), includes two aspects which have been used to promote a hierarchical model of authority/submission. First, woman is created after man and from his rib. While it might be argued that 1 Corinthians 11 suggests an order of priority on the basis of this text, the original text does not support the development of a model of dominance/subordination. The “rib” is the symbol of correspondence between man and woman. The man and the woman belong to each other in a qualitatively different way than they belong to the animals: “The unique closeness of her relationship to the man is underlined above all through the fact that she is created, not from the earth but out of the rib from man himself” (Wolff 94). If anything, the woman is distinguished from the animals who are not suitable for relationship with the man, who are subordinate to him. The woman’s superiority over the animals, not her inferiority in relationship to the man, is the point of the story.

The second aspect of the text used to support the dominance of man is that woman was created to be a *helper* for man (Genesis 2:20). Yet, this term *helper* is the same term used of God in his relationship with man (e.g., Exod. 18:4; Isa. 30:5; Psa. 146:5). With some humor, one might argue that since this term is used of the helping one who is superior (God), the woman who *helps* man, is the superior party. At the very least, there is no connotation of subordination with the use of the term; only that of correspondence. The term has been misapplied when it is interpreted to mean that woman was created to be servile to man.

³⁴This language, created by Elaine H. Pagels, is an attempt to recognize the motivations for various teachings on women. See her article “Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion,” 546. This article comes from her talk at the AAR annual meeting in Chicago in 1973.

The concept of subordination is only first referred to in Genesis 3:16 as a consequence of the Fall. Domination/subordination is presented as a new reality brought into being by sin and is represented as a part of what is broken in the marriage trust. Speculation on this text which envisages women as inferior or as properly subordinate is a late development in Judaism, occurring first in the second century before Christ. "The Old Testament [itself] does not emphasize the subordination of wives" (Balch 1986, 97). If the consequence of the Fall is the subordination of women, should that subordination be lifted up as the ideal? It seems obvious that it is a part of the fallen creation, the old order, which in the Apostle Paul's mind is passing away.

There is no doubt that the Jewish culture was patriarchal, especially in Jesus' day. Yet, women were generally accorded more value in the Jewish culture than in the Roman world. It is certain that misogyny (extreme devaluation of women) was a late rabbinical development which was adopted by some of the church "fathers" of the second and third centuries. Such attitudes are not careful reflections on the creation accounts of Scripture, but are adaptations of the Biblical message revealing the influence of Graeco-Roman culture.

5. The Eschatological Age of the Spirit. Another line of reasoning in the discussion of women in ministry is that which is developed along the lines of Peter's use of Joel's prophesy on the day of Pentecost as presented by Luke (Acts 2). The uniqueness of that event is explained as the universality of the pouring out of God's Spirit; the surprise of the crowd was that they all heard the gospel in their native languages. This prophesy proclaims the means behind the method in the book of Acts; the gospel will be proclaimed across many barriers (1:8) because the Spirit will be poured out "on all flesh," across all categories of the church: (1) age— young as well as old, (2) gender—female as well as male, (3) status— slave as well as free.³⁵ The sentiment of this prophesy is presented by the

³⁵Jews were more likely to have been disturbed by the inclusion of slaves as prophets than women. The Old Testament includes no stories of slaves as God's prophets. In contrast, there was a strong tradition of women as prophets (Miriam—Ex. 15:20; Deborah—Jg. 4:4; Huldah—2 Kg. 22:14; the wife of Isaiah—Is. 8:3. Rabbinical tradition refers to seven prophetesses—Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther. This point is made by Knofel Station in the paper he presented to the Open Forum of the Church of God and Christian Church (Independent) in Lexington, Kentucky on April 3, 1991, titled "The Teaching in Acts 2:17, 18 and Its Implications for Christian Unity," 7.

Apostle Paul in his teaching of the church (Gal. 3:28), the new creation, the new Adam (Romans 5), and a new Israel—all eschatological (end times) categories. In the line of such thinking, the Apostle Paul preaches a new time in which “we are no longer under the law.” It is the time now in which “faith has come” (Gal. 3:25). In the same discussion, Paul speaks of the inception of that faith and baptism into Christ; in Christ (here in the corporate sense of the church): “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

The threefold distinctions excluded in Paul’s pronouncement “you are all one in Christ Jesus” correspond to popular formulas which maintained such distinctions. The morning prayer of the Jewish male included the thanksgiving that he was not created a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.³⁶ Against the Roman expression of distinction and division in the household codes and Jewish man’s prayer, the Apostle Paul proclaims the positive dissolution of all such realities. The fact that Paul is presenting more than a visionary and “spiritual” ideal is proven in that it was precisely the human structures of these distinctions which were addressed in the life and practice of the early church.

For example, the vision of Peter in Acts 10 is lived out in Caesarea and then was the motivation for inclusion of the Gentiles in Acts 11. The unity Paul preaches is to be a reality in the social experience of the church (Eph. 2). Not only does Paul insist that the church live out such a vision, but he also attempts to model it himself. This vision is the basis of his confrontation with Peter. Paul also appeals to Philemon for the sake of Onesimus out of such convictions. And, his practice of including Christian women as partners in his ministry was the culminating expression of his conviction that “In Christ, all things are made new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Nevertheless, “whereas Paul’s ban on discrimination on racial or social grounds has been fairly widely accepted . . . there has been a tendency to

³⁶The earliest record of this prayer identified thus far is in the work of Rabbi Judah ben Elai, c. A.D. 150. However, the formula itself can be traced back to the Greek Thales who was grateful that he was a man and not a beast, a man and not a woman and a Greek and not a barbarian (Diog. Laert., Vit. Phil. 1.33). Socrates and Plato said substantially the same thing and Aristotle adopts their thinking. As noted earlier, Aristotle’s teachings where spread (process of Hellenization) by Alexander the Great in the 300s B. C. His empire covered much of what would later become the Roman empire. See expanded argument in F. F. Bruce, 188-191. It may be noted that the Jewish thanksgiving remains part of the orthodox Jewish expression. It occurs in the popular volume *Daily Prayers*, ed. Rabbi M. Stern (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1928).

restrict the degree to which ‘there is no male and female’” (Bruce 189). In the text of Galatians, the context may be limited to a discussion of baptism which is open to all (as opposed to circumcision which was the old sign of the law). “But the denial of discrimination which is sacramentally affirmed in baptism holds good for the new existence ‘in Christ’ in its entirety” (Bruce 190). F. F. Bruce’s conclusion seems to be the best, given both content and context:

No more restriction is implied in Paul’s equalizing of the status of male and female in Christ than in his equalizing status of Jew and Gentile, of slave and free person. If in ordinary life existence in Christ is manifested openly in church fellowship then, if a Gentile may exercise spiritual leadership in church as freely as a Jew, or a slave as freely as a citizen, why not a woman as freely as a man? (190).

Theological Synthesis

The evidence selected and analyzed above creates an argument which is cumulative in force; women should be included, not only in the life of the church, but also in the function of ministry (with appropriate office) in the church. The visionary expression of Jesus’ life and ministry with women infers it. The practice and expressions of mutuality of the Apostle Paul indicate the same. The household codes are best thought of as cultural expressions appealed to for pragmatic concerns and in their very qualification indicate an open future. The appeals to “creation order” are not so conclusive as many would like us to believe and at any rate will not support the exclusion of women in ministry. Finally, the idealism of the eschatological age, the age of the Spirit, was certainly understood to have come into being at Pentecost. The implications of the “new creation” were gradually recognized and affirmed in the life and practice of the church. The record of the New Testament is the story of that process.

The question of degrees of implementation which the evidence implies has been argued by some along the lines of function versus office. This line of thinking is that women may function in ministry, but are not to be allowed the formal legitimacy of office. A derivation of this idea is that women be allowed in an office only where they would not be “over men.” In this case, a woman always functions under the authority (and so supervision) of a man. Such a distinction seems artificial, especially given the history of distinctions between clergy and laity. Even the Catholic Biblical Association’s committee on the Role of Women in Early Christianity makes the following observation:

In the primitive Church . . . ministries were complex and in flux, and the different services later incorporated into the priestly ministry were performed by various members of the community. . . . Thus, while Paul could speak of charisms as varying in importance . . . the New Testament evidence does not indicate that one group controlled or exercised all ministries in the earliest Church. Rather the responsibility for ministry, or service, was shared. . . . The Christian priesthood as we know it began to be established no earlier than the end of the first or the beginning of the second century.

Therefore, the committee recognized that all of the members of the body were understood to have been gifted for up-building ministries (Eph. 4:12; cf. vv. 15-16; 1 Cor. 12:7, 12-31; Rom. 12:4-5). Women did perform ministry and exercise functions that were later defined by offices of ministry. Therefore, the committee concluded, *against* their own church tradition, that “the New Testament evidence, while not decisive by itself, points toward the admission of women to priestly ministry.”³⁷

It has already been noted that nowhere does the New Testament speak explicitly of women in church office. Only three discussions in the New Testament even touch on the participation of women in worship services. The basic concern of these texts is for proper conduct. First Corinthians 14 cannot mean that women are not to pray and prophesy (preach) in public assembly (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3-6). The prohibition in 1 Timothy (2:11-15) is unclear and the use of the household codes in 1 Timothy and Titus is the most conservative expression of the codes and runs counter to evidence of some other texts in the Scripture.

³⁷“Women and Priestly Ministry: The New Testament Evidence,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979):609, 613. The whole issue of church tradition must be reviewed given the explicit and astounding new evidence of participation of women in not only ministry, but also office. Against the standard presentations of the Catholic church, Mary Ann Rossi, translating the work of Giorgio Otranto, offers summaries of archaeological findings which portray women functioning as priests and bishops in the early catholic church: (1) fresco of a woman blessing the Eucharist in the Priscilla catacomb in Rome—possibly Priscilla; (2) inscriptions identifying four women by name as priests; (3) a Roman mosaic picturing one of four bishops as a woman, Theodora; and (4) ninth-century correspondence from Bishop Atto confirming that women served the early Church as priests and bishops, but were banned in the fourth century. Evidence such as this raises the question of official suppression of historical evidence of women’s leadership in the church. Such evidence has been used for a popular argument against the Catholic hierarchy by its appearance in *Megatrends for Women* by Patricia Aburdene and John Naisbitt (New York: Villard Books, Random House, Inc., 1992), 126.

The household codes cannot be appealed to for the general supervision of all women functioning in ministry in the church. In their contexts they are applied most often to husbands and wives and are discussions of proper interpersonal relations in the family (and perhaps to that particular family in their experience in worship). If the Apostle Paul were applying his use of the household codes to ministerial function in the church, he never would have mentioned Priscilla's name first in the lists. He was already breaking tradition to mention her name at all, and more to list her as a teacher of Apollos.

While some New Testament texts portray (and react to) new-found freedom for women in Christian communities, other texts apparently restricted women in others along societal conventions. The impetus for change regarding the status of women was lively in the church just as it was for Gentiles and slaves. Participation of women in services of worship and their inclusion in ministry are evidence of that. Some of the early motivation given for teaching acceptance of one's present societal role or status was the conviction that Jesus was returning immediately (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7). In later texts, that motivation was replaced by the need for the tolerance of society and harmony in mixed-religion homes with the instruction about submission.

Despite the variety in the record of the experience of early Christian communities, there is much that leads us to see the early church, when it recognized women in ministry, as self-consciously wrestling with the new realities called into being in the kingdom of God, the messianic kingdom, the age of the Spirit. The best understanding of Scripture invites us to be so visionary today.

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JOHN WESLEY: REVIVAL AND REVIVALISM, 1736-1768

by

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“Revival” used in a religious sense can denote either a long term movement of religious growth and renewal or a short-lived local period of intense religious excitement marked by a concentration of conversions.¹ The word is used in both senses in this study. A preacher who generated revivals was known as a “revivalist,” and his approach to his work of generating revivals was known as “revivalism.”² This study, therefore, is about John Wesley’s understanding of revival, and of the approaches he adopted and advocated for encouraging revivals to occur.

¹H. D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), 159. Rack goes on to say that local revivals take place “in a single community of Christians who [are] already Christians in an evangelical sense.” This is not necessarily so for the miners at Kingswood, near Bristol in 1739, who were Christians in a nominal sense only before the Methodist revival inspired by the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley.

²There is a tendency by recent Evangelical scholars like Iain Murray and Ian Rennie to define “revivalism” derogatorily as “organized evangelism” to distinguish it from genuine, unpredictable revivals which are inspired by the Holy Ghost without human initiative and management. See Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), xix, and Ian Rennie, “Fundamentalism and the Varieties of North Atlantic Evangelicalism” in Noll, Bebbington, Rawlyk, *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, The British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 335.

The aim of this study is to refute the claim made by Richard Steele in his study of John Wesley's synthesis of the revival practices of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Nicholas von Zinzendorf³ that, "Wesley drew so much from so many different sources that he cannot be said to have called any man father. His eclecticism was his originality. His methodology of revival was a hybrid, a synthesis of many divergent approaches that was nevertheless greater than the sum of its constituent parts."⁴ Steele was able to arrive at this conclusion only by totally disregarding Wesley's High Church heritage derived from his father, and Wesley's experience of religious revival as a child at Epworth, as a don at Oxford, and as a missionary in Georgia.

It is the argument of this study that it is the man Wesley called "father" who was the formative role model for Wesley's concept of revivalism, and that his revivalism was essentially the High Church ministry of his father at Epworth and Wroote in Lincolnshire creatively adapted and modified by Wesley to the needs of the Wesleyan Methodist (as opposed to Whitefield's Calvinistic Methodist) revival in line with Wesley's own mature ambition to be a "Primitive Christian" conforming to the practices and doctrines of the first five Christian centuries. John Wesley was indebted to Jonathan Edwards for demonstrating to him that genuine Christian conversions could take place within the context of intense, disorderly religious excitement and hysterical physical behavior.

Jonathan Edwards' "Faithful narrative of the Surprising Work of God in Northampton, Massachusetts" enabled Wesley to recognize "enthusiasm" as the genuine work of God's Holy Spirit. "In this work," says R. P. Heitzenrater, "he could plainly see the influence of the Holy Spirit in the revivals of New England . . . it set the stage for the understanding of the movement of the Spirit among the people."⁵ The second part of this study examines how Wesley's acceptance of enthusiasm affected his concepts of revival and revivalism.

John Wesley's High-Church Revivalism: Georgia, 1736-1737

In the late seventeenth century, "the Church of England produced a remarkable cult of Christian primitivism," says John Walsh, "which, in a

³*Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 30:1(Spring 1995), 154-172.

⁴*Ibid.*, 171.

⁵R. P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, Kingswood Books, 1989), 127

quiet way, constituted a virtual religious revival affecting many aspects of its life. . . . There was a fine flowering of Anglican patristic study in writers like Fell, Wake, Bingham, Cave, Reeves, and Deacon, when a knowledge of early Christian thought reached not only parish priests, but also devout laymen. . . .”⁶ One of these parish priests was Samuel Wesley, the rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire. He was a member of the “High Church” party of the Church of England who, according to Walsh, “were self-conscious conservatives” turning back to Christian tradition to defend apostolicity, episcopacy, liturgy, the eucharistic sacrifice, and the “religious character of magistracy; divine right, passive obedience.”

An ethic of charity inherited from the Middle Ages and reinforced by patristic learning stressed the obligations of Christian stewardship towards poverty and wealth.⁷ Concern for the reformation of society, education, and the conversion for the heathen was expressed in the foundation of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and the Propagation of the Christian Gospel to Foreign Parts. Samuel Wesley saw himself, therefore, as a guardian of the

⁶J. Walsh, “John Wesley and the Community Of Goods” in Keith Robbins, ed., *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany, and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 28. See T. A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, Kingswood Books, 1991), 7-21 for a review of this revival of these studies which Campbell dates from 1620.

