

# ***Wesleyan Theological Journal***

*Publication of the*  
Wesleyan Theological Society

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The Journal  
of the  
**WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
A Fellowship of Wesleyan-Holiness Scholars

Editor and Chair of the Editorial Committee:  
Barry L. Callen, 1993 to present

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Publication Address: Wesleyan Theological Society, P. O. Box 144, Wilmore, Kentucky 40390.

Society Web Address: [www.wesley.nnu.edu/wts](http://www.wesley.nnu.edu/wts)

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
(Organized 1965)

The Society's mission is to encourage the exchange of ideas among Wesleyan-Holiness theologians; to develop a source of papers for CHP (Christian Holiness Partnership) seminars; to stimulate scholarship among younger theologians and pastors; and to publish a scholarly journal.

# **WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL**



Published by the Wesleyan Theological Society  
P. O. Box 144  
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

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<http://wesley.nnu.edu>

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Wesleyan Theological Society

ISSN-0092-4245

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606, E-mail: [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com), or visit <http://www.atla.com/>. Available on-line through BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Series), Latham, New York, and DIALOG, Palo Alto, California.

Available in Microform from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Dept. I.R., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Other than the most recent issues, the journal is available electronically at this online address: <http://wesley.nnc.edu>

WTS on the Web: [www.wesley.nnu.edu/wts](http://www.wesley.nnu.edu/wts)

Views expressed by writers are not necessarily those of the Wesleyan Theological Society, the Editor, or the Editorial Committee.

Printed by  
Old Paths Tract Society  
Shoals, Indiana 47581

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

In this issue are select materials originating as presentations made at the 38th annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society. These materials include explorations into the fields of biblical, theological, historical, ecumenical, missiological, and psychological studies. This 2003 annual meeting was convened in Lexington, Kentucky, was hosted by Asbury Theological Seminary on March 20-22, 2003, and met jointly with the Society of Pentecostal Studies. WTS presented a Life-time Achievement Award to Dr. Charles E. Jones.

Howard Snyder identifies four significant problems in Christian theology and concludes that Wesleyan theology is well suited but often does not heal these wounds. Jeffrey Gros highlights the ecclesiological benefits of serious ecumenical dialogue and reflects on the role of the Wesleyan and Pentecostal traditions in this regard. The appreciative response of Paul Basset to Gros concludes with the caution that "being a church" is not the chief business of the bodies comprising the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. Diane Leclerc joins the feminists who challenge the influential assumption that original sin is best defined as pride. Here is a study of sin that has as its foci social justice and relevance for contemporary preaching. With Leclerc addressing the dangers of a "post-feminist" time, Joel Green stresses that Wesleyans have a valuable theological heritage to offer those willing to read the Bible with great care and insight in a "post-colonial" mode.

Russell Morton studies John 14 as a paradigm for the Wesleyan understanding of mission. Then David Bundy pursues one strand of Eastern Orthodoxy and locates a strain of thought that became definitive for the development of the Wesleyan/Holiness/Pentecostal concept of "sanctification" (the presidential address of the Wesleyan Theological Society). Cheryl Bridges Johns explores the neglected role of crisis in Wesleyan and Pentecostal discipleship and Thomas Oord identifies the several types of Wesleyan philosophy (the presidential address of the Wesleyan Philosophical Society). Laura Bartels looks at John Wesley's view of the "spiritual senses" and tests its relationship to the earlier work of George Cheyne. Barry Hamilton presents a fascinating study of the Corsicana Enthusiasts, while Michael Stephens shares the insightful story of public trials between 1897 and 1917 involving the Church of God (Anderson) and its teaching about divine healing.

The 39th annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society convened in Rochester, New York, was hosted by Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College on March 5-6, 2004, and will provide materi-

als for the Spring 2005 issue of this Journal. A highlight of this meeting was the awarding of the Society's 2004 Smith/Wynkoop Book Award to Floyd Cunningham for his book *Holiness Abroad: Nazarene Missions in Asia* (Scarecrow Press, 2003). The 40th annual meeting of WTS will convene on the campus of Seattle Pacific University on March 4-5, 2005. Officers of the Wesleyan Theological Society are listed herein, with email addresses for ease of communication. For further information on WTS, consult its web site: **[wesley.nnu.edu/wts](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wts)**

Barry L. Callen, Editor,  
Anderson, Indiana, April, 2004



# THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF WESLEYAN THEOLOGY

by

Howard A. Snyder

In principle, if not always in practice, Wesleyan theology overcomes and heals four deep problems in Christian theology:

1. The elitism of Eastern spirituality
2. The dualism of both Eastern and Western theology
3. The pessimism of Augustinian theology
4. The individualism of Enlightenment rationalism.

In this essay I show how this is true and also suggest some reasons why, for the most part, Wesleyan theology has not fulfilled its potential.

Has there in fact been a “Babylonian captivity” of Wesleyan theology? I believe so. Despite the dynamism of early Methodism and the vitality of the varied Methodist traditions, nowhere has the potential of Wesleyan theological insights been fully realized or worked out. This is true, I believe, for several reasons. The totality of these reasons constitutes the Babylonian captivity of Wesleyan theology. Rather than redemptively *transforming* the four areas listed above—elitism, dualism, pessimism, and individualism—more often than not Wesleyan theologians and Methodist churches have succumbed to them.

## What Babylonian Captivity?

What is this alleged Babylonian captivity of Wesleyan theology? In the days of the Israelite monarchy, the southern kingdom was finally conquered by Babylon and many of its people were carried into exile. The

Babylonian exile lasted seventy years. Wesleyan theology has suffered its Babylonian captivity for some two hundred years. True, there have been some escapes and some breakouts. Some captives have returned. A remnant (often the poor!) has been preserved in the land. But the captivity is still not ended. As for me, I want to claim Isaiah 35:10 for Wesleyan theology: “The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away” (NIV).

The Babylonian captivity of Wesleyan theology is a complex of the four elements listed above. To state the thesis more precisely: Wesleyan theology, which arose within and to date is primarily a part of the Western Christian theological tradition, has never achieved its redemptive potential because it has been shackled by an inheritance of *spiritual elitism*, *philosophical dualism*, *theological pessimism*, and *rationalistic individualism*. These form the cultural matrix in which Wesleyan theology has developed, and they still shape our understanding of Wesley and of the gospel. But, paradoxically, and here is my central thesis, Wesleyan theology inherently offers the resources to break these shackles and end the Babylonian captivity.