⁷Walsh, op. cit., 32. The other main “parties” were the “Low Church” and the “Broad Church” or “Latitudinarians.” These should not be regarded as “Parties” in the Victorian sense of the word as being “well-organized, possessed of a keen sense of group identity, and more or less permanently mobilized for combat.” The labels were “ascribed perjoratively by opponents more often than they were used as terms of self-definition.” There were periodic, sometimes vehement conflicts between the various groupings of Anglican clergymen in the eighteenth century, but these should not be over-emphasized. There was a mainstream Anglicanism whose minor cross-currents did little to disturb a high degree of clerical fraternity, cooperation and consensus” (Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor, editors, *The Church of England c1689-1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 30. Campbell points out that Christian antiquity was put to three main uses by the various groups in the Church of England: (1) polemical—to reject the authority of Christian antiquity unless substantiated by Scripture; (2) conservative—to hold up the vision of the ancient church as a test of ecclesiastical polity and doctrine; (3) programmatic—the ancient church was the model to be reinstated (or renewed or revived) in the Church of England. He stresses that “these three uses of the vision of Christian antiquity were not mutually exclusive” (ibid., 20-21).

apostolic order and doctrine handed down from men like Laud and Hammond, and became involved in the work of reformation and renewal. He preached on behalf of the Society for the Reformation of Manners at Westminster in 1699, but failed in his attempt to found a branch of the society in his parish. His parish ministry was marked by:

1. A clear, intense pattern of public religious services. At Epworth he held two services every Sunday, administered the Holy Communion monthly, and held prayers twice a week, and on feast days;
2. Regular religious instruction through house-to-house visitation, the catechism of children during Lent, and the provision of a library;
3. The encouragement of spiritual development by forming a Religious Society of some twenty-eight men on Bishop Hornebeck's model for prayer, reading, edifying conversation, and the doing of acts of charity;
4. Strict discipline.⁸

He welcomed James Oglethorpe's scheme to found a colony in Georgia for debtors, and even considered going there as a missionary despite his advanced age!⁹

John Wesley imbibed his father's high churchmanship,¹⁰ and fulfilled his father's ambition to be a missionary by going out to Georgia as a missionary with the S. P. C. G. on October 19, 1735. Once he was in Georgia, John Wesley exercised a parish ministry which bore the basic features of his father's ministry: a clear, intense pattern of public worship with three services on a Sunday and daily prayers; regular religious

⁸H. D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), 53.

⁹J. S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 111.

¹⁰The Moravian, Spangenberg, reported of Wesley that he had "several quite special principles, which he still holds strongly, since he drank them in with his mother's milk. He thinks that an ordination not performed by a bishop in the apostolic succession is invalid. . . . All these doctrines derive from the view of the episcopacy which is held in the Papist and English churches and which rests upon the authority of the Fathers. Above all, he believes that all references in Scripture of doubtful interpretation must be decided not by reason, but from the writings of the first three centuries . . ." (quoted in Campbell, Wesley and Christian Antiquity, 34-35).

instruction from house to house and the education of the young by his friend Charles Delamotte during the week and catechizing by Wesley on a Sunday; encouragement of spiritual development by forming religious societies for women as well as men; the reformation of manners by private and public reproof (“He championed the cause of those whom he deemed wrongly accused and unjustly treated by the magistrates; he opposed licentiousness, blasphemy, drunkenness, slavery, and every violation of the laws of God and man”¹¹); and strict discipline in matters relating to baptism and the administration of Holy Communion. Only communicants were allowed to sponsor babies for baptism. Communicants had to give prior notice of their intention to attend the Sacrament. People who had been irregularly baptized were not given the sacrament.¹²

While at Oxford Wesley had been influenced by John Clayton of Brasenose College who was associated with a group of Non-Jurors in his hometown of Manchester to extend his interest in primitive Christianity to the liturgical practices of the early church. Georgia gave Wesley the opportunity to practice a primitive Christian ministry. He divided the Sunday services into morning prayer, communion and sermon, and evening prayer; he stood to pray on Sundays; faced east at the recitation of the creed; mingled water with wine at the Holy Communion; immersed those babies strong enough to take the shock at baptism; prayed for the faithful departed; enjoined fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays; and commended confession and penance as Christian duties.¹³

Wesley’s ministry in Georgia lasted for nearly nineteen months, from February 2, 1736 to December 2, 1737. The animosity aroused among the colonists by his high church discipline, the fiasco of his courtship with Sophy Hopkins, his flight back to England, and his agonized soul-searching all combine to create the impression that his ministry in Georgia was a failure. R. D. Urlin’s verdict was that Wesley “accomplished little.”¹⁴ This was not Wesley’s considered judgment on his labours in Georgia. In his sermon on “The Late Work of God in North America,” published in 1778, he stated that a revival broke out in 1736 among the German-speaking

¹¹Simon, *Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 159.

¹²M. Lelievre, *John Wesley: His Life and Work* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1900), 72-73.

¹³Campbell, *Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 30-31.

¹⁴R. D. Urlin, *The Churchman’s Life of Wesley* (London: SPCK, new edition, 1886), 30.

colonists of Georgia and among the English-speaking colonists at Savannah and Frederica concurrent with a revival at Northampton in New England under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. The two revivals spread towards each other through the middle colonies. George Whitefield inherited this revival on his arrival in the colonies in 1738 “and by his ministry a line of communication was formed, quite from Georgia to New England.”¹⁵

It is ironic that it is only now that historians are taking seriously Wesley’s evaluation of Whitefield as “a catalyst rather than an instigator of revival,” as being “part of a larger movement, rather than as the final cause of the awakening.”¹⁶ Wesley’s claim to have seen an awakening under his ministry in Georgia gains further credibility when his ministry in Georgia is seen to have been the model for his concept of the nature of a revival. According to Wesley, a revival is a short-term, dramatic increase in the number of people within a community showing a renewal of interest in religion, followed by an equally dramatic decline of interest in religion: “Everywhere the work of God rises higher and higher, till it comes to a point. Here it seems for a short time to be at a stay; and then it gradually sinks again. . . . The little flock that remains go on from faith to faith; the rest sleep and take their rest; and thus the number of hearers in every place may be expected first to increase and then to decrease.”¹⁷

Wesley’s ministry in Georgia fits into this pattern of arousal, increase, and decline of interest. Note this pattern:

1. Wesley began his ministry on Sunday, March 7, 1736, by preaching in the wooden storehouse next to the larger court-

¹⁵Albert Outler, editor, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 3, Sermons III, 71-114 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 596-597.

¹⁶M. J. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 187.

¹⁷*Short History of the People Called Methodists*, T. Jackson, editor, *Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, Vol. XIII (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865), 320-321. Wesley’s description of the decline of a revival is colored by his bitter experience in Georgia: “Men, once curious to hear, will hear no more; men, once drawn, having stilled their good desires, will disapprove what they approved of before . . . and feel dislike instead of good-will to the preachers. Others who were more or less convinced will be afraid or ashamed to acknowledge that conviction; and all these will catch at ill stories, true or false, in order to justify their charge.” Compare Jackson, *Works*, Volume I, 26—“I could hardly believe that . . . the far greater part of this attentive, serious people would hereafter trample under foot that word, and say all manner of evil falsely of him that spake it.”

house and parsonage. There was a large, attentive, but doubtless curious congregation present to see the new preacher from England.¹⁸ There was another large congregation at Frederica when Wesley preached there on Sunday, April 11.¹⁹ A sign of the growing revival was Wesley's advice in mid-April to the "more serious among" his congregation to form themselves into "a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to instruct, exhort, and reprove one another." Out of this society Wesley chose an elite few to meet him as a group in the parsonage on a Sunday, and as individuals during the week.²⁰

2. The growing momentum of the revival necessitated a move to the courthouse for public services on Sunday, May 9. From Monday, May 10, Wesley began to visit his parishioners from house to house between the hours of 12 noon and 3 p.m. while they were forced to rest because of the heat.

3. His labours bore fruit. When Charles Wesley exchanged charges with his brother in mid-April, he found himself addressing 100 hearers at the weekday services.²¹ The work at Frederica revived with John's arrival. On May 23 there were nineteen people present at the morning service, with nine communicants. The following Sunday there were only five at the morning service, but twenty-five at the afternoon one. A small society was also formed.²² Wesley's work at Savannah "increased more and more, particularly on the Lord's day." This was because Wesley, in the best tradition of Anglican parochial ministry, treated his parishioners impartially. He used his gifts for languages to the full by conducting prayers in Italian at 9 a.m. and French at 1 p.m. He conducted prayers in German at Frederica, and he also began to learn Spanish in order to minister to the Jewish community in Savannah.²³ He paid visits to the smaller hamlets at Highgate, Hampstead, Thunderbolt and Skidoway.²⁴ By the time Charles left the

¹⁸Jackson, *Works*, 1:26 (& 13, 289).

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 28.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 29 (& 13, 289).

²¹T. Jackson, editor, *The Journal of Charles Wesley*, Volume I (London: John Mason, 1849, reprinted by Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, 1980), 27

²²Jackson, *Works*, 1:30-31.

²³Jackson, *Works*, 13:290.

²⁴Jackson, *Works*, 1:29, 38.

colony on August 11, 1736, the number of communicants had risen from an original three to forty.²⁵ Wesley's plain, pointed, persuasive preaching which "endeavored to convince of unbelief, by simply proposing the conditions of salvation as they are laid down in scripture; and appealing to their own hearts, whether they believed they could be saved on no other terms"²⁶ reinforced by his sincerity, goodness and kindness, began to bear fruit. The women heeded his admonitions to put aside their fashionable gowns and turned up for Sunday worship more modestly attired. A ball arranged to compete with one of his evening services "was deserted while the church was full."²⁷ A revival among the children at Savannah in June, 1737, marked the end of the revival. Interest among the adults that had been declining for some months previously.²⁸

4. The revival began to come to an acrimonious end on Sunday, July 3, 1737, with Wesley's decision to reprove Sophy Williamson for unseemly behavior. On Sunday, August 7, he repelled her from Holy Communion. By September 30, Wesley was bewailing "the poison of infidelity, which was now with great industry propagated among us." On Friday, December 2, 1737, "finding there was no possibility" of fulfilling his original mission "of preaching to the Indians," he left Georgia for Charlestown and a passage home to England.²⁹

To sum up, John Wesley was a high churchman with the desire to make his churchmanship correspond as closely as possible to the doctrine and practice of the early church of the first five centuries. He viewed revival as steady, assured growth in genuine Christian holiness. He looked for revival to be the product of: (1) plain, pointed, persuasive scriptural preaching; (2) a clearly defined pattern of intense, public religious worship enforced with strict discipline; (3) meeting in fellowship with groups of like-minded Christians for mutual reproof, instruction and exhortation; (4) regular instruction in scriptural Christianity from house to house, the catechizing of children, and the provision of good Christian literature; (5) the reformation of public manners and acts of charity.

²⁵Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 118.

²⁶Jackson, *Works*, 1:28.

²⁷Lelievre, *John Wesley*, 72-73.

²⁸Jackson, *Works*, 1:48.

²⁹Jackson, *Works*, 13:290.

John Wesley's Charismatic Revivalism: London, Oxford, Bristol, 1738-1739

Revival followed Wesley home from Georgia. Between his landing in England on February 1, 1738, and his departure for Herrnhut on June 13, 1738, Wesley lost no opportunity to preach wherever he could find an audience: parish churches, inns, stables, private houses, prisons, even on horseback to fellow travellers he met along his way.³⁰ This intemperate eagerness to witness to the Gospel whenever and wherever he could might have been the expression of what he regarded as an extraordinary call to abandon a regular parish ministry in order to look upon the whole world as his parish.³¹ That call was confirmed by the revival that began on his return from Herrnhut on Saturday, September 16, 1738. The following day he "began again to declare . . . the glad tidings of salvation, preaching three times and afterwards expounding the Holy Scripture to a large company," possibly some two hundred or so people, in a butcher's shop in the Minories at London.³² Wesley now embarked on a busy round of preaching in parish churches, private homes, prisons, and workhouses in London and Oxford. On October 14, 1738, he jubilantly informed John de Koker of Rotterdam that "both in London and Oxford . . . there is a general awakening, and multitudes are crying out, 'What must I do to be saved?'"³³ On October 30 he informed Count Zinzendorf that "The word of the Lord runs and is glorified, and his work goes on and prospers. Great multitudes are everywhere awakened, and cry out, 'What must we do to be saved?'"³⁴

³⁰Jackson, *Works*, Volume 1, sample entries for 02/01/38 (inn at Deal), 02/12/38 (St. Andrew's, Holborn, London), 02/18/38 (Castle prison, Oxford), 03/13/38 (on the coach to Salisbury), 03/15/38 (inns at Shipston & Hedgeford, private house at Stafford).

³¹"I look upon the world as my parish; thus far I mean that in whatever part of it I am I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare, unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation" (W. R. Ward & R. P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*, Volume 19, Journal and Diaries II [1738-1743], Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1990, 67, and Telford, *Letters*, 1:282). The respondent was formerly believed to have been James Hervey; but now, with the discovery of that letter, it is believed to have been John Clayton (Outler, *Works of John Wesley*, Volume 1, Sermons 1, 1-33, Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1984, 13, fn. 47).

³²Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 19, 12 & fn. 33.

³³Telford, *Letters*, 1:262.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 265.

Wesley's life was a busy round of preaching in churches, prisons, workhouses, and the private rooms of the religious societies to be found in London and Oxford. An idea of how full his days were can be gathered from a letter he wrote to George Whitefield on February 26, 1739:

Sunday—preached at the churches of St. Katherine-near-the-Tower and at Islington; and to religious societies meeting at Mr. Sim's, Mr. Bell's, Mr. Bray's, and at Fetter Lane.

Monday evening—Skinner's at 4.00, Mrs. West's at 6.00, Gravel-lane (Bishopgate) at 8.00, and Mr. Crouch of St. James's Square.

Wednesday—"at 6 . . . a noble Company of Women, not adorned with Gold or Costly Apparel, but with a Meek and Quiet Spirit, & Good Works."

Thursday—Mrs. Sims and the Savoy.

Friday—Mr. Abbot's and Mr. Parker's.

The revival was in full flow, with the fields after the service at Islington "white with people praising God." There were "about 300 present at Mr. Sim's" on the same day. "A large Company of poor Sinners" met at Bishopgate on a Monday. On a Thursday evening at the Savoy there were "usually 200 or 300."³⁵ At this time Wesley, as Henry Rack observes, "was moving in a highly-charged charismatic atmosphere in which he thought he saw the scenes of the Acts of the Apostles reproduced, with all the strange gifts of the apostolic age repeated: not only instant conversions, but visions, demon possession and healing."³⁶

A new dimension was added to the charismatic character of the revival with sporadic incidents of hysterical behavior (i.e., deep, disturbed emotions expressing themselves through exaggerated physical activities) from the beginning of 1739. On January 1 during a love-feast at Fetter Lane, attended by some sixty people: "About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we had recovered a little from that awe and amaze-

³⁵*Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Volume XXXIV, Part 4 (December, 1963), 76-77. A corrupt version of the text of this letter is found in Telford, *Letters*, 1:280-281.

³⁶Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 187. Examples in Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 19, are instant conversions (09/30/38 and 10/09/38), visions (11/19/38), demon possession (12/05/38), and healing (01/09/38).

ment at the presence of his majesty, we broke out with one voice, ‘We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.’”³⁷ On Sunday, January 21, while Wesley was expounding in the Minories, “A well-dressed middle-aged woman cried out as in the agonies of death. She continued so to do for some time, with all the signs of the sharpest anguish of spirit.”³⁸ At Oxford, while praying with a woman in her house, “she fell into an extreme agony both of body and soul, and soon after cried out with the utmost earnestness, ‘Now I know, I am forgiven for Christ’s sake.’”³⁹ The following evening Wesley met her again with a number of her neighbors. One of these “felt as it were the piercing of a sword” and in the street outside the house “could not avoid crying out aloud.” Wesley no longer maintained a detached attitude with such sufferers but began to pray for her relief together with her companions.⁴⁰

On March 3, 1739, George Whitefield wrote to Wesley to inform him of “a glorious door opened among the colliers. You must come and water what God has enabled me to plant.” A reluctant Wesley was prodded for a decision in a further letter on March 22: “If the brethren after prayer for direction think proper, I wish you would be here the latter end of next week.”⁴¹ Whitefield’s invitations caused consternation among Wesley’s circle of friends in London. They had “an unaccountable fear that it would prove fatal to him.” Lots drawn to decide the issue decreed that Wesley go to Bristol. The ever loyal Charles, caught up in the drama, “desired to die with him.”⁴² On his arrival at Bristol Wesley wrote to his brother Samuel: “I do not now expect to see your face in the flesh. Not that I believe God will discharge you yet; but I believe I have nearly finished my course.”⁴³

Wesley, therefore, arrived and preached in Bristol in a state of intense excitement. His agitation matched the mood of the city which was in a state of social turbulence and transition because of its development as an industrial and commercial center and port. The population was grow-

³⁷Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, 19:29.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 32.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 36. This is the first, spontaneous example of what Methodists later called “praying companies.”

⁴¹Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 190.

⁴²Jackson, *Journal of Charles Wesley*, 1:146.

⁴³Telford, *Letters*, 1:291. The dreadful irony was that Samuel himself would die in November, 1739!

ing rapidly. Colonial trade in bulk goods like sugar, tobacco, and iron ore was creating mercantile credit that was being invested in developing industries like coal mining and the manufacture of glass and porcelain. A network of roads constructed between 1721 and 1730 enabled people like John Wesley to travel relatively quickly from London to Bristol via Reading, and to make frequent excursions to Bath and Gloucester while he was at Bristol.⁴⁴ The excitement engendered by the rapid industrial expansion of the city and of its economic hinterland was aggravated by popular social unrest. Corn riots among the miners at nearby Kingswood were a cause of great anxiety to the inhabitants of Bristol. The religious temperature of the city was raised by the activity of the “French Prophets,” with their claims to being able to perform miracles and to receiving divine revelations in dreams and visions accompanied by physical convulsions.⁴⁵

Wesley’s excitement reached a climax on the morning of Thursday, April 26, at Newgate Prison. While preaching on the words “He that believeth hath everlasting life,” Wesley was led, without any previous design, “to speak strongly and explicitly of Predestination, and then to pray ‘that if I spake not the truth of God, He would not delay to confirm it by signs following.’” In spontaneously calling upon God to vindicate the gospel of free grace with the instant public conviction and conversion of sinners, John Wesley, the popular revivalist, was born. The proper clergyman arrayed in his gown and bands⁴⁶ who had been, until just prior to his arrival in Bristol, “so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order” that he “should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church,”⁴⁷ was now casting all his inhibitions aside, and calling publicly and fervently upon God to convict and to convert his hearers: “Immediately the power of God fell upon us: one, and another, and another sunk to the earth: you might see them dropping on all sides as thunder-struck. One cried out aloud. I went and prayed over her, and she received joy in the Holy Ghost. A second falling into the same agony, we turned to her, and received for her also the promise of the Father. In the evening I made the same appeal to God, and almost before

⁴⁴Scattered references in Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (1989) and Barrie Trinder, *The Making of the Industrial Landscape* (1987).

⁴⁵Elie Halevy, *The Birth of Methodism in England* (trans. B. Semmel, Chicago, 1971), 67.

⁴⁶Wesley preached in gown and cassock, even in the open air (John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley*, 1886, 317).

⁴⁷Jackson, *Works*, 1:174.

we called He answered. A young woman was seized with such pangs as I never saw before; and in a quarter of an hour she had a new song in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God.”⁴⁸

In these events at Bristol on the morning and evening of April 26 are present four features that would become characteristic of Wesley’s charismatic revivalism:

1. Preaching aimed at creating an emotional crisis of repentance and rebirth in his hearers. Edwards’ account of the revival at Northampton had demonstrated to Wesley that the instantaneous conversion he had experienced as a private individual could be repeated on a larger, more public scale, and that it could be brought about by preaching consisting of what a listener of Wesley’s sermons described as “a combination of terror and tenderness.”⁴⁹ Wesley admitted that his preaching was designed to drive people into what his critics called “a species of madness” and which he termed “repentance and conversion.”⁵⁰ He defended his method by saying, “may not love itself constrain us to lay before men ‘the terrors of the Lord’?” And is not better that sinners should be terrified now that they should sleep on and awake in hell? I have known exceeding happy results of this even upon men of strong understanding.”⁵¹

2. His use of prayer to reinforce his appeals for instantaneous conversion. Henry Moore recalled of the aged Wesley: “Sometimes when he had liberty his words literally struggled for utterance and he poured them out with great rapidity and force, often stopping for a moment to breathe out a most impressive prayer that the people might there and then believe, and the word have an entrance to them.”⁵² Wesley also went among those labouring under a conviction of sin to pray with them in order to help them overcome their shame, fear, and indecision.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹R. P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:83.

⁵⁰G. R. Cragg, *The Works of John Wesley* Volume 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 196.

⁵¹Telford, *Letters*, 2:69.

⁵²*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1897, 515.

3. His toleration of bizarre, hysterical behavior. Thomas Maxfield sunk down as though he were dead, “but soon began to roar out, and beat himself as one dead, so that six men could scarcely hold him.” An awed Wesley recorded: “I never saw one so torn of the evil one.”⁵³ There was an element present at the meetings which feigned this violent crisis of conversion, either persons drawing attention to themselves or indulging in drunken horseplay. Charles Wesley was always willing to eject any imposters who disturbed his meetings in these ways. At Pelton on June 4, 1743, he left a drunkard come fresh from the ale-house to thrash about on the floor and to beat himself heartily without anyone praying over him; and a girl suffering from violent convulsions was carried out of the room, placed on the floor outside the door, and at once recovered the use of her limbs.⁵⁴ John Wesley was quite prepared to accept that “in some few cases, there was a mixture of dissimulation—that persons pretended to see or feel what they did not, and imitated the cries and convulsive motions of those who were really overpowered by the Spirit of God; yet even this should not make us either deny or undervalue the real work of the Spirit.”⁵⁵

4. Field preaching, with an occasional spectacular crowd numbering hundreds or thousands, was backed up by regular meetings for exhortation and prayer in numerous private homes. The evening meeting at Nicholas Street in Bristol on May 21, 1739, must have been the first Methodist “Ranter” prayer-meeting since “all the house (and indeed all the street for some space) was in uproar. But we continued in prayer; and before ten the greater part had found peace.”⁵⁶ It was destined to set the pattern for a movement of popular, cottage based, prayer-meeting revivalism led by laypersons who were independent of the authority of Wesley and his preachers. This pattern would prove a disruptive force within the Wesleyan Methodist

⁵³Jackson, *Works*, 1:185.

⁵⁴Jackson, *Journal of Charles Wesley*, 1:314.

⁵⁵Quoted by W. L. Doughty, *John Wesley: Preacher* (London: Epworth Press, 1955), 133.

⁵⁶Jackson, *Works*, 1:185.

movement and lead to a number of secessions from the Connexion in the years following Wesley's death.⁵⁷

Wesley's Synthesis of High-Church and Charismatic Revivalism in 1768

John Wesley still remained a high churchman at heart when he became a charismatic revivalist and the leader of the Wesleyan Methodist movement. His basic concerns were still "the renewal of ancient Christian morality and spirituality and for church structures and institutions patterned after those of the ancient church."⁵⁸ Methodism was raised up by God "to reform the nation, particularly the Church: and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."⁵⁹ Albert Outler is right to say of John Wesley that "despite his gifts as leader and organizer, it was his impression that he had never planned the Methodist Revival. He had instead been gathered up into it and swept along by what seemed to him the clear leadings of divine providence."⁶⁰ Wesley himself informed Vincent Perronet that neither he nor Charles had any "previous design or plan at all; but everything arose just as the occasion offered."⁶¹ Nevertheless, what Wesley did was to adopt for Methodist use a succession of practices which reflected those of the Primitive Church—field preaching, class-meetings,

⁵⁷The cottage-meeting became a more self-conscious, prayer-based method of revivalism in the early 1760s. From 1772 onward, when an association of Methodists was formed in London for conducting cottage based prayer-meetings, the cottage prayer-meetings became an organized method of revivalism among the common people. Prayer-meetings could be very irregular and ill-conducted. The attempts of some travelling preachers to curb the worst excesses of praying revivalism created disaffection with their authority, especially with the outbreak of the American War of Independence in 1775. There were some revivalists who refused to be brought to order. The Band Room Methodists at Manchester, the "Quaker Methodists" at Warrington, revivalist groups belonging to the Methodist New Connexion at Stockport and at Macclesfield, together with some disaffected Anglicans at Oldham, came together in 1805 to form Independent Methodism, united by a "common dedication to liberty, commitment to free gospelism, and disavowal of the professional ministry." See, among others, J. S. Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (Wisconsin University Press, 1984), 25-29.

⁵⁸Campbell, *Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 52-53.

⁵⁹"Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others from the year 1744 to the year 1789," Jackson, *Works*, 8:287.

⁶⁰Outler, *Works*, 1:5.

⁶¹Telford, *Letters*, 2:292.

class tickets, love feasts, watch night services,⁶² and especially the connexional principle of itinerating preachers linking together independent societies under the supervision of John Wesley as their “Father in the Gospel,” which reflected the organization of the Pauline churches of the New Testament.

The years between 1757 and 1762 were decisive for the growth of Methodism as a national movement. They were years of unprecedented growth marked by numerous revivals throughout England and Ireland. At the close of 1763 Wesley wrote: “Here I stood and looked back on the late occurrences. Before Thomas Walsh left England God had begun that great work which he has continued ever since without any considerable intermission. During that whole time many have been convinced of sin, many justified, and many backsliders healed.”⁶³ In 1765 the first public record of the Conference Minutes showed 25 circuits and 71 preachers in England, 4 circuits and 4 preachers in Scotland, 2 circuits and 2 preachers in Wales, and 8 circuits and 15 preachers in Ireland. In 1767 there were 22,410 members in England, 2,801 in Ireland, 468 in Scotland, and 232 in Wales.⁶⁴

In 1768 Wesley noted that “in many places the work of God seems to stand still.” He went on to ask, “What can be done to revive and enlarge it?” To answer his question Wesley went back to the high-church ministry he had exercised in Georgia. The recommendations Wesley made for his preachers to follow are a synthesis of the high-church revivalism he practised in Georgia and the charismatic revivalism he had practised in the British Isles since his return in 1738, with the pattern of his revivalism in Georgia providing the basic framework into which he could fit his charismatic revivalism. Wesley looked for Methodist revival to be the product of:

1. Plain, pointed, emotionally charged, extempore scriptural preaching of the vital necessity of Christian holiness for salvation implemented by fervent prayers for the conversion of the hearers;

⁶²Ibid., 294-95 (societies), 299 (watchnight), 300 (class tickets), 302 (love feast), 305 (stewards to distribute charity).

⁶³Jackson, *Works*, 3:148. April 13, 1758, was the date on which Thomas Walsh left England for Ireland.

⁶⁴H. E. Luccock and P. Hutchinson, *The Story of Methodism* (N. Y.: Methodist Book Concern, 1926), 103.

2. The rigorous observance of the Methodist pattern of public religious services--especially field preaching, the 5 a.m. preaching service, the fervent singing of hymns, and the diligent observation of both the Friday and quarterly fast days;

3. The core of "believers in any place" meeting in bands for intimate fellowship where they could "speak without reserve";

4. Regular religious instruction from house to house, spending "an hour a week with the children in every large town," and the dissemination of Methodist literature;

5. By being "conscientiously exact in the Methodist discipline"—especially in the regular appointment of new society stewards who were responsible for distributing charity to the poor and needy; and

6. Continued union with the Church of England.⁶⁵

A gifted preacher could exercise such a ministry effectively. Adam Clarke wrote to Wesley from Plymouth on January 30, 1786:

When I was admitted at Conference, I promised, before God and my brethren, to observe the Rules laid down in the Larger Minutes, and to keep them for conscience sake; one of which was, 'To recommend fasting, both by precept and example.' To the latter, through the grace of God, I have constantly adverted ever since; but to former, viz., recommending it by precept, I must confess, though I have not wholly neglected it, yet I have been too remiss. . . . I know it rejoices your soul to hear of the prosperity of the work of God. I have some intelligence of this kind to impart. We have and do see glorious days in Dock. . . . The congregations have been wonderfully enlarged . . . multitudes have been convinced, several converted, and, though I do not yet know any who have attained, yet there are several who are panting after *perfect love*. . . . At Plymouth our congregations were distressingly small for some time. I went out to the Parade, and had more hundreds to hear there than I had dozens in the room, and though I have preached out in the cold weather at the expense of my hearing and voice, yet have I been amply compensated for both, in seeing an increased congregation in the room, and several of these have been awakened and joined to the Society. . . . There is one thing that

⁶⁵L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 3rd ed., 1876), 22-23.

conduces much to the prosperity of the work at Plymouth and Dock, viz., the constant morning prayer-meetings, together with several evening ones, which are all productive of good, and are well attended. . . .⁶⁶

Wesley's call for continued union with the Church of England was an unconvincing attempt to preserve the myth of Methodism as a renewal movement within the Established Church made all the more unconvincing by Wesley's high-handed departures from the standard practice of the Church—preaching in other men's parishes without their permission, extempore prayer, and the holding of annual conferences at which lay preachers were given their stations for the year. Methodism was relegated to the status of a sect, and the itinerant preachers disliked their subordinate role to the ordained Anglican clergymen found within the ranks of Methodism. Charles Wesley aggravated their sense of grievance by exercising his right as a clergyman to preach twice every Sunday in the City Road chapel to the exclusion of the lay itinerant preachers whenever he was resident in London, to the exclusion of the lay itinerant preachers.⁶⁷

America was where Wesley's revised concept of revivalism found its truest and most effective expression. The Revolutionary War "destroyed any remaining supposition about a connection with the Anglican Church. In 1784 they organized as an independent denomination, with Wesley's (somewhat reluctant) blessing."⁶⁸ Francis Asbury wedded the charismatic revivalism of the camp meeting to the disciplined structure of High Church revivalism so that under his superintendence early American Methodism secured its identity in post Independent America by "being a force for democratization and proponents of an egalitarian gospel while building a singularly undemocratic, episcopal, and preacher dominated polity."⁶⁹

Conclusion

John Wesley was an Anglican High Churchman with the inbred desire to make his churchmanship correspond as closely as possible to the

⁶⁶*The Wesley Banner and Revival Record*, 1850, 241-243.

⁶⁷G. J. Stevenson, *City Road Chapel and Its Associations: Historical, Biographical, and Memorial* (N.Y.: Methodist Book Concern, 1872), 75.

⁶⁸Randy Maddox, "Reading Wesley as Theologian," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30:1 (Spring 1995), 28.

⁶⁹R. E. Richey, *Early American Methodism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991), xv.

doctrine and practice of the primitive Christian Church. He inherited his High Churchmanship from his father. At Oxford he extended his concepts of High Churchmanship to include the liturgical practice of the early church. In Georgia he put his ideas into practice and generated a revival which consisted of a dramatic rise in religious interest followed by an equally dramatic decline accompanied by acrimony. At sometime during his return from Georgia he received a call to leave the parochial ministry in order to concentrate on an itinerant ministry designed to reform the Church of England. He became involved in a charismatic revival in London, Oxford and Bristol which added an intensely emotional character to his revivalism, especially to his preaching and praying for instantaneous conversions. The dramatic growth of Methodism as a nationwide religious body with its own identity despite his attempts to keep it in union with the Church of England directed him to devising a synthesis of his High Church and Charismatic revivalism suitable for preachers who were now exercising pastoral as well as evangelical ministries.

The crux of this Wesleyan revivalism was preaching for instantaneous conversion, a clear pattern of public religious services, regular religious instruction of adults and of children, the meeting of the core of faithful believers in intimate fellowship groups, and charitable works. Since Wesley regarded revival as the unpredictable work of God's Holy Spirit which could work in quite powerful and bizarre ways he tolerated the emotional excesses which often attended Wesleyan revivals. In all of this Wesley was a debtor to his own religious and cultural background and heritage, and to his intelligent, pragmatic reflection upon his own experience. His revivalism was a synthesis of his own, hard won values and experience—not a secondhand synthesis of men like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Nicholas von Zinzendorf.

REPLY TO CHARLES GOODWIN

by

Richard B. Steele

I welcome Charles Goodwin's article, "John Wesley: Revival and Revivalism, 1736-1768," and gratefully acknowledge the important corrective it provides to my own essay on Wesley's "synthesis" of the revival practices of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Nicholas Zinzendorf (Spring 1995 issue of this *Journal*, pp. 154-172).