I will attempt to show how Wesleyan theology has the resources to break these four shackles. I hope to show also the potential Wesleyan theology has today to make an unprecedented impact for the kingdom of God, especially in this age of the increasing emergence of global Christianity.

## **Hermeneutical Insights**

As we deal with Wesley’s theology in face of these issues, some insights from William Webb’s book, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, are relevant to the discussion.<sup>1</sup> In dealing with Scripture, Webb argues for what he calls “a redemptive-movement hermeneutic.” We must pay attention not only to the words of Scripture but to the “redemptive spirit” they manifest with varying degrees of explicitness. In part this is the “trajectory” argument

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<sup>1</sup>William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

that David Thompson and others have advanced.<sup>2</sup> And as Webb points out, it is not unrelated to the “analogy of faith” approach that Wesley and others have employed.<sup>3</sup> “When taking the ancient text into our modern world, the redemptive spirit of Scripture is the most significant dimension with which a Christian can wrestle,” Webb argues. If we fail to pay attention to this redemptive spirit, we will find that in many cases “living out the Bible’s literal words in our [contemporary] context fails to fulfill” what God intends.<sup>4</sup>

Webb’s approach fits nicely with a Wesleyan biblical hermeneutic. Might the same approach be useful in dealing with Wesley’s own writings? Webb proposes eighteen criteria in his “hermeneutic of cultural analysis.” It is beyond my purpose here to detail his approach, but I am intrigued especially with his second and third criteria, which he calls “seed ideas” and “breakouts.”<sup>5</sup> It seems to me that these have particular

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. David Thompson, “Women, Men, Slaves and the Bible: Hermeneutical Inquiries,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 25:3 (March 1996), 326–49. Webb writes, “I have coined my approach a ‘redemptive-movement’ hermeneutic because it captures the redemptive spirit *within* Scripture. It looks at a component of meaning *within* the biblical text and canon—a component of meaning easily missed in our application process. Some may prefer calling this interpretive/applicational approach a ‘progressive’ or ‘developmental’ or ‘trajectory’ hermeneutic. That is fine. The label ‘redemptive movement’ or ‘redemptive spirit’ reflects my concern that the derived meaning is internal, not external, to the biblical text” (Webb, 31; emphasis in the original).

<sup>3</sup>Webb notes that such a “redemptive-movement hermeneutic” is not a new concept. “Aspects of a redemptive-movement hermeneutic are found in other standard approaches to Scripture. For instance, an ‘analogy of faith’ approach considers that all biblical texts must be used in a dialogue of sorts in order to formulate a synthetic understanding of truth; one must never read a text in isolation from the rest of Scripture” (Webb, 35). The “analogy of faith” (Rom. 12:6) was an important hermeneutical principle for Wesley: “the agreement of every part of [Scripture] with every other is properly the *analogy of faith*” and is key in biblical interpretation (Wesley, Sermon 62, “The End of Christ’s Coming,” III.5). See Albert Outler’s comment here (*WJW* [Abingdon], 2:483); Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 18f. Wesley’s own writings should be similarly interpreted if one wishes to get a sense of his overall theological project.

<sup>4</sup>Webb, 30.

<sup>5</sup>Webb’s first five criteria are: (1) Preliminary Movement; (2) Seed Ideas; (3) Breakouts; (4) Purpose/Intent Statements; and (5) Basis in Fall or Curse. These are “Intrascriptural criteria” and, Webb argues, the most inherently persuasive of the 18 criteria.

relevance for the interpretation not only of Scripture but also of Wesley texts. Webb defines “seed ideas” and “breakouts” as follows:

*Seed Ideas*: “A component of a text may be [merely] cultural if ‘seed ideas’ are present within the rest of Scripture to suggest and encourage further movement on a particular subject. . . . If later readers in another place and time draw out the implications of the seedling idea from one text, this can lead to taking other texts beyond their original-audience application and form to a more realized expression of the spirit within.”<sup>6</sup>

*Breakouts*: “While a seedbed idea is subtle and quiet due to its unrealized form, a breakout is a much more pronounced deviation by Scripture from cultural norms. *Here the text completely overturns the expected norms.* Also, the seedbed is theoretical/potential, whereas the breakout is real or actualized relative to the original audience. *It challenges the standard sociological patterns in the present reality.*”<sup>7</sup> Webb cites a number of such “breakouts” within Scripture—for example, when women like Deborah, Huldah, and Priscilla perform roles approved by God which clearly transcend or “break out” from the norms of the time. These examples should be viewed not as mere exceptions, but rather as pointers toward where God is moving in history. Do we find any significant “seed ideas” and “breakouts” in Wesley? I believe so. And these may offer hermeneutical clues that can liberate Wesleyan theology from its Babylonian captivity. Webb’s approach provides some suggestive criteria for interpreting Wesley, as well as some needed safeguards against the rampant tendency to selectively pick from Wesley what we like and interpret his statements or insights in a way that is contrary to Wesley’s fundamental theology and the “redemptive spirit” of his theological work.

If we apply Webb’s hermeneutical approach to Wesley, what do we find? I would flag the following key “seed ideas” and “breakouts” in Wesley:

*Seed Ideas*: (1) Wesley’s optimism of grace (related to prevenient grace); (2) “inward and outward holiness” as God’s provision for all, and the availability of God’s Spirit to all; and (3) salvation as healing.

<sup>6</sup>Webb, 83f.

<sup>7</sup>Webb, 91 (emphasis added).

*Breakouts*: (1) Salvation surpasses, not merely restores, creation, so that the end is greater than the beginning; (2) the gospel for the poor in which the direction of salvation is “from the least to the greatest,” not vice versa; (3) Wesley’s ecological sensitivity.<sup>8</sup>

I will not deal directly with each of these themes. Rather, these “seed ideas” and “breakouts” serve as background in showing the ways that Wesleyan theology heals, or at least holds the promise of healing, the four problems identified above: Spiritual elitism, spirit/matter dualism, soteriological pessimism, and rationalistic individualism.

## 1. PENTECOSTAL GRACE: The Answer to Spiritual Elitism

**The Problem:** Wesleyan theologians rightly celebrate the way John Wesley appropriated the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Wesley reached back before Augustine to a more dynamic and more optimistic understanding of God, God’s love, human nature, and therefore of Christian experience.<sup>9</sup> Wesley’s fruitful use of Eastern Christianity has now been quite thoroughly explored by a number of theologians.<sup>10</sup> What is much less acknowledged is the downside of this inheritance. In many ways the Eastern theological inheritance is problematic, even though it accounts for much of the dynamism of Wesleyan theology.

The central problem with the Eastern tradition of spirituality is that its understanding of Christian perfection is elitist. It is not a spirituality for the masses, for the common people, but for religious super-heroes

<sup>8</sup>I am not claiming that any of these themes are in themselves original to Wesley.

<sup>9</sup>Wesley mined the early centuries of the Christian tradition, tending to value especially “the Greek representatives over the Latin” (Randy L. Maddox, “John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences and Differences,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 45:2 [Fall 1990], 30). More generally, see Kenneth E. Rowe, ed., *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976), especially the lead essay by Albert Outler, which bears the same title as the book.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 31 and *passim*; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Kingswood, 1994); Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley’s Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997), 19f, 205ff; Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 34, 53f; and the sources these authors cite.

who leave the pursuits of everyday life in quest of holiness. The high ideal of Christian experience espoused by Eastern theology—perfection, *theosis*, the restoration of the image of God in human experience—was a theology for religious specialists. Miroslav Volf has shown how deeply embedded such elitism is in Eastern ecclesiology.<sup>11</sup>

Wesley in a sense democratized this elitist tradition. Consider the way he appropriated “Macarius the Egyptian.” Though Wesley affirmed virtually all the key themes in the Homilies of Macarius, he applied them much more broadly. Wesley emphasized Christian life in the world, creating and promoting a spirituality and discipleship for the masses, the poor, the common people.<sup>12</sup> Despite Wesley’s own best efforts, however, Wesleyan theology over the years has too often fallen into an un-Wesleyan elitism. The doctrine of Christian perfection or entire sanctification has almost inevitably been seen as an elitist spirituality—a theology for super-saints or spiritual super-heroes. This clearly was not Wesley’s intent—though it may be argued that Wesley himself did not fully extricate himself from such elitism, despite the non-elitist, democratic, liberationist tendencies in his theology and practice.<sup>13</sup>

A deeper issue of elitism arises here, however, an elitism that has shackled and limited Wesleyan theology and Wesleyan-oriented churches over the years. It was already present in early Eastern theology and in fact underlies the spiritual elitism I have already mentioned.<sup>14</sup> This is, of course, the elitism that by the third century had thoroughly infiltrated and infected Christianity, namely the clergy/laity distinction that assumed and reinforced a split-level spirituality. The masses were called to a relatively low level of discipleship, but a spiritual elite—clergy, monks, super-saints—were called to obey the so-called “counsels of perfection.” These special ones were to take Jesus’ teachings seriously, to *really practice* what Jesus taught. The fourth-century Constantinian settlement simply reinforced this dichotomy and made it an unquestioned assumption of the

<sup>11</sup>Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>12</sup>Howard A. Snyder, “John Wesley and Macarius the Egyptian,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 45:2 (Fall 1990), 55-60.

<sup>13</sup>I mean “democratic” in the sense of being for all the people equally (“populist” in this sense), not in the sense of democracy as a political ideology, which Wesley mistrusted.

<sup>14</sup>As Volf shows clearly in *After Our Likeness*, 107-116.

Christian worldview. It is hardly ever seriously challenged theologically today, even among Protestants.<sup>15</sup>

This clergy/laity elitism has always crippled Wesleyan theology and practice. Though Methodist movements have occasionally broken through this barrier for rather brief periods of time, this heresy has been a constant drag on Wesleyan theology, pulling understanding and practice down well below what Wesley—to say nothing of Jesus—intended.<sup>16</sup> In fact, John Wesley himself (and certainly Charles) never fully freed himself from this clergy/laity elitism. One evidence of this is Wesley's frequent resorting to the language of "extraordinary" ministers and "extraordinary" gifts of the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Wesley failed to see that what he thought was "extraordinary" should rather be seen as normative, given a sound biblical theology of charismatic gifts and the priesthood of believers.<sup>18</sup> Even so, I would argue that Wesley's doctrine of grace does point the way to solving this malady of spiritual elitism.

**The Solution: Pentecostal Grace.** Wesley's own theology contains the dynamite to blast these elitist shackles to bits. Wesley carried through the logic of God's love and of Christ's atonement to his understanding of Christian experience and ongoing discipleship. God's grace is "free for all and free in all."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Important among a number of significant exceptions are Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990) and R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999). Stevens traces the emergence, historically and theologically, of "clergy" and "laity" in the church.

<sup>16</sup>Typically, genuine Christian revival and renewal movements to some degree break through the clergy/laity (and related male dominance) barrier in their first generation, but then revert to more hierarchical/patriarchal patterns over time. This is true not only of early Methodism but of virtually all movements in the Wesleyan tradition, including Pentecostalism. I give some preliminary attention to this dynamic in *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997). Here the emerging discipline of social movement theory may be of help theologically to the church.

<sup>17</sup>This comes through even in Wesley's notes on the O.T. See, for example, his comment on Ex. 35:30, *ENOT*.

<sup>18</sup>See the discussion in Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 93f, 178f.

<sup>19</sup>Wesley, Sermon 110, "Free Grace."

In contrast to the Eastern tradition where perfectionist teaching was for those who would flee the world, Wesley emphasized Christian life *in the world*, an ongoing, everyday discipleship in which the Jesus-follower was to do “all the good you can.” Wesley held that *all* Christians were to grow in sanctification or Christian perfection and that a person could experience entire sanctification as a deeper (or higher) relationship with God after the new birth. He did not teach an absolute perfection or “sinless perfection” in this life, of course, since perfection for him was always a continuing process, not a state—sort of a progressively moving target, with its essence being love. For Wesley, perfection did not imply perfect knowledge or flawless behavior. Beneath his emphasis on a crisis experience of entire sanctification (as, indeed, beneath his emphasis on the new birth) was his conviction that all of life should be an ascent toward God, continuously enabled and empowered by God’s grace, but always involving the cooperation of the will.