Goodwin argues persuasively that a full account of Wesley's approach to revivalism must take his Epworth upbringing, Oxford education, and Georgia mission into consideration. And I cheerfully concede that the Anglican tradition and the customs of the primitive church both played a greater role in early Methodist piety and evangelistic methodology than I allowed for in my article. However, I would like to make three comments in reply to Goodwin's criticisms of my position.

First, I myself included a section on "John Wesley's Training in Piety" in the book to which I refer in note 3 of my article.¹ It does not appear from Goodwin's notes that he is acquainted with my book, and perhaps he would be pleased to know that I have given some attention to Wesley's Anglicanism in another place, even though I failed to do so in the controverted article.

Second, I would point out that, while rightly noting Wesley's use of Patristic and Anglican resources, Goodwin has not refuted my claim that Wesley also drew inspiration and concrete instruction from Edwards,

¹"*Gracious Affection*" and "*True Virtue*" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 103-110.

Whitefield, and Zinzendorf. That many early Methodist practices had antecedents in the Fathers and the Church of England does not mean that Wesley was incapable of being influenced by other eighteenth-century revival movements—movements which themselves sometimes incorporated elements from Patristic, Anglican, and other older Christian sources.

Third, I am puzzled by Goodwin's animus against my claim that Wesley's methodology was "a hybrid, a synthesis of many divergent approaches" when he himself calls Wesley's methodology a "synthesis of high-church and charismatic revivalism." He and I may differ over the actual sources from which Wesley drew. But it appears to me that Goodwin actually confirms my essential thesis (even if he rightly modifies by argument by introducing important additional evidence). This thesis is that Wesley's genius lay in his catholic-spirited openness to many voices within the Christian tradition.

I never said that Wesley's revivalism was a "secondhand synthesis," as Goodwin charges, nor am I even sure what that expression is supposed to mean. My aim was to display several of the "models" of revivalism current in mid-eighteenth century North Atlantic society, and to demonstrate how Wesley both learned from them and yet developed something new, something different, and something of far greater and more enduring influence and longevity than any of them.

JOHN WESLEY: FATHER OF TODAY'S SMALL GROUP CONCEPT?

by

David Hunsicker

The “cell” concept in church structure is becoming prominent in almost every denomination in American Protestantism. With the overwhelming success of the Willow Creek model—showing how effective the use of small groups can be within a larger church structure—pastors and concerned lay people are more and more willing to commit time and energy to explore the alternatives and possibilities for Christian growth that small group encounters have to offer.¹

But as we sit in our home Bible studies and enjoy the benefits of being spiritually fed by striving together to understand the Word of God or perhaps being deeply touched by the testimonies of what God has done in another Christian’s life, we seldom recall that it was not always like this for the church. Although the small group concept is not new, the privilege of meeting in small groups was secured at the price of suffering and persecution in times long since past and often forgotten.

The history of the small group concept in and since the era of the Protestant Reformation continues to be an intriguing topic. Pressing questions arise: Where did the small group concept begin? How did it gain

¹Willow Creek Community Church, in Barrington, IL., started as somewhat of an experiment in church planting, but has exploded through an effective use of small group strategy. Today Willow Creek has approximately 1,000 small groups that incorporate over 9,000 people into the life of the community of the church. For more detail, see Lynne and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church: The Story of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995).

prominence in the life of the church? What about the role of John Wesley? Though not the originator of the small group, John Wesley's role might be considered so instrumental that without him present circumstances probably would be quite different. A look at some key influences which formed Wesley's theology will greatly aid the reader in recognizing the unique and considerable contribution made to today's ecclesiastical structure by Wesley through the development of his Methodist classes.

Origin of the Small Group Movement

From Scripture we see how the infancy of our faith was nurtured to maturity through the use of small group meetings, usually in the homes of believers, i.e., home churches. These apostolic churches thrived for over a century before a well-organized, structured church was instituted, resulting in the decline of the small home groups. With the apparent demise of the home church concept, an important tool in the propagation of the gospel seemed buried and forgotten until the spirit of the Protestant Reformation resurrected the desire to imitate the apostolic church with all its implications. Thus, once again the meeting of small groups of believers began to spring up outside the confines of the traditional, medieval Catholic church structure.

It is difficult to determine exactly who resurrected the use of small group meetings. In Germany, Martin Luther considered the use of small groups² but never pursued them.³ Twenty-one years later, Martin Butzer appealed to the Council of Strasburg for permission to create small "fel-

²John McIntosh, in his article "Proposals for Godliness in the Church," *Reformed Theological Review*, vol. 35, 1976, 80, relates that as early as 1525 Luther had seen clearly that a reformation carried out with the authority of the magistrate did not necessarily produce living faith, i. e., true piety, among the whole populace, almost all of whom were members of the state church. Hence, in the introduction to his *Deutsche Messe* of that year, he proposed that there should also be a "truly evangelical service" to be observed by select groups of "real Christians" who would meet "by themselves" in one of their homes "to pray, read, baptize, receive the Sacrament, and do other Christian works." Their fellowship was to be guarded and invigorated by discipline. Just such a church within the church was an implication of Luther's understanding of the universal priesthood, which he had already clearly set forth in 1520.

³In Luther's own words, "But as yet I can not desire to begin such a congregation or assembly or to make rules for it. For I have not yet the persons for it, nor do I see many who want it. Yet, if it is desired it shall be." See Luther's *Works*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), vol. 53, 64. He also shows reservation when he says "If I should begin it by myself, it may result in a revolt. For we Germans are untamed, crude, boisterous folk with whom one ought not lightly start anything except under the compulsion of a very great need."

lowships,” but his request was rejected.⁴ In Zürich, about the time of Luther, Ulrich Zwingli inadvertently pushed the Anabaptists in the direction of small groups when he started meeting with a small gathering of men who were interested in learning New Testament Greek. This group later separated from Zwingli and formed the core of the Swiss Anabaptists. The Anabaptists, facing severe persecution, used small groups more out of necessity than ideology. Their original intention was to reform the Mass solely around the principle of *sola scriptura*; they did not intend to nurture the concept of small groups.⁵ Thus, a concise concept of or methodology for the use of small groups was never developed by the Anabaptists.

Not until the late seventeenth century did the small group concept come back into its own within the life of the church. This revival was primarily the product of Anthony Horneck in Great Britain and Philipp Jacob Spener in Germany. The concurrent reemergence of such groups both in Great Britain and Germany presents a difficulty in determining what influences each might have had on the other.⁶ In Britain, Horneck,

⁴Wilhelm Pauck, in *The Heritage of the Reformation* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., Union Theological Seminary, 1961), 121, states, “Butzer, who had a high sense of the church as a moral community, fired one memorandum after another at the city council, demanding for the church the full institution of church discipline. . . . In 1546 and 1547 he went so far as to propose the formation of fellowships (Gemeinschaften) of earnest Christians in each parish. Such fellowships were to be voluntarily formed by church members who had responded to an appeal from the ministers, but no one was to be permitted to join without making a clear confession of faith. . . . Butzer had the support of a minority of his fellow ministers. The others feared that the building of an ecclesia in ecclesia might disrupt the officially established church and disturb the unity of the common wealth. It did not take the magistrate long to reject these proposals.”

⁵It should be noted that, concurrent with the early rise of Anabaptism, before the persecution there was an inclination among the laity toward meeting in small groups to discuss and be taught the Scripture in depth. This can be clearly seen as early as 1523 in the Zürich disputation documents concerning Andreas Castleberger’s Home Bible Study Fellowship. See *Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, ed. by Leland Harder, (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1985), 203-206.

⁶F. Ernest Stoeffler, in *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1967), 186f, draws a conclusive link between the rise of the society movement in England and Pietism in Germany. He states that Horneck grew up in “Reformed Pietist circles” and even goes as far as to say, “During his younger years Horneck was a friend of both Labadie and Spener.” It is important to note that this in no way removes the distinctive Anglican impression molded into the society movement, but only serves to show that both Spener (Pietism) and Horneck (religious societies) were influenced by the French “Enthusiast” Jean de Labadie. Stoeffler even draws attention to the fact that Horneck was at one time a member of “Labadie’s youthful band.” Thus, it seems reasonable that Labadie could be a common denominator for both Pietism and Anglican religious societies.

an Anglican priest (originally a Lutheran minister), began to develop societies in hope of helping his congregation develop more disciplined spiritual lives. These societies were created as an outshoot of the Anglican Church, but were still under the strict control of the Church of England. The history of the development of Horneck's societies is recorded by Josiah Woodward, the minister of the Poplar Society in London.⁷ According to Woodward, the purpose of these societies was to bring about holiness by self-examination. He stated . . .

That the sole design of this Society [is] to promote real holiness of heart and soul: It is absolutely necessary that the persons who enter into it do seriously resolve, by the Grace of God, to apply themselves to all means proper to accomplish these blessed ends.⁸

As the Anglican societies became popular and began to increase rapidly, a secular version called the *Societies for the Reformation of Manners* began to develop concurrently. John Simon has aptly labeled these societies vigilance committees. Woodward went into much detail to delineate the difference between the religious societies and the secular ones.⁹ Woodward stated:

Societies for Reformation bent their utmost Endeavors from the first to suppress publick Vice, while the Religious Societies endeavored chiefly to promote a due Sense of Religion in their Breasts, tho' they have since been eminently instrumental in the publick Reformation. The former endeavored to take away the Reproach of our Religion by curbing the Exorbitancies of its Professors; the latter attempted to retrieve that holy Vigor in the Practice of Religion, which becomes Christians.¹⁰

Josiah Woodward's insights ultimately proved correct when the secular movements lost energy while the religious societies continued to grow and prosper. Perhaps the greatest benefit of the religious societies, which

⁷Josiah Woodward published his work *An Account of the Rise of the Religious Societies in the City of London and of their Endeavours for the Reformation of Manners* (1st ed.) in 1698. The edition which has been used here is the 5th (London: J. Downing, 1724).

⁸Woodward, *An Account of the Rise of the Religious Societies in the City of London*, 6th ed., 1744, 108.

⁹John Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London: The Epworth Press, 1st ed., 1921), 23.

¹⁰Woodward, *An Account*, 69-71.

had a significant impact on John Wesley, was their practical social programs which included: care for the poor, care for widows and orphans, assistance in the relief of debt, caring for and visiting the sick, and setting up over ninety schools to educate poor children in London and its surrounding area.

Religious societies also spawned some later societies which had a tremendous influence on Christianity. In Great Britain during the eighteenth century, e.g., there was the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1699 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in 1701.¹¹ Woodward was astute in his assessment that, while the secular societies with their laws and regulations effectively weeded and tilled the ground, it was only the religious societies that, in promoting Christian knowledge, could plant the seeds.¹²

About the same time this was happening in England, parts of Germany were being revived by the heart and words of a Lutheran minister in Frankfurt am Main. Philipp Jacob Spener published his *Pia Desideria* in 1675. In it he laid out his program for the reformation of the Lutheran Church; noticeable was the use of small groups. Spener stated:

. . . it would perhaps not be inexpedient (and I set this down for further and more mature reflection) to reintroduce the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings. . . . One person would not raise to preach . . . but others who have been blessed with gifts and knowledge would also speak and present their pious opinions on the proposed subject to the judge-

¹¹Both of these societies have particular significance for John Wesley. Wesley's father had been a strong supporter of the SPCK from early on and started a society at Epworth for the promotion of Christian knowledge in 1702. John became a corresponding member in 1732 while at Oxford. It is likely that this association with the SPCK was significant in the development of the "Holy Club." In addition, it was the SPG which sent Wesley on his mission to the Indians in Georgia in 1735. There is an interesting connection here to German Pietism as well. August Franke was impressed with the SPCK from its inception and became a corresponding member as early as 1701. The union between the SPCK and Franke remained strong and in 1711 the society began also to support two Halle missionaries who had originally been sent to India (Ziegenbalg and Plütschau) under the support of the Danish king. Correspondence of these missionaries was published in England in 1709 by Anton Böhme and so impressed Wesley when he read it in 1730 that he later published his own edition (Paul Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1732-1735," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Duke University, 1972, 526).

¹²Woodward, *An Account*, 71-73.

ment of the rest. . . . This might be done by having several ministers . . . or by having several members of a congregation who have a fair knowledge of God . . . take up the Holy Scriptures, read aloud from them, and fraternally discuss each verse in order to discover its simple meaning and whatever may be useful for the edification of all. . . . At the same time the people would have a splendid opportunity to exercise their diligence with respect to the Word of God and modestly to ask their questions (which they do not always have the courage to discuss with their minister in private) and get answers from them. In a short time they would experience personal growth and would also become capable of giving better religious instruction to their children at home.¹³

Both Horneck and Spener were criticized, often severely, by their fellow clergy for reasons that ranged from arrogance to popery. The most severe (and somewhat justifiable) attack came on the grounds that their use of small groups often led to the desire on the part of the group members to separate from the traditional church structures. Small groups often created schisms. Spener was persecuted wherever he went and tried to pursue the small groups in Germany. However, Horneck eventually succeeded in gaining some favor within the Anglican Church, as well as considerable success within English society. The religious society movement in England rode a wave of popularity which did not wane for over half a century. It was not until John Wesley entered the scene and dramatically altered the society concept that persecution arose once again.

¹³Philipp Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 89-90. Spener appeals to Martin Luther here as he attempts to provide a way to restore the Scriptures to Christians. Luther stated: "One of the principal wrongs by which papal politics became entrenched [was that] the people were kept in ignorance, and hence complete control of their consciences was maintained. The papacy prohibited, and insofar as possible continues to prohibit, the reading of the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand, it was one of the major purposes of the Reformation to restore to the people the Word of God which had lain hidden under the bench (and his Word was the most powerful means by which God blessed his work). So this will be the principal means, now that the church must be put in better condition, whereby the aversion to Scripture which many have may be overcome, neglect of its study be counteracted, and ardent zeal for it awakened (Luther's *Works*, Weimar edition, Tischreden, 4, 87, 432-433; 5, 661, 662). Spener saw the plea for his *collegia pietatis* as keeping within Luther's guidelines for reformation. He argued that these small groups provided the means to realize Luther's vision for restoring the priesthood of all believers.

Influences on Wesley's Thinking and Theology

John Wesley was a man of such diverse interests and acquaintances that difficulties arise when one tries to identify critical influences in his life. Some of the obvious are: his mother, his Anglican upbringing (and to some extent English Puritanism), German Pietism (the Moravians), and Catholic Mysticism.

John Wesley was born to Anglican parents Samuel and Susanna Wesley in 1703 while Samuel was a priest in the town of Epworth in Lincolnshire, England. He was close to his mother all his life and grateful to her for his upbringing. From early in his childhood, Susanna was influential in shaping John's thinking on the use of small groups.¹⁴ Both Samuel and Susanna were children of English Dissenters, but both independently had chosen to rejoin the Anglican Church. Needless to say, John from a very early age was influenced by both Anglicanism and English Puritanism.

While Wesley's ecclesiology underwent changes over the course of his life, David Lowes Watson is correct in asserting that Wesley was visibly Anglican, especially in two areas. These are his use of reason as a basic underlying principle for interpreting Scripture and his staunch opposition to separatism. Watson states:

The source of Wesley's ecclesiology was the Anglican theological method in which he had been schooled, whereby all matters of faith and practice were subjected to the threefold criteria of scripture, tradition, and reason. Thus he invariably took scripture as the bedrock of his churchmanship . . . scripture was always the final authority.¹⁵

Wesley held that reason provided the proper hermeneutic for both the Bible and faith, and he often relied on "reason and common sense" to

¹⁴Robert Tuttle, Jr., in *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Francis Asbury Press, Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 44-45, relates Wesley's feelings toward his mother in this way: "So, my mother managed a discipline, which although austere, was never cruel. It is important to remember that her instructions related not only to the development of the child through discipline and education, but was profoundly religious as well. And, lest you think that she related well only to her children, let me describe briefly one curious result of this. Our family devotions were held not only for us but for the servants as well. Devotional meetings were frequently held in the rectory kitchen on Sunday evening. When my father was away my mother took charge. Once when my father was spending time in London . . . some members of the congregation joined our meetings. At first there were thirty or forty but by the time my father returned the attendance had reached more than 200."