In other words, the Wesleyan answer to spiritual elitism is *Pentecostal grace*—the grace of God’s Spirit poured out on “all flesh” or “all people” (Acts 2:17, Joel 2:28) at Pentecost and subsequently. Wesley took seriously the new dynamic that entered into history on the Day of Pentecost. God’s Spirit has been poured out on all humanity, so that the life Jesus taught and modeled can be the common experience of the whole church. Now, as Wesley put it, with the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit “the constant fruits of faith, even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” can become the common experience of *everyone*—“persons of every age, sex, and rank.”<sup>20</sup> Pentecostal grace, the grace of God poured out by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and, as Wesley says, “Not on the day of Pentecost only,” but all down through history, is now our common inheritance.<sup>21</sup> Now, by the Spirit, God pours out the grace that restores the image of God, gives the mind of Christ, enables Christians to “walk as [Jesus] walked” (1 Jn. 2:6). This is Trinitarian, Wesley notes: “See the Three-one God clearly proved.”<sup>22</sup> Pentecostal grace is the grace of God the Father who sends his Spirit to enable us to be like Jesus. It creates a Trinitarian community, the Body of Christ, endowed with an unpredictable range of spiritual gifts “as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor. 12:11

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<sup>20</sup>John Wesley, *ENNT*, Acts 2:17, 2:38.

<sup>21</sup>Wesley, *ENNT*, Acts 2:17.

<sup>22</sup>Wesley, *ENNT*, Acts 2:38.



NRSV). This is the end of spiritual elitism, for the Spirit gives his gifts to all. The gifts of the Spirit were not just for the few or just for the early church. When the Spirit is poured out, the church will experience “the plentiful effusions of the gifts, and graces, of the Holy Spirit,” Wesley wrote.<sup>23</sup>

This understanding of Pentecostal grace is a key *seed idea* for Wesley—more radical than is usually comprehended. Wesley argues that the grace of God is fully available to all people, in all places, through all history. This is the gospel dispensation. This is gracious good news. Theologically, it strikes a fourfold blow at the root of all spiritual elitism, for Pentecostal grace means that: (1) through Jesus the grace of salvation is available to all people; (2) every believer, without exception, may be filled with the Spirit; (3) every believer, without exception, receives graces and gifts for ministry; and (4) this is good news especially for the poor, since in God’s economy the “order” is always “from the least to the greatest . . . not first to the greatest, and then to the least.”<sup>24</sup>

## 2. THE WESLEYAN PENTALATERAL: The Answer to Dualism

**The Problem:** A nagging problem in Christian theology is an unbiblical spirit/matter dichotomy. This dualism is part of our philosophical inheritance from Platonism and Neo-Platonism.<sup>25</sup>

In the West, the spirit/matter dualism deriving from Greek philosophy was reinforced by Enlightenment thought, which bequeathed us a faith/reason or faith/science dichotomy. The problem of an unbiblical

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<sup>23</sup>Wesley, *ENOT*, Isa. 11:10. The doctrine of spiritual gifts remains, however, a seed idea in Wesley, not fully developed. See the discussion in Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 94-98.

<sup>24</sup>Wesley, *ENNT*, Heb. 8:11. Similarly, in “The General Spread of the Gospel”: “And in every nation under heaven we may reasonably believe God will observe the same order which he hath from the beginning of Christianity. ‘They shall all know *me*,’ said the Lord, not from the greatest to the least (this is that wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God) but ‘from the least to the greatest,’ that the praise may not be of men, but of God” (Serm. 63, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” 19). Some of Wesley’s enemies quickly saw that this teaching had disturbing political and socioeconomic, not just spiritual implications! See the discussion in Snyder, *Radical Wesley*, 31-38, 48f, 86f.

<sup>25</sup>I am speaking here of our assessment and understanding of the material creation, not of the philosophical question of the relationship between God and matter. The biblical worldview is neither dualism nor monism.

spirit/matter dualism is as much a problem in Eastern as it is in Western theology, however.

Christian theology has never really succeeded in grounding doctrine in the kind of biblical holism that puts a proper valuation on the material world while maintaining the primacy of spiritual reality. When philosophy or Christian theology has attempted to strike a biblical balance, it generally has gone to the opposite extreme, ending up in materialism or monism.

John Wesley's theology was much more holistic, comprehensive, and conjunctive than that of the dominant theologies of his day. In fact, Wesley's own theology was much more dynamically holistic than are Wesleyan, Pentecostal, or Evangelical theologies today. Viewed in the long tradition of Christian doctrine, Wesley's theology to a significant degree overcame in fact, and certainly overcomes in tendency, the dualism of both the Eastern and Western traditions.

An unbiblical spirit/matter dichotomy is deeply embedded in contemporary Evangelical and Pentecostal theology, piety, and hymnody. Our hymns and songs speak of "raptured souls," of being "weaned from earth," of inhabiting a bodiless, totally immaterial, spiritual eternity. Life on earth is but a "dark maze" and a "transient dream"; the goal is to be borne "safe above, a ransomed soul."<sup>26</sup> Thus we sing and thus we apparently believe. Yet at some level we must know this is unsound biblically. Only grudgingly do we confess the resurrection of the body. Only theoretically do we believe that Jesus was fully human. In our piety we often see Jesus rather as the escape route from our materiality into pure non-material spirituality, which of course is where everyone *really should* dwell, not only in eternity but right now, as Christians on earth.

We simply do not know how to deal with, or properly value, the material world without giving it either too little or too much attention. This is a form of Babylonian captivity that Wesleyan theology has not escaped. Yet there is a way out.

**The Solution: The Wesleyan Pentalateral.** The solution to the dualism of both Eastern and Western theology is a biblical holism, begin-

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<sup>26</sup>Though many other examples might be cited, I refer here to the hymns "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross" by Fanny Crosby, "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart" by George Croly, and "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" by Ray Palmer. Fortunately we also have many hymns and songs that give a contrasting view, such as "This Is My Father's World" and "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life."

ning with a biblical doctrine of creation. Here Wesley's insights and theological methodology do help us.

Recovering a *Wesleyan* biblical holism will mean, however, transcending the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience as sources of authority in theology. Helpful as the Quadrilateral has been, it contains a serious flaw that tends to perpetuate an unbiblical spirit/matter dualism. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral, in other words (which of course is a post-Wesleyan construct) is part of the problem. It subtly reinforces a spirit/matter dualism by neglecting the very material, space-time reality of the created universe. We need to be more authentically Wesleyan than the Quadrilateral suggests. And here authentic Wesleyan theology, taken on its own terms, points the way.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral does preserve some essential insights. It reminds us that Wesley, as heir of the Protestant Reformation but also of an Anglican tradition that wanted to preserve the best of Roman Catholicism, generally refused rigid either/or categories.<sup>27</sup> The Reformation watchword of *sola scriptura* is right in affirming Scripture as the essential, authoritative revealed basis of salvation. But, of course, in practice we do more than read Scripture in our search for truth. We read it through our rational, experiential, and cultural lenses. We are in fact shaped by tradition and experience, and we use reason to sort out truth and mediate competing claims.

The so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral is thus an important insight. We use all four elements, and they are all in varying ways valid sources of truth.<sup>28</sup> Wesley, however, made use of another key source—the *created order*. He spoke of “the wisdom of God in creation.” In other words, we really have in Wesley (if we wish to use this kind of model) a *pentalateral*, not a quadrilateral. We discern truth through Scripture (primary source), but also through these other great gifts of God: reason, creation, experience, and tradition.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>With some exceptions. As Outler notes regarding Wesley's sermon “Free Grace,” denouncing predestination, “Calvin and Wesley are here poles apart and, for once, Wesley scorns any ‘third alternative.’” *WJW* (Abingdon), 3:556.

<sup>28</sup>See Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*.

<sup>29</sup>It will not do to “fix” the quadrilateral by subsuming creation under one of the other elements—reason or experience, for instance. While creation may in some sense be implicit in all four elements, it must be made explicit in order to avoid misunderstanding Wesley's theology, his theological methodology, and his spirituality.

Wesley was explicit about the key role of the created universe. He wrote in “God’s Approbation of His Works,” “How small a part of this great work of God [in creation] is man able to understand! But it is our duty to contemplate what he has wrought, and to understand as much of it as we are able.”<sup>30</sup> For Wesley, such “contemplation” is a theological, not just a devotional, exercise. Similarly, in preaching from the Sermon on the Mount Wesley affirmed:

God is in all things, and . . . we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature; . . . we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical atheism; but with a true magnificence of thought survey heaven and earth and all that is therein as contained by God in the hollow of his hand, who by his intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is in a true sense the soul of the universe.<sup>31</sup>

Wesley’s reliance on the created order as a source of insight and authority runs through all his thought. A particularly pointed statement comes early in his *Compendium of Natural Philosophy, Being a Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*:

In short, the world around us is the mighty volume wherein God hath declared himself. Human languages and characters are different in different nations. And those of one nation are not understood by the rest. But the book of nature is written in a universal character, which every man may read in his own language. It consists not of words, but things, which picture out the Divine perfections. The firmament every where expanded, with all its starry host, declares the immensity and magnificence, the power and wisdom of its Creator. Thunder, lightning, storms, earthquakes and volcanoes, shew the terror of his wrath. Seasonable rains, sunshine and harvest, denote his bounty and goodness, and demonstrate how he opens his hand, and fills all living things with plenteousness. The constantly succeeding generations of plants and animals, imply the eternity of their first cause. Life subsisting in millions of different forms, shows the vast diffusion of this animating

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<sup>30</sup>Wesley, Sermon 56, “God’s Approbation of His Works,” 2.

<sup>31</sup>Wesley, Sermon 23, “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse III,” I.11.

power, and death the infinite disproportion between him and every living thing.

Even the actions of animals are an eloquent and a pathetic language. Those that want the help of man have a thousand engaging ways, which, like the voice of God speaking to his heart, command him to preserve and cherish them. In the meantime, the motions or looks of those which might do him harm, strike him with terror, and warn him, either to fly from or arm himself against them. Thus it is, that every part of nature directs us to nature's God.<sup>32</sup>

Wesley's primary accent here is that the created order shows us God's wisdom, glory, and beauty, leading us to praise him and live responsibly before him in the world.<sup>33</sup> But this implies, as well, *revelation*—creation is the God-given “book of nature.” It is in the light of this book of nature that we interpret the Scriptures, and vice versa.

If we discern Wesley's theological methodology inductively from his own writings and use of sources, we are in fact drawn to something like a Wesleyan Pentalateral, with creation as a key component, rather than just a quadrilateral of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. This has been cogently argued by some Latin American Methodist theologians and is well articulated by Luís Wesley de Souza in his essay “‘The Wisdom

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<sup>32</sup>John Wesley, *A Compendium of Natural Philosophy, Being a Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*, “A New Edition,” ed. Robert Mudie, 3 vols. (London, UK: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1836), 2:370f. Cf. Burtner and Chiles, *John Wesley's Theology*, 36. Wesley says in his Preface, “I wished to see this short, full, plain account of the visible creation, directed to its right end; not barely to entertain an idle barren curiosity, but to display the invisible things of God; his power, wisdom and goodness.” Wesley hoped this work, “in great measure, translated from the Latin work of John Francis Buddæus,” might “be the means, on the one hand, of humbling the pride of man, by showing that he is surrounded on every side with things which he can no more account for than for immensity or eternity; and it may serve on the other to display the amazing power, wisdom, and goodness of the great Creator; to warm our hearts, and to fill our mouths with wonder, love, and praise!” I:iii-vi.

<sup>33</sup>Barry Bryant notes the “pronounced aesthetic theme” in Wesley's doctrine of creation. See Barry Bryant, “John Wesley on the Origins of Evil,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30:1 (Spring 1995), 133, and the discussion in Jerry L. Walls, “‘As the Waters Cover the Sea’: John Wesley on the Problem of Evil,” *Faith and Philosophy* 13:4 (Oct. 1996), 537.

of God in Creation': Mission and the Wesleyan Pentalateral."<sup>34</sup> De Souza recognizes, however, the limitations of such quadrilateral/pentalateral language. Although he uses the term "Pentalateral," the model he proposes actually puts Scripture at the center with reason, creation, experience, and tradition arrayed around it.<sup>35</sup> This moves in the direction of a more adequate conception—one which keeps Scripture central, as it was for Wesley, and sees creation, tradition, reason, and experience as key sources that dynamically orbit around this center (to pick up on some helpful insights from Melvin Dieter).<sup>36</sup>

It is important to note here that Wesley's key emphasis on the *image of God* was part of his understanding of creation. Man and woman are created in God's image. For Wesley, this is more than an affirmation about human worth or dignity (as it is often taken today). It has key redemptive implications. Since human beings bear God's image, even though marred by sin, they can be redeemed, healed, restored. Created in the divine image, men and women are "capable of God."<sup>37</sup> That is, they have an inherent capacity for deep communion and companionship with God if the effects of sin can be overcome. This reality and dynamic is grounded in the biblical doctrine of creation.