¹⁵David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 11.

argue the belief that Christianity was a reasonable religion.¹⁶ He felt obligated to examine every novelty by its reasonableness as well as its scriptural foundation. Frank Baker has gone as far as to assert that Methodism, which is deeply rooted in personal experience, could not be passed off as “mere emotionalism” in the eighteenth century because of Wesley’s reliance on reason as his guiding principle.¹⁷ This approach to Scripture was a foundational influence in Wesley’s later pragmatic development of the use of small groups.

Wesley’s Anglican background is clearly evident in his non-schismatic approach to ministry. Yet, this was probably the greatest area of tension for Wesley as well because from an early age he struggled with the Puritan concept of a gathered church.¹⁸ This influence probably came through the writings of Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, and George Fox.¹⁹ Watson puts this tension in proper perspective when he asserts:

Wesley found that the ecclesiola, the little church, was a self-evident reality among the people to whom he ministered in the Methodist societies. Clearly these groups had been gathered together by God, and blessed with power and purpose. Yet he felt it was important to keep them firmly within the visible Church of England, grounded in the mainstream of the Christian tradition.²⁰

¹⁶Wesley, in “Plain Account of the People Called Methodist,” *Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1872, vol. 14), consistently refers to the use of reason and common sense in determining what he refers to as the general principles laid out both overtly and by inference in Scriptures.

¹⁷Frank Baker, “John Wesley’s Churchmanship,” *London Holborn and Quarterly Review*, 185 (1960), 269-270.

¹⁸The concept of gathered church is very similar to the ecclesiola in ecclesia of Luther and Spener. It is the concept of a little church (Spener more than Luther would argue true church) within the larger, more structured Magisterial church.

¹⁹Frank Baker, in “Wesley’s Puritan Ancestry,” *LHQR* 187 (1962), 180-186, states that since Samuel and Susanna Wesley were converts from Dissident families, “it is not surprising that they did not fill their children’s heads with stirring tales of their predominantly Puritan forefathers.” However, Robert Tuttle, Jr. adds: “. . . the fact still remains that Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, George Fox, as well as Scupoli-Castaniza, and Henry Scougal were all read devotionally at the Epworth rectory while Wesley was a boy” (John Wesley, 73). A difficulty arises in determining the more predominant of influences concerning a “gathered church” theology, Moravian or Puritan. It appears that the concept originated in English Puritanism, but was heavily reinforced by Wesley’s experience with the Moravians.

²⁰David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 21.

Wesley remained loyal to his commitment to the Anglican Church all his life; as long as he lived, the Methodist movement in England always remained ecclesiola in ecclesia and never separated from the Church of England.

Though Wesley never separated from the Anglican Church, his reliance on reason, coupled with the Puritan concept of a gathered church, left him in spiritual turmoil at times because he could not reconcile his understanding of faith, on the one hand, with assurance of salvation on the other. Biographers of Wesley have correctly asserted that he struggled with this from his youth because of the introduction of mystical writings which impacted him sporadically the rest of his life. Robert Tuttle is probably correct in his assertion that it was not until Wesley's Moravian synthesis that he began to properly address this inner turmoil.²¹

The tension between finding "heart-felt religion" on the one hand and reliance on the hermeneutic of common sense and reason on the other eventually prompted Wesley to look for a more pragmatic response to the rigidity of Anglican order. This tension is a visible force behind Wesley's shift from a rigid Anglicanism to the more practical development of Methodism which accommodated what Wesley specifically felt was a Christian's duty. This pragmatism emerged as early as the 1730s when John joined a group at Oxford initiated by his brother Charles that later became known as the "Holy Club."²² During these formative years of

²¹Tuttle's concept is intriguing. Basically he argues that from early in life Wesley dealt with the problem of assurance of salvation. The only way Wesley could attack this problem was to retreat to the writings of Catholic mystics such as à Kempis and de Renty which pushed him toward a works-righteousness understanding of justification. This tendency seems only further reinforced by the Puritan concept of holiness which was also introduced to Wesley at an early age. Tuttle asserts that, when Wesley met the Moravians in route to Georgia and spent time with them both in America and back in London, he was significantly influenced by their marked Lutheran concept of justification by faith alone. What specifically confronted Wesley was their assurance of salvation as exercised by the "fruits" of their lives.

²²The formation of the Holy Club was entirely consistent with Wesley's development at this stage. He was being influenced by both the religious societies (SPCK) and the writings of John Arndt (*True Christianity*) and August Franke (*Nicodemus and Pietas Hallensis*). Heitzenrater commented on this in his research of Wesley's Oxford diaries and financial records (see Heitzenrater's dissertation, 504). While the influence of Pietism existed in Wesley, the Holy Club was predominantly a product of the Anglican religious society movement, as Howard Snyder has asserted ("Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism as Renewal Movements: A Comparative and Thematic Study," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1983, 111).

Methodism Wesley admittedly had one purpose in mind. He states: “My one aim in life is to secure personal holiness, for without being holy myself I cannot promote real holiness in others.”²³ He saw the initiation and preservation of the “Holy Club” as a practical response to this goal.²⁴

Wesley consistently took a pragmatic approach to ministry. In 1745 he stated (in relation to Anglican order): “I would inquire, What is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build up in His fear and love. Order, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth.”²⁵ Thus, the development of Methodism was not out of line with the combination of both Wesley’s determination that in many ways Anglicanism had failed to reach the average person and his development of a more pragmatic approach to evangelism and discipleship (see Appendix).

Perhaps as noticeable as Wesley’s use of reason and his pragmatic approach was his interest in the authority and structure of the ancient, apostolic church. This is apparent in the methodology he employed as he attempted to reform Anglican ecclesiology. Wesley, in defense and explanation of Methodism, often referred to the practice of the apostolic church. For example, he stated:

At other times, they [Methodists] consulted on the most probable means, following only common sense and Scripture: Though they generally found, in looking back, something in Christian antiquity likewise, very nearly parallel thereto. . . . Upon reflection, I saw how exactly, in this also, we had copied after the primitive Church. . . . So that it is not in vain, that, without any design of so doing, we have copied after another of the institutions of the Apostolic age.²⁶

²³C. E. Vulliamy, *John Wesley* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), 60.

²⁴It is from his association with the “Holy Club” that the term “Methodism” arose. Snyder, “Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism,” 124, states that “from about 1732 on the Wesleys and their friends were commonly called ‘Methodists’ because of their regularity and John Wesley’s penchant for applying a method to nearly every significant task.”

²⁵John Wesley, *The Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1982), vol. 26, 206. This is also quoted by David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 18.

²⁶John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist,” *Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1872), 14: 248, 264-265.

Wesley consistently sought to be in line with the ancient church and it could have been this desire for primitivism which caused him to take a deeper interest in the Moravians. He was so taken by their simplicity that after attending one of their ordination services in Georgia he remarked:

They [Moravians] met to consult concerning the affairs of their church. . . . After several hours spent in conference and prayer, they proceeded to the election and ordination of a bishop. The great simplicity, as well as solemnity of the whole, almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker or Peter the fisherman presided, yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and power.²⁷

It would be difficult to overestimate the impact the Moravians had on Wesley. Considerable research and writing has been done in this area of Wesley's life. According to Wesley, he originally went to Georgia "to save his own soul and learn the true meaning of the gospel by preaching to the Indians." Preaching to the Indians in America did not bring about Wesley's salvation, but it did bring him into contact with the Moravians, and later Peter Böhler when Wesley returned to London. Through his relationship with Böhler, Wesley started to synthesize an understanding of faith and assurance. He noticed that the Moravian marriage of faith with assurance was a product of the Pietistic concept of the experience of "new birth," an experience that greatly enhanced one's desire to produce the fruits of faith, things noticeably absent in the rigidity of Anglicanism. Though Wesley later broke with the Moravians over the issue of "quietism,"²⁸ he nonetheless was indebted to them for their vision of rebirth

²⁷Wesley, *Journal*, vol. 1, 170-171.

²⁸The reason for the break came about when the Moravians at the Fetter Lane Society (a unique joint society comprised of both Anglicans and Moravians) pushed for the ideal that the person desiring assurance found it in the rejection of all forms of human achievement, even to the extent of churchgoing or receiving the sacraments. Wesley correctly saw this as leading to a fatal antinomianism and addressed the Moravian position as follows: "The sum of what you state is this: 1. That there is no such thing as weak faith: That there is no justifying faith where there is ever any doubt or fear, or where there is not, in the full sense, a new, a clean heart; 2. That a man ought not to use those ordinances of God which our Church terms 'means of grace,' before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, clean heart" (*Journal*, vol. 2, 370). After this assertion Wesley stated: "I then, without saying anything more, withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the society."

and some of their methodology of discipleship. Perhaps most memorable for Wesley was Böhler's exhortation to Wesley "not to stop short of the grace of God."²⁹ Wesley took this to heart and worked fervently and tirelessly in developing the Methodist class movement within the Anglican church.

John Wesley was clearly influenced by all of these factors, i.e., Anglicanism, the religious society movement, German Pietism (predominantly the Moravians), and Catholic Mysticism. But it would be unfair simply to label Wesley as one who borrowed from others. What made Wesley unique was that, while he was influenced by outside factors such as those mentioned, he had the ability to process them, using his hermeneutic of reason and common sense, and to keep or discard what was necessary in his pursuit of personal holiness. In doing so Wesley was able to add uniquely and significantly to the small group ideas of Horneck and Spener, who preceded him.

Wesley the Innovator

Wesley's originality appears in four major areas: his openness to offer the gospel to all; his immense organizational skills, laced with a touch of pragmatism; his model of discipleship; and his utilization of the laity, both men and women. Through his insights and skills, Wesley took the ailing structure of the Anglican religious societies and rejuvenated them, giving them clear focus and purpose along with the structural means of accomplishing his program for effective evangelism and Christian discipleship.

John Wesley far excelled the Anglican vision of the religious societies when he opened admission in his new society to anyone who had a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.³⁰ Simon rightly argues that, when Wesley made this his only condition for admission to his new society, "he took a step which separated him from the religious societies. From the time of Dr. Horneck it was essential that those who joined the old societies should be members of the Church of England."³¹ Wesley chose to look at a person's desire to change and spiritual condition rather than apply an "ecclesiastical test." He did not restrict his

²⁹Wesley, *Journal*, vol. 1, 457.

³⁰Wesley, "Plain Account," 250.

³¹John Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (London: The Epworth Press, 1923), 21.

society to English churchmen; he opened it to members of other churches as well, especially to those outside any formal church affiliation. Wesley stated that his society was a place where those who “wanted to flee from the wrath to come” could “unite themselves in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation.”³²

German Pietism had a similar spirit of ecumenicalism. Yet, where Wesley greatly differed from the Pietists was his desire to go out and call people to join his societies rather than to wait for them to join voluntarily. Karl Zehrer has been quick to point out that the Pietists did not agree with the Methodist concept of “open-air” preaching, or at least it was foreign to their understanding of presenting the gospel.³³ This distinction can be seen clearly in how the different movements (Pietism and Methodism) eventually developed. While the distinction is subtle, notice the implications. The Pietists under Franke built orphanages and education to make disciples, whereas Wesley made disciples who would build orphanages and schools. John Wesley not only had an ecumenical outlook, he had a vision for the lost as well.

Wesley was uniquely qualified for the role of developing the small group concept (known as the Methodist Society) within Anglicanism. His pragmatic approach to ministry allowed him to see beyond the old structure, which was stagnant and limiting at times, and his exceptional organizational skills helped put him in a position to remold it.³⁴ This bent in Wesley toward organization was a mixture of his own talents, an uncanny

³²Wesley, “Plain Account,” 250.

³³Karl Zehrer, “Die Beziehungen zwischen dem hallischen Pietismus und dem frühen Methodismus,” *Pietismus und Neuzeit: Jahrbuch 1975 Zur Geschichte Des Neueren Protestantismus*, ed. Andreas Lindt and Klaus Deppermann (Luther-Verlag Bielefeld, 1975), 56. Whitefield prompted Wesley to this form of evangelism. Wesley was a little skeptical at first, but later whole-heartedly embraced “open air” preaching as a form of recruiting members for developing his new “Methodist” small groups.

³⁴Wesley’s approach was always open to change if he considered the change helpful and beneficial to his small group paradigm. However, he was often criticized for being too easily swayed when he changed his model of “Methodism.” To this criticism Wesley replied: “That with regard to these prudential helps we are continually changing one thing after another, is not a weakness or fault, as you imagine, but a peculiar advantage which we enjoy. . . . We are always open to instruction; willing to be wiser every day than we were before, and to change whatever we can change for the better” (“Plain Account,” 254).

ability to delineate clearly his goals, and a stringently disciplined life. Wesley was “obsessed by the notion of moral imperfection and was continually dissatisfied with [his] efforts in the pursuit of the holy life. Consequently, in order to do battle with idleness, boasting, lying, heat in arguing, levity, detraction, intemperate sleep, unclean thoughts, and the like, asceticism in the form of ‘rules’ initially won out.”³⁵ Wesley’s journal reinforces Tuttle’s argument. His “General Rules of Employing Time” included: (1) begin and end every day with God, and sleep not immoderately; (2) be diligent in your calling; (3) employ all spare hours in religion, as able; (4) make all holidays holy days; (5) avoid drunkards and busybodies; (6) avoid curiosity and all useless employments and knowledge; (7) examine yourself every night; (8) never on any account pass a day without setting aside at least an hour for devotion; and (9) avoid all manner of passion. Under his “General Rules as to Intention” he wrote: “(1) in every action reflect on your own end; (2) begin every action in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; (3) begin every important work with prayer; and (4) do not leave off a duty because you are tempted in it.”³⁶

Obviously, Wesley had the analytic skills to break complex issues into parts so as to examine them and reshape them. This was his approach to the Anglican religious societies. He broke his society into subclasses based on something as simple as geography, in order to increase attendance and to provide easier accessibility. Wesley’s ultimate desire was that those who attended his small groups, i.e., Methodist class meetings, would pursue depth of commitment. That is why he devised the means to accommodate ease and accessibility.

Wesley viewed the Methodist class meetings as a very effective means of instituting his principles of discipleship. He, or other Methodist preachers, would often preach in the “open air” of a town square and use the occasion to encourage listeners to attend a society meeting later that day. Once the society took hold, the participants were encouraged to meet weekly in an effort to “fear God and work righteousness” while “striving to enter in at the strait gate and to lay hold on eternal life.”³⁷ As the society increased in number it would be subdivided into “little companies, or

³⁵Tuttle, *John Wesley*, 95.

³⁶Wesley, *Journal*, vol. 1, 48. This is also quoted in Tuttle, *John Wesley*, 95-96.

³⁷Wesley, “Plain Account,” 250.

classes—about twelve in each class.”³⁸ All these classes together went to make up the United Society of Methodists.

Wesley noticed early in the formation of these small group class meetings that there were some who “wanted some means of a closer union: they wanted to pour out their hearts without reserve, particularly with regard to the sin which did still easily beset them.”³⁹ He relied on his experience with the Moravians and once again subdivided the classes to develop a next level of discipleship, the bands.⁴⁰ He stated:

In compliance with their desire, I divided them into smaller companies; putting the married or single men, and married or single women, together. The chief rules of these bands (that is little companies, so that old English word signifies) run thus:

In order to “confess our faults one to another,” and to pray one for another that we may be healed, we intend: (1) To meet once a week, at the least; (2) To come punctually at the hour appointed; (3) To begin with singing or prayer; (4) To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our soul, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting; (5) To desire some person among us (thence called a Leader) to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.⁴¹

Eventually, these bands were further subdivided into select societies and penitents. The select societies were comprised of those who “continued in the light of God’s countenance.” In reference to these subdivisions, Wesley stated:

My design was, not only to direct them how to press after perfection; to exercise their every grace, and improve every talent they had received; and to incite them to love one another more, and to watch carefully over each other; but also to have

³⁸Wesley, *Journal*, vol. 2, 528.

³⁹Wesley, “Plain Account,” 258.

⁴⁰Wesley does not acknowledge (“Plain Account of the People Called Methodist”) that he is using a term which the Moravians developed, i.e., *die banded*, but rather links it to English antiquity. The influence of the Moravians here is perhaps more than Wesley was willing to admit.

⁴¹Wesley, “Plain Account,” 258.

a select company, to whom I might unbosom myself on all occasions, without reserve; and whom I could propose to all their brethren as a pattern of love, of holiness, and of good works.⁴²

The penitents were comprised of those “who were now determined to renew their first love.”⁴³ Wesley used the structure of the Methodist United Society to teach discipleship at every level. He consistently traveled from town to town to encourage not only the leaders but the participants as well. Remarkably, Wesley was involved in every level of every Methodist class.

The ultimate prize of discipleship in Wesley’s small group system came in the reward of participation in the Love Feast, which Wesley borrowed from the Moravians. This practice was used to celebrate faith and initiate new members into the bands. He described it as follows:

In order to increase in them a grateful sense of all his mercies, I desired that, one evening in a quarter, all the men in band, on a second, all the women, would meet; and on the third, both men and women together; that we might together “eat bread,” as the ancient Christians did, “with gladness and singleness of heart.” At these love feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name, as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with the “meat which perisheth,” but with “that which endureth to everlasting life.”⁴⁴

Wesley’s Methodist form of evangelism and discipleship is one of his greatest legacies to the church.

At the time of Wesley’s death in 1791, there were approximately 72,000 Methodists in Great Britain and another 57,000 in America.⁴⁵ This explosive revival lends insight into another area where Wesley truly excelled and made a distinct contribution to the modern use of small groups. This area is his vision and ability both to garner lay people and to provide opportunity for them in the life of the church.

⁴²Wesley, “Plain Account,” 260.

⁴³Tuttle, *John Wesley*, 281.

⁴⁴Wesley, “Plain Account,” 258-259.

⁴⁵Robert Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Epworth Press, 1945), 177-178.

John Wesley built the structure of Methodism around the “class leader.” He was blessed with the ability to discern leadership qualities and relied on this often in determining his class leaders. Wesley was also “aware that the authority of the class leaders would depend to a large degree on the respect accorded by the class, not least because they were in touch with the members at precisely the point of accountability for discipleship.”⁴⁶ When Wesley found someone able to establish and maintain this “contact,” he made every effort to incorporate them into his small groups to disciple others. Wesley described the duties of the “class leader” as:

(1) To see each person in his class, once a week at the least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give, toward the relief of the poor. (2) To meet the Minister and the Stewards of the society, in order to inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that are disorderly and will not be reproved; to pay to the Stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.⁴⁷

Because much of the structure Wesley devised was foreign to the Anglican system, he was often criticized by his fellow clergy, especially for the use of lay people in leadership capacities. In *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist* Wesley responded to the criticism of using lay people who were “insufficient for the work” by stating:

I answer, (1) Yet such leaders as they are, it is plain God has blessed their labour. (2) If any of these is remarkably wanting in gifts or grace, he is soon taken notice of and removed. (3) If you know any such, tell it to me, not to others, and I will endeavour to exchange him for a better. (4) It may be hoped they will all be better than they are, both by experience and observation, and by the advice given them by the Minister every Tuesday night, and the prayers offered up for them.⁴⁸

One of Wesley’s most unconventional innovations came in the strides he took to advance the role of women in Christian ministry. He

⁴⁶Watson, *Early Methodist Class Meetings*, 99.

⁴⁷Wesley, “Plain Account,” 253. It should be noted here that in the nineteenth century the duties of the class leader became much more elaborate. For more information, see *The Wesley Banner and Revival Record in 1849* which contains a list of the duties of a class leader.

⁴⁸Wesley, “Plain Account,” 255.

was ingenious in developing godly women for positions of authority over other women within the bands. Wesley gave women opportunities and trained them in the institution of discipling other women. He bolstered this by taking every advantage to incorporate them into the Love Feasts and to recognize their leadership skills. In his Sermon “On Visiting the Sick” he stepped out of the mold of the eighteenth century and challenged his listeners to recognize the respect which God has for both sexes. He stated:

But may not women, as well as men, bear a part in the honourable service? Undoubtedly, they may; nay, they ought; it is meet, right, and their bounded duty. Herein there is no difference; “there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.” Instead it has long passed for the maxim with many, that “women are only to be seen, not heard.” And accordingly many of them are brought up in such a manner as if they were only designed for agreeable playthings! But is this doing honour to the sex? or is it a real kindness to them? No; it is the deepest unkindness; it is horrid cruelty; it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any women of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have it in your power assert the right which the God of nature has given you. Yield not to that vile bondage any longer! You, as well as men, are rational creatures. You, like them, were made in the image of God; you are equally candidates for immortality; you too are called of God, as you have time, to “do good unto all men.” Be “not disobedient to the heavenly calling.” Whenever you have opportunity, do all the good you can, particularly to your poor, sick neighbour. And every one of you likewise “shall receive your own reward, according to your own labour.”⁴⁹

Some Reflections

While it is obvious that John Wesley borrowed extensively from his time and the Christian realm around him, he nonetheless cannot be considered simply eclectic. He has made a distinct mark on the church through both his pious life and his desire to see people come to a growing relationship with Christ. His delicate balance of order and pragmatism was unique for his time. His acceptance of anyone who wanted to know

⁴⁹John Wesley, “On Visiting the Sick,” *Works*, vol. 8 (London: The Methodist Book Room), 125-126.

the truth was (and continues to be) a refreshing return to a biblical standard of love. His innovative use of lay men and women has brought greater depth to the meaning of true discipleship. His structural use of small groups has provided stepping stones upon which we can build models of discipleship that reach Christians in the twentieth century. Wesley's methods leave much for today's church to ponder as we struggle with the vision of reaching a lost and dying world.

John Wesley could very easily be considered the "Father" of the modern small-group concept. He certainly has left his unique imprints. After one has spent some time with the father, it is easy to recognize his offspring.

Appendix

*Excerpt from John Bennet's Copy of the Minutes of the Conferences
of 1745 Publications of the Wesley Historical Society,
No. 1 [London: Wesley Historical Society, 1896]*

In this excerpt, Wesley's pragmatic approach is clearly visible when the question put before the Conference was whether Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent church government was the most reasonable. He answered:

The plain origin of church-government seems to be this. Christ sends forth a preacher of the gospel. Some who hear him repent and believe the gospel. They then desire him to watch over them, and to build them up in the faith, and to guide their souls in the paths of righteousness. Here then is an independent congregation, subject to no pastor but their own, neither liable to be controlled in things spiritual by any other man or body of men whatsoever.

But soon after some from other parts, who are occasionally present while he speaks in the name of Him that sent him, beseech him to come over to help them also. Knowing it to be the will of God, he consents (complies), yet not till he has conferred with the wisest and holiest of his congregation, and with their advice appointed one who has gifts and grace to watch over the flock till his return.

It is pleasing to God to raise another flock in the new place; before he leaves them he does the same thing, appointing one who God has fitted for the work to watch over these souls also. In like manner, in every place where it pleases God to gather a little flock by his word, he appoints one in his

absence to take the oversight of the rest, and to assist them of the ability which God giveth. These are Deacons, or servants of the church, and look on their first pastor as their common father. And all these congregations regard him in the same light, and esteem him still as the shepherd of their souls.

These congregations are not strictly independent. They depend on one pastor, though not on each other.

As these congregations increase, and as the Deacons grow in years and grace, they need other subordinate Deacons or helpers: in respect of whom they may be called Presbyters, or Elders, as their father in the Lord may be called the Bishop or Overseer of them all.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Quoted in Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 18-19.



James Earl Massey

**HONORING DR. JAMES EARL MASSEY
BY THE WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
NOVEMBER 3, 1995, NAMPA, IDAHO**

by

Barry L. Callen

Members of the Wesleyan Theological Society, I have a special privilege this evening. I present to you a man who has been a personal friend and mentor of mine for decades. More importantly, he has played the roles of teacher, pioneer, model, and prophetic spokesperson for the whole holiness tradition in North America.

James Earl Massey has embodied within the Christian community at large what his church of origin, the Church of God movement (Anderson), has envisioned since 1880 to be God's will for the church. The quest has been for true holiness and an authentic unity of the Spirit among all Christians. The vision has been one of changed lives that then become effective communicators and models of the gospel of Christ to the world. Dr. Massey has shown us how to be bridge-builders among all of God's people, for the sake of the credibility of the church as it is on mission for Jesus Christ.

Native of Detroit, Michigan, son and grandson of ministers, accomplished concert pianist, acclaimed pulpit master, James Earl Massey holds degrees from Detroit Bible College, Oberlin Graduate School of Theology, and Asbury Theological Seminary—where he has a long tenure as a distinguished trustee. He was senior minister of the Metropolitan Church of God in Detroit for more than two decades. Serving on the Anderson University campus for most of the years from 1969 until his retirement

this year, he has been Campus Pastor, Professor of New Testament and Preaching, and Dean of the School of Theology.

Beyond the Anderson campus, he has been Principal of a School of Theology in Jamaica, radio speaker for the Church of God on its national program, the Christian Brotherhood Hour, and Dean of the Chapel and University Professor of Religion at Tuskegee University. He has been visiting professor, academic lecturer, or guest preacher at over one hundred colleges, universities, and seminaries. He is or has been a contributing editor for various journals, including *Christianity Today*, and books, including being the present homiletics editor for the *New Interpreters Bible*. Author of several bestselling books of his own in the fields of preaching and New Testament, he has filled distinguished pulpits from England and Egypt to Australia and Japan. A man of many campuses and of the whole church, he nonetheless always has considered the Church of God movement in particular and the American holiness movement in general his home tradition.

Dr. Massey has crossed racial and denominational lines freely, bringing with him the richness of the African-American church tradition. He has intruded on the secure smugness of human prejudice with the sharp edge of the biblical word of salvation, equality, and liberation for all. The Spring, 1996, issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* will carry a major article by Dr. Massey on "Race Relations and the American Holiness Movement." As few others have been able to do, he has bridged the gulf between faith and learning, between religious ideals and social realities, between the ancient biblical text and the task of contemporary preaching.

With gentle courage, our Brother James has broached the reluctant racial barriers in North American society and in the church. His has not been an angry call for reparations; his has been a focus on the God who calls for believers to be present agents of the new creation in Christ, courageous members of a reconciling church that, once united itself by God's grace, can bring healing to a broken world. He has taught, preached, and practiced the good news about a *holy* God and a *holy* life in the midst of real human needs and urgent social dilemmas. Prophetically confrontational without ever being angrily abrasive, he is one man of God who is making a lasting difference.

The name James Earl Massey is known and respected widely as one of the most gifted preachers of the last half of the twentieth century. Often he is referred to as the "Prince" or "Dean" of preachers. Two months ago

Abingdon Press released a major hardback book on Christian preaching for the twenty-first century, written and published wholly in Dr. Massey's honor. Titled *Sharing Heaven's Music*, this book reflects a fact known so well by the line-up of its distinguished writers. James Earl, poet/pianist, expert exegete, our special holiness brother, has done so very much to share the inspirations and implications of the Word of God, enabling insight, new life, hope, heaven's music in the pulpit, in the soul, in the streets. Says the introduction to the book *Sharing Heaven's Music*:

The gospel itself has a cadence, rhythm, and joy that should be music to the world. It's non-Enlightenment dimensions of vision, imagination, and poetic approaches to grasping and sharing truth are especially relevant to postmodern sensibilities. Designing a Christian sermon is an inspired art form as much as it is a learned skill. Today's multicultural settings, usually discordant, can be transformed by the harmonizing gospel so that diversity becomes a rich melody that witnesses to the God who comes to make all things new and all disciples one (pp. 11-12).

To literally thousands of ministers and ministerial students in dozens of denominations over a span of decades, James Earl Massey, a humble yet powerful man of God, has been model and mentor, an honored and well-heard mouthpiece of the divine. Thus, it is wholly appropriate that this Society honor James Earl Massey for a lifetime of truly distinguished service to a holiness tradition that aspires to much that this man actually has been and done.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ingemar Strand, *Änglar-visst finns dom!* (Örebro: Evangeliipress, 1993). 224 pp. ISBN 91-7038-660-9.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Ingemar Strand has long worked under the aegis of the Swedish Holiness Church, the Helgelseförbundet, as an evangelist and a professor in the Götabro Missionskola. Since the closure of that institution, he has been retired but continues to be in demand as a speaker at Bible conferences. He holds a licentiate in philosophy.

In this volume, Strand provides an extensive analysis of the biblical understanding of angels and the demonic, interpreting them as warrants for evangelism and mission and for the development of the church in contrast to popular cultic understandings of the phenomena. The volume begins with a survey of Christian literature from the earliest New Testament documents to the post-reformation period, demonstrating that angels have been a preoccupation of popular religious culture and have been discussed by most of the formative theologians of the Christian tradition.

The remainder of the volume is a close textual analysis of the Bible, beginning with the Genesis narratives of the creation (pp. 20-53), and continuing through the text. It is insisted that angels and demons have boundaries (pp. 76-81). Here the effort is made to counter popular efforts to assign to angels and demons elements of divinity. It is insisted, congruent with the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, that, while there is an element of divinity in all of God's creation, humans and angels cannot be ascribed all of the attributes of God. Particular attention is given to the issue of omnipresence, omniscience, power and salvation. It is interesting to note

that, like the traditions of early Eastern Christian theology, for example the Alexandrian/Caesarean theologians and the Cappadocians, Strand insists that individuals can serve as angelic or demonic forces in the spiritual development of individuals, but insists that individuals are restored to the image of God only through the grace of God.

The “angel of the Lord” is given attention (pp. 82-91), as are the groupings of angels mentioned in the Bible (pp. 92-117), Satan and the other (lower) spirit worlds (pp. 118-125), as well as gradations (levels) of angels (pp. 126-130) and demons (pp. 131-135). The analysis is straightforwardly and appropriately, albeit unwittingly, Neo-Platonic.

Another issue with contemporary apologetic interest is that of demon possession (pp. 136-145). The argument is made that, while Christians and others can be tempted by demons and encouraged by angels, the response is the result of choices made through freedom of will. As the will of the individual comes to conform less and less to that of the Divine, one can become a habitual sinner. Those choices can be influenced, argues Strand, by the workings of the demonic (pp. 146-153). Significantly, the influences are understood to be social conditions related to the development of moral and ethical issues within the larger culture.

The model for spiritual victory over evil, insists Strand, is provided by the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. The important narratives of Jesus’ moral fortitude in the face of temptations, the accounts of the dogged conformity of Jesus to the will of God, and the references to Jesus’ consistent life of prayer and devotion are, the author asserts, placed in the Bible for the instruction of the Christian.

Strand provides clear, concise exposition of the problem posed by the references to angels and demons in the Bible. The result is not a traditional scholarly analysis; it was never intended to be such. However, because of the careful attention to the thought world of the composition of the New Testament, he has arrived at a presentation which takes into account the Hellenistic Middle/Neo Platonic context of the New Testament. The sources cited in his reflections reflect a wide reading of Swedish Pentecostal and Charismatic writing and scholarship as well as forays into other literature. It is a courageous presentation about a difficult and controversial subject, a subject which few scholars would dare to investigate!

Michel Weyer, hrsg. 1993. *Gottes erklärte Wille. Festgabe zum 65. Geburtstag für Armin Härtel* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche, 43; Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus). 93 pp. No ISBN.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

The development and influence of the Methodist churches outside North America and England have been the subject of remarkably little research. Weyer and his colleagues have made a significant contribution to the study of the Methodist tradition in Germany through the essays contained in this Festschrift for Armin Härtel, Bishop of the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche in the DDR. The Festschrift is a thoughtful analysis of issues related to the development of the Methodist Church in the DDR as well as to theological and relational matters relevant for the Methodist Church in German-speaking Europe, primarily Germany. It was not intended to present an exhaustive analysis of the issues discussed; instead it poses the historiographical and current theological imperative for coming to terms with this aspect of German Methodist history. The method of this review is to discuss briefly each of the essays in the volume and then offer an appraisal of the whole.