According to Wesley, the whole created order in a more remote sense bears God's stamp and image.<sup>38</sup> This was more particularly true of

<sup>34</sup>Luís Wesley de Souza, "'The Wisdom of God in Creation': Mission and the Wesleyan Pentalateral," in Howard A. Snyder, ed., *Global Good News: Mission in a New Context* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 138-152.

<sup>35</sup>See De Souza's graphic, p. 143 of *Global Good News*.

<sup>36</sup>See the summary of Dieter's model in Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 16-20, 215f. Maddox says, "Wesley's so-called 'quadrilateral' of theological authorities could more adequately be described as a unilateral *rule* of Scripture within a trilateral *hermeneutic* of reason, tradition, and experience" (*Responsible Grace*, 46). I would say, rather: A unilateral or central rule of Scripture within a quadrilateral of creation, reason, tradition, and experience.

<sup>37</sup>A phrase Wesley used repeatedly, especially in his sermon "The General Deliverance."

<sup>38</sup>As Theodore Runyon notes, "The renewal of the creation and the creatures through the renewal in humanity of the *image of God* is what Wesley identifies as the very heart of Christianity." Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 8 (emphasis in the original).

animate nature, where the wisdom of God was especially displayed.<sup>39</sup> Here Wesley's worldview is more Hebraic and biblical than Greek or Platonic; more ecological, "both/and," than is most Reformed theology. In his mature theology especially, Wesley did not make a sharp break between the physical and the spiritual realms. It was no theological embarrassment to him to see the interpenetration of the material and the spiritual worlds, and to affirm the working of God's Spirit in both, interactively.<sup>40</sup> This provides (in part) the theological basis for recognizing that salvation has to do not only with human experience but also with the restoration of the whole created order (another key theme in Wesley).

I would not claim that Wesley himself (and certainly not his heirs) fully overcame the spirit/matter dualism of classical Christian theology. He did not. But he points us in the right direction with his oft-repeated stress on "all *inward* and *outward* holiness"; in his key theme of "justice, mercy, and truth"; and in his sensitivity to the created order, concern for physical healing and well-being, compassion for animals, even in his interest in gardens and gardening. Especially does Wesley point us in the right direction in his vision for the restoration of the created order.<sup>41</sup>

Here the Wesleyan "breakout" (in Webb's sense) is Wesley's remarkable ecological sensitivity. As Theodore Runyon notes, Wesley's view of the original harmony of the created order (to be restored in the new creation) is essentially "what today would be called *ecological balance*."<sup>42</sup> Some of Wesley's ideas and speculations about the restoration of creation, as for instance in his sermon "The General Deliverance," may sound quaint and romantic. They should not for that reason be dismissed. We should note the theological move Wesley is making; the way he is extend-

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<sup>39</sup> Wesley believed on philosophical and theological grounds that more could be learned about God from the animal creation than from "the music of the spheres"—more from biology than from astronomy. Though behind this lies his use of the "great chain of being" idea, more fundamentally this view is based on the biblical account of creation and of the importance of the image of God. See the helpful discussion in J. W. Haas, Jr., "John Wesley's Vision of Science in the Service of Christ," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 47 (1995), 234-43.

<sup>40</sup> Wesley's interest in healing, in electricity, and in so-called paranormal phenomena should be seen in this context.

<sup>41</sup> Based on the KJV of Acts 3:21, Wesley envisioned, hoped for, and spoke of "the restitution [i.e., restoration] of all things." See, e.g., Sermon 4, "Scriptural Christianity," 3; Sermon 39, "Catholic Spirit," I.3.

<sup>42</sup> Runyon, *The New Creation*, 10 (emphasis in the original).

ing salvation to the whole created order as he reflects on Romans 8:19-22. Consider Wesley's logic in "The General Deliverance." His argument runs like this:

- I. Before the Fall, the brute creation was perfectly happy, more nearly resembling human beings. Humans were the great channel of communication and blessing between the Creator and the whole brute creation.
- II. As a result of the Fall, creation is subject to vanity—to sorrow, pain, evil, and death. This was by the wise permission of God who determines to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil. Now the creatures are deformed and alienated from humans.
- III. The brute creation will be redeemed and restored in God's final redemption. All creatures will share, according to their capacity, in the glorious liberty of the children of God, attaining a beauty and perfection far higher than they ever enjoyed—thus making amends for what they have suffered. The new earth will be "one perennial spring."

Three implications follow:

- A. This illustrates God's mercy to all his works.
- B. It provides an answer to the problem of creature suffering.
- C. It encourages us to show mercy to all God's creatures.

Wesley wrote, ". . . something better remains after death for these poor creatures [which] likewise, shall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and shall then receive an ample amends for all their present sufferings." In view of God's care and ultimate intent for his creation, we ourselves should "imitate him whose mercy is over all his works." Reflecting on God's merciful intent of ultimate restoration should "soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord careth for them." Wesley argues, "It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures, to reflect that, as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Wesley, Sermon 60, "The General Deliverance," III.9, 10. As Jerry Walls notes, "Wesley's suggestions about animal suffering [and ultimate redemption] are fascinating and worthy of further exploration, particularly in light of ecological concerns and the renewed appreciation in our time for the natural order. . . . Wesley takes pains to reject the notion that the animal kingdom is of equal value



I consider such statements to be “breakouts” in Wesley’s theology (even if the ideas were not totally original with him). They indicate an ecological sensitivity that clearly is relevant to a theology of salvation, of discipleship, and of mission today. They also witness to Wesley’s lifelong interest in science and health, which was based in large measure in his understanding of God as creator and sustainer as well as redeemer and restorer.<sup>44</sup> This also has implications for discipleship and mission.

Calling such passages in Wesley “breakouts” suggests that in some ways they move beyond what Wesley said on other subjects or in other contexts. This is, in fact, the case. In terms of a fully biblical holism and in terms of our contemporary challenges, we can certainly identify areas where Wesley’s theology does not square with these breakouts. Yet these breakouts themselves give us a fuller understanding of Wesley’s theological project.

One significant area where I think Wesley did *not* overcome a non-biblical dualism is his theology of the kingdom of God. Though there are some “seed ideas” and occasional “breakouts” here as well, Wesley’s central focus on Christian perfection caused him to understand God’s kingdom too narrowly. Often Wesley virtually equates the kingdom of God with the experience of Christian perfection. Here, I believe, E. Stanley Jones’ stress on the kingdom of God as “realism” provides from within the Wesleyan tradition a suggestive corrective.<sup>45</sup>

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to [human beings, however]. While he shows remarkable sensitivity to animal suffering and supports the significance of animals far more than most traditional theologians, he does not go to the extreme of denying or minimizing the special status of human beings.” Walls, 539.