The first essay (pp. 7-10) was contributed by Bishop Franz W. Schäfer of Zürich. It reflects on the role of the European Central Conference in the development and juridical involvements of the East German Church. When it became essential, because of political realities, to divide the German Church into juridical units reflecting the political and military realities of the post WW II era, the European Central Conference worked with the East German Methodists to insure as much fellowship and assistance as possible.

The second essay (pp. 11-14), by Herbert Uhlmann, formerly Professor in the Methodist Seminary at Bad Klosterlausnitz (DDR), now Pastor in Zwickau, reflects on the difficulties posed by the realities of the STASI dominated DDR regime.

The third contribution (pp. 15-32) is by Lothar Schieck, also a former instructor in the Bad Klosterlausnitz Seminary and now Docent at the Theologisches Seminar Reutlingen. "Gods declared/revealed will" is proposed as the organizing hermeneutical principle of the book. The approach shares some common features with exegesis of both redaction critics and liberation theologians. At issue is not only a literary critical exercise but also a

program for Christian life and mission. Schieck argues that the discerning of God's will and conformity of the human will to the divine will are essential for the development of the church in the DDR and in the future of the reunified Germany. Special attention is given to the Gethsemane pericope, the third clause of the "Lord's Prayer," and the "Sermon on the Mount," with reference to texts less central for the analysis.

The next essay is by Karl Zehner, also formerly on the faculty of the Bad Klosterlausnitz Seminary and now pastor in Oelsnitz, is perhaps the contribution with the widest interest. Explored for the first time is the relationship between the famed German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Methodist tradition. As noted in earlier works on Bonhoeffer, Bonhoeffer professed antagonism toward Methodism and to the disciplines of the tradition. However, Zehner demonstrates that Bonhoeffer "protested too much" and that Bonhoeffer was well informed about the social ministries of American Methodism and the life of John Wesley. He suggests that Bonhoeffer betrays an approach both to social issues and to Christian discipleship that is congruent with the Wesleyan tradition.

Perhaps the most historiographically important contribution (pp. 57-93) is that of Michel Weyer, the editor of the volume and Professor Emeritus of the Theologisches Seminar Reutlingen. This is the first scholarly attempt to trace the development of the self-understanding of the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche in the DDR. From the end of World War II until the present, each step in the political development of the then DDR required a response by the Methodist Church and positioning of itself within that reality so as to be most effective in mission. Weyer's treatment is careful, fully documented, and studiously reflects the complexities of the situations faced by Bishop Härtel and the EmK-DDR churches. This essay has implications for mission theory within the Methodist tradition.

The resulting compilation of essays is an important book. Not only has it allowed more German Methodist historians and theologians to find a voice; it has also celebrated the life and ministry of the remarkable Bishop Härtel. Each of the essays broaches significant issues. Without doubt each subject treated here will receive further attention as the German Methodist church, and others, reflect on the period 1945-1993 and as the sources for our knowledge of the period are expanded. Hopefully Bishop Härtel and the Seminary at Bad Klosterlausnitz will receive full monographic treatments. Other interesting areas remain to be examined: (1) relations between the Methodists and the other churches, especially the Lutheran Church, the Pentecostals, and the Baptists; (2) the process of

education and clergy formation in the DDR; (3) religious education in the churches; (4) the relationship with the European Central Conference and with the Methodist Church in the USA; (5) the relationship with the Methodists in Estonia and Hungary; and (6) the EmK-DDR and EmK-GDR understandings of mission.

To note these as potentially significant subjects for research is not to detract from the significance of the present volume. All subsequent research on Methodism in “Eastern Europe” will of necessity begin with this volume. The work is a truly significant scholarly contribution to the intercultural structures of Methodist history and thought.

Randy L. Maddox. 1994. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, Abingdon Press. 416 pp. ISBN 0-687-00334-2.

Reviewed by Henry H. Knight III, Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri.

This is quite simply the best analysis and interpretation of the theology of John Wesley thus far. I can think of no other volume, current or past, which combines such thoroughness of research with depth of insight. It deservedly should replace Colin Williams' *John Wesley's Theology Today* (1960) as the standard text on Wesley's theology.

In part the quality of this work is due to Maddox immersing himself in primary and secondary source material, including the critical edition of Wesley's Works and the enormously productive last thirty years of Wesley scholarship, both of which were unavailable to Williams. Much of this is evident in the over 100 pages of endnotes, many of which extend the discussion or offer additional information. There is likewise an extensive bibliography, including a comprehensive listing of dissertations and articles as well as books.

This book is exceedingly well-written both in style and clarity. Maddox again and again demonstrates his gift for summarizing the heart of theological controversy between East and West, Catholic and Protestant, or Lutheran and Reformed, and then carefully examining Wesley's position by comparison. As so many of my students attest, it is a book that teaches as it goes about its primary purpose of interpreting Wesley's theology.

Maddox argues that Wesley was a "practical theologian" who understood the theological task as "neither developing an elaborate system of Christian truth-claims nor defending these claims" through apologetics, but instead as "nurturing and shaping the worldview that frames the temperament and practice of believers' lives in the world" (17). The Wesleyan model of theology is not that of a detached, university-based academic, but of a "pastor/theologian who was actively shepherding Christian disciples in the world" (17).

This means that the test of theological congruency cannot be that of a tight, logical system in which doctrines are derived from or subsumed under an "architectonic Idea" (18). Instead, a practical theology is given consistency through a central "orienting concern" from which the theologian addresses changing situations. Christian orienting concerns, says

Maddox, “will characteristically focus on the general issue of how God interacts with humanity” (18). Wesley’s orienting concern—and the theme of this book—Maddox calls “responsible grace.”

By this term Maddox seeks to draw attention to God’s gracious initiative and to the absolute indispensability of grace for salvation in Wesley’s thought. At the same time, salvation of necessity requires human participation as well, which this grace “inspires and enables” (86) but does not coerce. Because salvation for Wesley involves a divine/human relationship, Maddox understands grace not as a created product but an uncreated presence of God through the Holy Spirit (86).

This understanding of grace is one of the many ways Wesley’s theology has characteristics more typical of the Christian East than the West. Maddox argues that Wesley’s concern for holiness leads him to emphasize therapeutic images of salvation rather than the juridical imagery of Western theology, incorporating the latter into the former. Likewise, Wesley sees the work of grace as both pardon and empowerment. Forgiveness is in service to the larger goal of holiness.

Maddox skillfully weaves his theme of responsible grace throughout the book. It is found not only in his sections on soteriology proper, but is used to interpret Wesley’s understanding of a loving God, his relational anthropology, and the way in which he integrates theories of the atonement. Especially noteworthy, and a marked improvement from Williams, is Maddox’s nuanced discussion of “holy tempers” and Christian affections, and his extensive treatment of “means of grace” in terms of responsible grace. This orienting concern also enables Maddox to show the unity of Wesley’s thought while at the same time tracing its development throughout his life.

While I find Maddox’s thesis persuasive, there no doubt will be others that do not. But beyond this, any book which tries to do so much will naturally be criticized on more specific issues.

One certain to draw attention is Maddox’s claim that the mature Wesley believed faith to be “justifying from its earliest degree”—that is, the “faith of a servant” is justifying faith (127). Maddox is quite careful to note that this “nascent faith” was not the “fullness of Christian faith” (127). It is also undeniable that Wesley did believe such persons were accepted by God. The problem is that Wesley still reserves the term “justification” for those who have the faith of a child of God. While this may partly be a matter of what one means by the term “justification,” there is also the question of why Wesley calls those who fear God and work righteousness “acceptable” but not “justified.”

Maddox's thorough and insightful discussion of Christian Perfection, while a carefully reasoned and helpful explanation of Wesley's position, also raises questions. When Maddox says Wesley insisted to perfectionists Maxfield and Bell that "Christian Perfection is not a required qualification for salvation, only a desirable blessing that God makes available for Christians in this life" (186), he seems to be understating Wesley's position. More importantly, when Maddox argues that, while instantaneous "entire sanctification may have been distinctive of Wesley," sanctification as a "progressive journey" was "most characteristic of Wesley" (190), some may feel he de-emphasizes the instantaneous element overly much. Furthermore, his lengthy discussion of the relation of the instantaneous to the gradual may obscure the role of Christian Perfection as the orienting goal and ultimate content of the Christian life.

These are minor quibbles, however, given the excellence of this work. The book not only will be the standard text on Wesley's theology, but has also set a standard for future scholarship.

Editor's note: The Randy Maddox article "Reading Wesley As Theologian" in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (30:1, Spring 1995) provides a methodological introduction to his reading of John Wesley as theologian.

Mark A. Noll. 1994. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 256 pp. ISBN 0-8028-3715-8.

Reviewed by Henry H. Knight III, Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri

“The scandal of the evangelical mind,” writes Mark Noll, “is that there is not much of an evangelical mind” (3). By an “evangelical mind” Noll means much more than theology. He is concerned that we no longer know how to think like Christians about the entire range of human life, including the physical world, art, politics, society, economics, and history.

He describes the evangelical ethos as “activist, populist, pragmatic, and utilitarian” (12) and evangelical thinking as “bereft of self-criticism, intellectual subtlety, or an awareness of complexity” (14). The fact that during the Gulf War of 1991 the best-selling evangelical books concerning the Middle East were all on biblical prophecy is a case in point: “The best way of providing moral judgment about what was happening in the Middle East was *not* to study carefully what was going on,” but to engage in a “Bible study that drew attention away from a careful analysis” of Middle East culture or history (13-14).

It is a powerful and persuasive indictment, though carefully limited to the life of the mind. Time and again Noll reminds the reader of the courageous sharing of the gospel and generous social ministry which has marked evangelicalism. He celebrates how a populist evangelicalism kept alive supernaturalism against the corrosive effects of modernity. Yet, the result was nonetheless a disaster for serious evangelical scholarship and thought.

It was not always so. Evangelicals have a rich intellectual tradition stretching from the Protestant Reformers through the Puritan divines, culminating in America in Jonathan Edwards. In Europe the tradition continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but in the United States it is said to have stopped with Edwards. Noll’s central task is to analyze why.

The story is complex, but two elements seem especially significant. First is the evangelical embrace of revivalism in the late eighteenth century. Second is the Scottish enlightenment in the early nineteenth. With regard to the first element, ironically Edwards himself planted the seeds that would undermine the intellectual life. “Where Edwards’ thinking had grown out of his theology, the revivalism that Edwards promoted (because of his theology) eventually led to a decline of theology” (80). Beginning with Whitefield, revivalism emphasized individualism and immediatism in place of the church, and direct, popular leadership in place of autho-

rized clergy. The result was a populism which scorned tradition and traditional learning.

Unable to appeal convincingly to tradition, evangelicals sought an alternative way to justify traditional values. This the Scottish “common sense” philosophy seemed to provide. In contrast to the French enlightenment, it enabled American evangelicals “to align faith in reason with faith in God” (91), and fit nicely with Baconian science as well. Evangelicals adopted an evidential approach, in which the “facts” of science and the “facts” of scripture were mutually reinforcing. Intuitive common sense was “considered the basis for reliable knowledge” (92). This in turn led to a method of scriptural interpretation in which the Bible is seen as a book of facts to be collected and “arranged by induction to yield the truth on any issue” (98).

However helpful this seemed in democratic, anti-traditional America, it was a major shift in evangelical thought. Where Edwards began his theological reflection with God, and then moved to philosophical issues, evangelicals were now adopting enlightenment assumptions as a basis for theology. While evangelicals traditionally had highlighted human incapacities due to sin, now there was a new confidence in the natural human capacity for reason.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this shift culminates in the “intellectual disaster of fundamentalism,” especially, according to Noll, in the dispensational, holiness, and pentecostal movements. While these three theological traditions were never entirely aligned, they provided the impetus behind fundamentalist habits of mind which prevent a “doxological understanding of nature, society, and the arts” (126). The holiness and pentecostal movements reinforced the idea that growth in Christ requires the rejection of the world and its learning. Dispensationalism encouraged populist teachers who practiced simplistic literalism rather than thoughtful, scholarly exegesis. They are said to have reinforced intellectual habits from the nineteenth century which . . .

included a weakness for treating the verses of the Bible as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that needed only to be sorted and then fit together to possess a finished picture of divine truth; an overwhelming tendency to “essentialism,” or the conviction that a specific formula could capture for all times and places the essence of any biblical truth for any specific issue. . . ; a corresponding neglect of forces in history that shape perceptions and help define the issues that loom as most important to any particular age; and a self-confidence, bordering on hubris, manifested

by an extreme antitraditionalism that casually discounted the possibility of wisdom from earlier generations (127).

Noll describes the consequences of this for the way evangelicals have engaged political and scientific thought.

He ends the book on a note of hope. There is a renaissance of sorts in evangelical thought, largely due to the influence of Dutch Reformed and Mennonite scholarship and the appropriation of patterns of thought from other traditions. Moreover, evangelicals have the opportunity to develop their own intellectual tradition if they can abandon such debilitating habits as confusing what is distinctive about American evangelicalism with Christian essentials, making false disjunctions between such things as activism and scholarship, and an intuitionism which blinds to complexity and prevents self-criticism. Noll believes the global nature of contemporary evangelicalism promises a rich cross-cultural theological harvest. He envisions the traditional evangelical focus on the cross of Christ—with its emphasis on an incarnate Savior who dies for the world in order to redeem the world—as an appropriate foundation for a renewal of the evangelical mind.

This book is the product of a superb historian who communicates his insights with clarity and style. It is a joy to read! There is much to applaud in Noll's exposition. His call to think Christianly and for reflection that is both self-critical and aware of complexity is needed. The disastrous consequences of the uncritical embrace of culture is shown in convincing detail. I agree with Noll that Jonathan Edwards represents an excellent model for a recovery of the evangelical mind, though I would point also to John Wesley.

In spite of my enthusiasm for this book, I have a number of reservations. Noll warns against a disjunction between activism and study, but I wonder if he isn't presupposing a disjunction between the heart and the mind. While rightly concerned with intuitionism and individualistic immediatism, he does not provide a way to speak of the integration of heart and mind in the whole person. Here, Wesley and Edwards have much to teach us through their discussion of religious affections.

The remainder of my concerns revolve around the issue of populism. The root of the American evangelical mind, as Noll tells it, is revivalism and disestablishment. Revivalism undercut the authority of the churches with its own popular leadership and mass appeal—"With its scorn for tradition, its concentration on individual competence, its distrust of mediated knowledge-American revivalism did much to hamstring the life of the mind" (64). Disestablishment likewise made church success dependent on

popular appeal. Together, these two elements led evangelicals “to make most questions of truth into questions of practicality” (67), focusing more on what people want to hear than what they really need to hear.

There are three issues I would raise in response. The first is that it was not just the revivalists but the scholars who rejected Edwards’ theological anthropology for one based on the Scottish Enlightenment. I certainly agree with Noll that this was a fateful turn for evangelicalism, but, as he notes, it was an unlikely one for revivalism. Could it be that it was the adoption of “common sense” realism as a defense against Humean skepticism by the scholarly elite that is the central element in the move away from Reformation Protestantism? It is at least fair to say that such philosophic egalitarianism was not limited to revivalism; it is possible that revivalism was more the recipient than the initial promoter of the new philosophy.

This is not to say that revivalism lacked an egalitarian impulse. It certainly did, and its chief target was often the educated elites, among whom were the established clergy conversant with the Christian tradition. But what must be recognized, as Nathan Hatch has shown so well in *The Democratization of American Christianity*, is that the revivalist attack on tradition was part of a class conflict. The keepers of traditional orthodoxy despised the lower class preachers of the Baptists and Methodists, both white and black, and they in turn combined evangelical and Enlightenment language in opposition to the upperclass, educated clergy. How different would revivalism have been had the scholars maintained the faithfulness to tradition while at the same time providing encouragement and educational opportunities to those persons called into ministry from the lower classes. Isn’t this what John Wesley at least tried to do with his lay preachers?

Revivalism in and of itself may not be as culpable in the scandal of the evangelical mind as Noll contends. It can be argued that the populist movements, for all their intellectual difficulties, made important contributions to evangelical thought. This may not be right on Noll’s point, because the contributions may not have had to do with science or the arts—after all, the marginalized people of the holiness, pentecostal, and African-American traditions did not have the luxury of thinking about such things. Yet I believe they attempted to think Christianly about their world, often doing so in an oral rather than a literary form of discourse and thought. The key to examining if they engaged in critical reflection is not their writings but their hymns, testimonies, and practices. As James Cone and others have shown for African-American Christianity and Steven Land for Pentecostals, these forms of thinking and being yield rich and surprising insights. For example, in all these movements there is

something like a vision of the kingdom of God which impacts their evaluation and hope concerning this present life. On some matters it is fair to say that the African-American slave preacher was a more perceptive interpreter of scripture and its meaning for our society than the intellectuals at Princeton.

Perhaps the one distinguishing feature of all three of these traditions is that they were not interested in truth that simply informs, but in truth that transforms. While much of the focus has been on personal transformation, it was often aimed at the social order as well. The radical implications of the gospel for society was especially evident in such persons as Charles Finney, Orange Scott, and B. T. Roberts, all of whom linked holiness with social reform. It was also the holiness movement of their day which produced a significant body of writings in addition to fostering an oral tradition.

There has been a kind of Reformed critique which finds Arminianism as the culprit behind the intellectual decline of evangelicalism. Mark Noll, to his credit, does not claim this, but he does place a major part of the blame on revivalism. I have tried to suggest otherwise—it certainly wasn't Arminians or revivalists who replaced the Calvinist Edwards with Scottish Enlightenment philosophy at Princeton. Instead, I believe Wesley and Edwards—an Arminian and a Calvinist—were right to embrace revival and to try to shape it in ways faithful to their Protestant heritages. The significant turn in evangelical history may not be the move from Reformation Protestantism to revivalism, or Calvinism to Arminianism, but from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. That is, while I find much to applaud in the holiness movement's linkage of sanctification and social reform, I believe the crucial divide is not Wesley versus Edwards or Finney versus Hodge; it is Wesley and Edwards versus Finney and Hodge. It is this change in both scholarship and popular revivalism that has so strongly impacted the contemporary evangelical mind.

While it is necessary to understand the reasons for the scandal of the evangelical mind, even more important is the way forward. Mark Noll offers us helpful pointers to a recovery of evangelical intellectual life. The point of Christian scholarship, he notes, is not to win recognition in the wider culture, but "to praise God with the mind" (248). Thus the key will not be found in new institutions, periodicals, funding, and academic respect, as important as these all are. Instead, it is this: "If evangelicals are ever to have a mind, they must begin with the heart" (249). This is an affirmation Wesley and many of his theological descendants would readily endorse.

Clark Pinnock and others, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994. 202 pp. ISBN 0-8308-1852-9.

Reviewed by Jeffrey S. Lamp, Spiro, Oklahoma

Occasionally a book appears that has the potential of reshaping the dialogical paradigms of a branch of theological scholarship. Exemplary of this phenomenon are Schweitzer's *Quest for the Historical Jesus*, Barth's commentary on Romans, and E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. If early reaction is a reliable indicator, *The Openness of God* may soon join this select company of works.

The focus of this volume, a collection of five thematic essays by contributors Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, is stated in its subtitle. The authors seek to challenge the traditional view of God advanced in nearly two thousand years of classical Christian theistic reflection, the substance of which is found in various treatments of the "attributes of God." They replace this construct with a view of God that they argue is more consonant with the whole of Scripture and Christian experience. This view, labeled "the openness of God," depicts a God who, "in grace, grants humans significant freedom to cooperate with or work against God's will for their lives, and [who] enters into dynamic, give-and-take relationships with us" (p. 7).

In the first chapter, "Biblical Support for a New Perspective," Rice highlights numerous biblical passages that depict God as displaying emotions, voicing contingent intentionality, and even expressing regret over previous decisions (e.g., at creating humankind, Gen. 6:6). Rice argues that such examples should be understood literally. He challenges the traditional practice of identifying such depictions as anthropomorphisms. The ultimate example is Jesus Christ, in whom God entered intimately into relationship with humankind. Rice concludes his discussion by examining some passages that would appear to contradict the open view of God. Passages asserting immutability (e.g., Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17) are restricted to describing God's character and existence, affirming God's reliability in relationship.

Those passages describing God's unilateral will in prophetic fulfillment are shown to depict only a small portion of the complex phenomena of prophetic prediction (cf. Isa 46:10-11; Jer 3:7; 32:4; 52:12-14). Those describing predestination and foreknowledge (e.g., Rom. 8:29-30) are explained in largely Arminian fashion in light of other biblical testimony (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:4). In short, the difficult passages can be accommodated by the biblical portrait of a God who enters into dynamic relationship with finite creatures.

The second chapter, "Historical Considerations," is perhaps the most significant in the volume. Sanders attempts to show how the traditional view of God gained theological ascendancy despite the clear testimony of Scripture. Sanders argues that divine predicates such as immutability, impassability, eternity, incomprehensibility, noncorporeality, and anonymity entered Christian thought through contact with Hellenistic culture. Analogous to Philo's attempt to make the Torah compatible with Hellenistic philosophy, early Christian apologists borrowed Hellenistic terminology, especially that of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, to frame their presentation of the gospel. The Arian controversy and the neo-Platonist tendencies of Augustine granted these formulations the dogmatic status that ensured their prominence in Christian theology. What was originally intended to serve as a contextual expression of the gospel became the substance of the Christian view of God.

The third chapter, "Systematic Theology" by Pinnock, and the fourth chapter, "A Philosophical Perspective" by Hasker, serve to correct the situation described by Sanders in light of the biblical data presented by Rice. The focus of these chapters is to present theological and philosophical support for an open view of God, with special attention given to comparison of the traditional views (Calvinist, Arminian, and Molinist) of divine omnipotence and omniscience and the open view of a God who relates dynamically to genuine]y free persons. This study gives rise to the book's most controversial proposition: God cannot know for certain the future actions of creatures endowed with true freedom. Rather, God willingly accepts the risk of rebuff in order to interact personally with human beings. At the same time, Pinnock and Hasker are careful to distinguish between the open view of God and the view of process theologians who see God as interdependent with creation. The open view, which draws on the strengths of traditional and process positions, produces "a picture of God as majestic yet intimate, as powerful and yet responsive, as holy and loving and caring, as desiring for humans to decide freely for or against [God's] will for them, yet endlessly resourceful in achieving [God's] ultimate purposes" (p. 154).

In the final chapter, "Practical Implications," Basinger explains how the foregoing discussion impacts the daily experience of Christians. He describes how the divine-human relationship, viewed from the perspective of the open view of God, injects vibrancy and urgency into petitionary prayer, the search for divine guidance, the alleviation of human suffering, social responsibility, and evangelism. The open view of God is not simply a theoretical construct; it is of vital concern for Christian living.

In assessing this book, it must be conceded that objective appraisal may be beyond reasonable expectation. Challenges to "orthodox" views

of God have been frequent throughout history, but those originating from parties within the bounds of orthodoxy often elicit the sharpest responses. In the case of the present volume, two features make this certain. The first is the brevity of the book. The body of the argument is presented in 170 pages, hardly enough space to define this controversial thesis adequately. The sympathetic reader can only hope that this volume is but the introduction to future work of more comprehensive scope.

The second feature is the choice of language used to portray the limits of divine sovereignty in light of genuine human freedom. The use of “cannot,” for example, especially with respect to foreknowledge, will affront those who accept the premise that nothing lies beyond God’s ability. Perhaps the authors could have considered an option that sees God as possessing the ability of complete foreknowledge, but choosing to suspend it in dealings with human beings. They should at least reconsider word choice if they wish their thesis to attract popular consideration.

Nevertheless, this book provides a substantive framework for those who wish to maintain the integrity of human freedom while affirming the sovereignty of God. Its lucid style presents the argument in a form easily digestible by the nonspecialist while providing documentation in endnotes for those wishing to pursue further study. This should make it an attractive resource for the local church. It provides ample fodder for discussion of the problem of human suffering and the church’s response to it, the need for both social action and evangelism, and the importance and benefit of personal devotional discipline.

For Wesleyans, the book provides opportunity for reflection on several doctrinal distinctives. How is the open view of God compatible with our form of Arminianism? How might this conception of intimate divine-human relationship inform our understanding of Christian perfection? Can we integrate this perspective into our joint emphasis on personal holiness and social involvement? The possibilities are myriad. Moreover, while it may not have been foremost in the minds of the authors, this book stands as a masterful example of how the Wesleyan quadrilateral can be applied to difficult theological issues. This fact alone should recommend the book to pastors and teachers.

Those who would dismiss *The Openness of God* would do well to recall what the Protestant Reformation taught us about ideas that have enjoyed longstanding acceptance in the church. Pinnock and company have started us down the road of examining again what we have long taken for granted as true.

Howard A. Snyder. 1995. *EarthCurrents: The Struggle for the World's Soul*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 334 pp. ISBN 0-687-11449-7.

Reviewed by Merle D. Strege, Anderson University, Anderson, Indiana

Does there exist a language or discourse by which humans may interpret their existence amid the converging and diverging forces which shape the earth and beyond as we approach the first decades of the twenty-first century? If such a language exists, what conditions must it necessarily satisfy in order to qualify for such a grand assignment? Are there any present candidates for this role?

It has become a commonplace of much contemporary scholarship to assert that such questions as these can no longer be posited. Thomas Aquinas might legitimately have attempted this project in the thirteenth century, or even Karl Barth earlier in our own. However, the knowledges that humans either discover or produce, depending on one's point of view, have become far too complex and diverse to permit a rational mind any longer to attempt such a grand enterprise. Despite this conventional scholarly wisdom, Howard Snyder has attempted answers to these questions in this engaging and thought-provoking book.

Rising out of impressions stimulated by his world-wide tour in 1993, Snyder's book is the product of his search for answers to such questions as: What are the connections between apparently diverse cultural movements? "How can one get behind the [news] headlines to understand what is really going on? What do today's changes mean for the future of Plant Earth, and for being human?" Snyder's search is couched in decidedly global terms, "an exercise in cultural analysis, viewed globally."

Focusing on the decades 1990-2030, he conducts his search on the thesis that "eight global trends are shaping what and how the world's peoples believe, and thus are touching all our lives." In Snyder's words, these trends are (1) the coming of on-line, instant access culture, (2) the rise of a global economy, (3) the rapidly expanding influence of and new roles for women, (4) increasing environmental vulnerability and awareness, (5) scientific breakthroughs in understanding matter itself, (6) the rise of a computer culture, (7) a startling decline in Western society, and (8) a basic power shift in global politics.

Readers concluding that Snyder has written a theologian's version of *Megatrends* would be incorrect, for Snyder is interested in far more than cataloging trends; he is pursuing answers to the questions of meaning

which he believes underlay these cultural currents. They share important characteristics of long-range influence and cultural rootedness, but it is their fundamentally spiritual basis which Snyder believes to be crucial: EarthCurrents “are not simply opinion, not just fleeting currents expressed in popular culture or counterculture. *Something deeper is at work.* Something of the nature of metaphor and worldview—the lenses through which we look. Something at the level of fundamental paradigms and values. EarthCurrents have a power that prods the spirit, not just the mind.”

Rather than argue the merits of his selections, Snyder accepts these currents as givens in order to pursue their implications for answers to the larger questions of worldview and meaning. It is his contention that these eight trends have the capacity to shape, indeed already do shape, the worldviews of people around the world. He provides informative, relevant, chapter-length discussions on each of the eight global trends and convincingly displays the ways in which they construct our social reality.

In the book’s second major section Snyder considers six potential candidates for a worldview which might hold together the implications which global trends raise. They are global economics, quantum physics, the ecological vision of the *Gaia* hypothesis, the universe’s divine design, determinism, and postmodernism. Each of these Snyder finds lacking in its answers to one or more aspect of the global currents. For instance, quantum physics and the *Gaia* hypothesis fail to satisfy larger human questions of meaning which insist that their answers must transcend the natural processes of the physical universe. Postmodernism’s sense of life’s fragmentation fails to address our growing perception of the interconnectedness of things. Perhaps surprising for a theologian, even traditional theism comes under Snyder’s criticism for its lack of specificity: “Yet in light of global trends, we may sense that it is not wholly adequate. Something is missing.”

Any worldview which can tie together the manifold strings of the eight earthcurrents must satisfy conditions arising from them. These conditions are: a respect for and embrace of ecology in its broadest applications; an appreciation for the coherence of meaning and things under the aspects of order, surprise, and beauty; and the narrative structure of experience. Snyder’s case for the last of these three is, perhaps, the only question mark in an otherwise able and convincing argument. Snyder discusses the narrative quality of human experience on the basis of an apparent supposition of a universally shared linear view of history. The

structure of narrative depends on such a view. But there are cultures which take a cyclical view of time. How do such cultures impinge on Snyder's argument?

Snyder's search for the answers to his opening questions concludes in Christian theism. He contends in his final section that the story of Jesus of Nazareth addresses the questions and implications which earthcurrents raise. Moreover, Snyder argues that the story of Jesus adequately satisfies the conditions which any worldview must meet. In developing this argument Snyder has not attempted a systematic theology or a metaphysics. What he has done is define a problem and then set about answering the questions it raises. Simply stated, that problem is the human quest for meaning. However, the complexity of life in the last days of the twentieth century render its potential solutions very difficult achieve.

Snyder is to be heartily thanked for considering such questions in frank recognition of the manifold and diverse forces which affect people across the face of the globe. Theologians bold enough to attempt a systematic theology would do well to begin with Howard Snyder's questions and proposals. On a smaller scale, people concerned to reflect on the issues by which to frame the meaning of their own individual lives would do just as well.

Announcing the . . .

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY ENDOWMENT FUND

Established by the Society, November, 1995

1. The endowment fund is established in perpetuity on behalf of the Wesleyan Theological Society, which is a Commission of the Christian Holiness Association that operates under the federal tax exempt number 61-0293757.
2. The Executive Committee of the Wesleyan Theological Society oversees the endowment fund, which is managed by the Secretary-Treasurer of the Society.
3. The principal of the endowment fund shall at all times be kept intact. The interest income from the principal is to be disbursed annually as follows: Up to ninety percent of the annual interest income may be used to supplement the general operating budget of the Society; and at least ten percent of the annual interest income is used to increase the principal of the fund.
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5. If the Wesleyan Theological Society should be disbanded, the Executive Committee will decide how the remaining endowment fund assets should be disbursed for the purpose of enhancing scholarship among the Wesleyan/Holiness traditions.

Contributions should be directed to the Society's Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. William Kostlevy, c/o Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky 40390. Phone 606-858-2235.

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A. *Full Members*: Those who affirm the purposes of the Society as expressed in Articles II and III of the Bylaws (see below). Full Members are entitled to attend all meetings, vote, hold office, present papers, and receive the *WTS Journal*.

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II. 1. This Society shall be regarded as a Commission of the Christian Holiness Association and through its President shall submit a report of its activities to the Annual Convention of the CHA.

II. 2. Purposes

A. To promote theological interchange among Wesleyan/Holiness scholars and other persons interested in this area;

B. To provide theological leadership to the CHA, including offering a doctrinal seminar at its annual convention;

C. To stimulate scholarship among younger theologians and pastors;

D. To publish a journal consisting of significant contributions to Wesleyan/Holiness scholarship.

III. *Doctrinal Basis*. While WTS members are not required to sign a statement of faith, the society works within the context of the CHA and its statement of faith/mission statement:

The Christian Holiness Association is a body of churches, organizations, and individuals who accept the inspiration and infallibility of sacred Scripture and evangelical doctrine that pertains to divine revelation, the incarnation, the resurrection, the second coming of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church as affirmed in the historic Christian creeds. The particular concern of this fellowship is the Biblical doctrine of sanctification identified historically in what is known as the Wesleyan position.

The association believes that personal salvation includes both the new birth and the entire sanctification wrought by God in the heart by faith. Entire sanctification is the crisis experience subsequent to conversion that results in a heart cleansed from all sin and filled with the Holy Spirit. This grace is witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. It is maintained by that faith which expresses itself in constant obedience to God's revealed will and results in a moment-by-moment cleansing.

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1. Please report any change of address immediately to the Secretary-Treasurer.
2. Members not paying dues for two years in a row will be discontinued as active members.
3. Persons not eligible for or not desiring membership may subscribe to the *Journal* at the current rate.
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