<sup>44</sup>J. W. Haas notes that Wesley “encouraged his preachers to become conversant with science, incorporated scientific topics in his sermons and other writings, and used electrotherapy apparatus in his medical clinics. Science correctly understood was to serve the cause of Christ rather than be feared.” In the context of the “new science” of his day, Wesley characteristically steered a middle course philosophically between God’s direct agency and the proper role of human scientific investigation, discovery, and explanation. Haas, “John Wesley’s Vision of Science in the Service of Christ,” 234. See also John C. English, “John Wesley’s Scientific Education,” *Methodist History* 30:1 (Oct. 1991), 42-51.

<sup>45</sup>See the discussion in Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*; E. Stanley Jones, *Christ’s Alternative to Communism* (1933) and *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* (1940). Jones came to see that the holiness movement in which he was raised had too narrow and too individualistic and interior an understanding of the kingdom of God. Yet his more comprehensive view of the kingdom did not go to the other extreme, as so often happens.

The Bible itself, properly interpreted with openness to the Holy Spirit, provides the cure to the distorting dichotomy between spirit and matter. I believe the Wesleyan Pentateuch offers profound insights, in terms of theological method, to help us rightly discern the Word of truth in our day.

### 3. HEALING GRACE: The Answer to Pessimism

**The Problem:** A third malady that has infected Western Christian thought is *theological pessimism*. We still walk and think in the shadow of Augustinian theology. This easily leads to an unbiblical pessimism in soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology, limiting our perspective and our hope concerning what God can and wants to do in salvation, in the church, and in history. We have inherited a historical and eschatological pessimism that acts as a dead weight on our understanding and expectation of what God can and desires to do within the present dispensation.

**The Solution: Wesley's Optimism of Grace.** Wesley overcame the pessimistic cast of Augustine's theology, with its over-emphasis on original sin, by mining the resources of Eastern theology. For this reason Wesleyan theology has always had a genetic predisposition toward optimism that contrasts with the Augustinian-Calvinist tradition (that still remains dominant within American Evangelicalism). Yet Wesley was not "Pelagian" or "semi-Pelagian," as some have thought, for he was well aware of the depths of sin and the absolute need for God-given grace in order for people to respond to the offer of salvation.<sup>46</sup>

Wesley's theology breathes an optimism of grace.<sup>47</sup> The key accent here is not optimism, however, but *grace*. In Wesley we confront a hopefulness that is all of grace—not an optimism of human effort or an optimism based on ideas of social progress or social perfectibility. Still less when we speak of "optimism of grace" are we talking about temperament of psychology.

While Wesley's optimism of grace traces back to Eastern roots, and more importantly, to the Bible, at this point he was indirectly indebted

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<sup>46</sup>I put these terms in quotation marks because they are themselves problematic. Those who practically equate Augustine's views with Scripture may see the correcting of his views in a more biblical direction as "semi-Pelagian."

<sup>47</sup>See the discussion in Michael Hurley, S.J., "Salvation Today and Wesley Today," in Rowe, ed., *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*, 94-112.

also to Continental Pietism and particularly to Philip Jakob Spener, for whom “hope for better times” was a key theological category.<sup>48</sup> Much of Continental Pietist renewal and reform, as also that of the Moravian resurgence under Zinzendorf after 1727, was fed theologically by this optimism of grace, this “hope for better times.”

Particularly important here is Wesley’s conception of grace as preceding (“preventing”), converting, and sanctifying or transforming.<sup>49</sup> While this formulation is not original with Wesley, he took it in new directions, so that it qualifies as a “seed idea” in Wesleyan theology. To be authentically Wesleyan, more importantly, to be faithfully biblical, we must maintain Wesley’s balance here. There is but one grace, the grace of God—that is, the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. Grace is a quality of God the Trinity.

Preceding, converting, and sanctifying grace are not three different “kinds” of grace. Grace is one; it is the gracious, loving, self-giving activity and influence of God. The threefold distinction refers not so much to the nature of grace itself but to the way people and cultures *experience* that grace. By God’s gracious initiative men, women, and children are drawn to God (or they resist that grace). As they respond in faith, preceding grace becomes justifying grace, leading directly into sanctifying grace if people continue to open their lives to the work of God’s Spirit. Or, put differently, the loving grace of God precedes us, draws us to Christ, converts us, and progressively sanctifies us, leading finally to “glorification” in the new creation.<sup>50</sup> In some sense, this trajectory is mirrored also in God’s redemptive work in society and the whole created order. Thus, Wesley’s doctrine of grace, and particularly of the prevenience of grace, is indeed a key “seed idea” that can bear fresh fruit in our day.

In Wesley’s view, all creation is infused or suffused with God’s grace as an unconditional benefit of Christ’s atonement. There is nowhere one can go where God’s grace is not found, though humans (and people

<sup>48</sup>See Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 94.

<sup>49</sup>“By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.” Wesley, Sermon 16, “The Means of Grace,” II.1.

<sup>50</sup>Often in Wesley one can use the terms “grace” and “love” interchangeably, with no essential difference of meaning. This says much, of course, about his fundamental conception of God.

corporately, as cultures and societies) can, and do, close their hearts and minds to God's grace.<sup>51</sup>

The first and most basic meaning of prevenient or preceding grace is that in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, God has gone ahead of us (ahead of every person), preceding us, counteracting the effects of sin to the extent that people *can* respond to grace. God's preceding grace is not in itself saving grace; its function is to draw us to salvation in Christ.<sup>52</sup>

One key implication of preceding grace is that God's Spirit is the missionary.<sup>53</sup> God is already active in all persons, cultures, societies, and to some degree in many (not all) religions.<sup>54</sup> God works for good, limiting the effects of evil and seeking to bring people to himself. While some people, responding to preceding grace, may find their way to God, the role of the church and Christian mission is essential so that more people may know and respond to Christ and be saved from their sins. Thus the planting of vital, outreaching churches in all societies and among all people groups is always essential to Christian mission. The work of Christian mission is so to cooperate with God's preceding grace that people may experience God's convicting, reconciling, and sanctifying, restoring grace.

<sup>51</sup>"For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed, preventing grace." Wesley, Sermon 75, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," III.4.

<sup>52</sup> There is a sense in which preceding grace may become salvific, Wesley taught, in the case of individuals who have never had opportunity to hear of Jesus but who respond in obedience to the (preceding) grace they have received. Thus Cornelius before Peter's preaching, though "in the Christian sense. . . then an unbeliever," was not outside God's favor. "[W]hat is not exactly according to the divine rule must stand in need of divine favour and indulgence." Wesley, *ENNT*, Acts 10:4. Anyone thus saved, however, is saved by Christ's atonement, even though they are unaware of it. In these cases, then, preceding grace becomes (in effect) saving grace. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 32-34.

<sup>53</sup> This is central to the *missio dei* in a Wesleyan sense.

<sup>54</sup> Non-Christian religions are not in themselves *means* of grace, but God's grace to some degree works in them—if in no other way, at least to restrain evil. Presumably most religions are a mixture of good and evil (as Christianity itself can be when it becomes religion). A pagan religion, like an individual person or a culture, may become totally corrupt, but even there God's grace is at work, to some degree restraining evil, or finally bringing judgment.

An emphasis on preceding or prevenient grace can be pressed too far, of course. The necessary distinction between *preceding* and *justifying* grace may be lost. The danger would be to miss Wesley's balance; to so emphasize that we are saved by grace, not by works, that the necessity of knowing and responding to God's grace in Jesus Christ in faith and obedience is eclipsed. There is an unfortunate tendency today in some Methodist circles to collapse all of grace into the category of prevenient grace, losing the key Wesleyan dynamic that understands God, by his Spirit, to be enabling people at every stage to respond *responsibly* to God's initiative. Grace for Wesley in this sense is sacramental. That is, it signals and extends God's powerful love to us and then, *as we respond responsibly*, it (or better, the Spirit) works *within* us *synergistically*, "faith working by love," so God's grace effects what God intends.<sup>55</sup> The whole point of prevenient grace is that it *precedes* in order that there might be response—responses of repentance, faith, love, and good works.

This is where Wesley's fundamental emphasis on salvation as healing—another key seed idea in Wesley—is especially relevant. Wesley's conception of salvation as healing from the disease of sin is profound, and he carries it to surprising lengths. While people are guilty because of their *acts* of sin, the deeper problem is a *moral disease* that alienates people from God, from themselves and each other, and from the physical environment.

Reformed theology has tended to use primarily (or exclusively) juridical and forensic models of salvation, with strong emphasis on the Book of Romans. Jesus' atonement cancels the penalty for sin so that we may be forgiven, justified. Wesley affirmed this, of course, for it is biblical. But for Wesley the deeper issue was the moral disease of sin that needed healing by God's grace. Justification is instrumental to a broader healing, reconciliation, and restoration. Wesley wrote in his sermon "The Witness of Our Spirit":

As soon as ever the grace of God (in the former sense, his pardoning love) is manifested to our soul, the grace of God (in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit) takes place therein. And now we can perform through God, what to [ourselves]

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<sup>55</sup>Randy Maddox's *Responsible Grace* is particularly important and insightful here. This perspective should be kept in mind as well when considering Wesley's understanding of the sacraments.

was impossible . . . a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul after His likeness.<sup>56</sup>

Today “therapeutic” models of salvation are anathema among many Evangelicals because they are thought to undercut the biblical emphasis on the guilt of sin and justification by grace alone. To use healing language for salvation is seen as caving in to humanistic psychology, an over-emphasis on “feeling,” and moral relativism. But we are not faced with an either/or choice here. Pardon for sin through the atoning death of Jesus Christ is essential. But the point of Christ’s atonement is that human beings, and by extension their societies, cultures, and environments, may be healed from the disease and alienation of sin. This is something that Wesley increasingly signaled in his later writings.

This healing theme has many implications for the church and its mission. The “divine therapy” model underscores the personal and relational nature of salvation. It has the potential for “healing” the divisions between our understandings of spiritual, physical, social-relational, environmental, and cosmic health. God’s salvation intends and entails healing in all dimensions. Salvation-as-healing makes it clear that God is intimately concerned with every aspect of our lives; yet, biblically understood, it also makes clear that the healing we most fundamentally need is spiritual: Our relationship to God.<sup>57</sup> Biblically grounded (and as Wesley understood it), the salvation-as-healing motif is no concession to pop psychology; it is rather an affirmation of who God is, what it means to be created in God’s image, and what it takes for that image to be restored in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The healing paradigm is often especially relevant in mission contexts. As Philip Jenkins notes in *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, many African and other independent churches “stress Jesus’ role as prophet and healer, as Great Physician. Although this approach is not so familiar in the modern West, this is one of many areas in which the independents are very much in tune with the Mediterranean Christianity of the earliest centuries.”<sup>58</sup> In this sense authentic Wesleyan

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<sup>56</sup>Wesley, Sermon 12, “The Witness of Our Spirit,” 15.

<sup>57</sup>See for example Luke 5:20-26, where Jesus both heals and forgives the paralytic.

<sup>58</sup>Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 116. Jenkins documents the prominence of the healing emphasis in much of emerging global Christianity.

theology is inherently more missional in a global context than is a soteriology based exclusively on juridical and forensic models.

#### 4. SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY: The Answer to Individualism

**The Problem:** The individualism of contemporary Western culture, especially in the United States, makes it very difficult for us to understand community and social solidarity. This is part of our inheritance from Enlightenment rationalism. Here, as in other areas, one can trace a long line of development in theology and culture—including the way the doctrine of the Trinity became deformed in Western theology, the misleading subject/object distinction of Cartesian philosophy, and over-individualized notions of liberty that are so deeply embedded in American consciousness.<sup>59</sup>

This heritage of individualism affects the church, and theology, at several levels. It is difficult for us to understand the social nature of Christian experience and the church as a social (and therefore necessarily political) organism; it is difficult to understand justice other than in terms of individual righteousness and personal morality; it is difficult to understand social transformation other than in terms of the cumulative effect of individual good deeds.

**The Solution: Social Christianity.** Wesleyan theology provides the resources for overcoming the individualism of Enlightenment rationalism—both as an issue of teaching and as a matter of practice. The solution is Wesley's understanding of social Christianity in relation to the perfecting, restoring work of the Holy Spirit.

In his own spiritual quest, Wesley became sharply aware of this issue of individualism. For him it was not so much a philosophical as a personal matter. His quest, initially, was very individualistic, as his journal shows. It came as a flash of insight when a "serious man" whom Wesley sought out in 1729 told him, "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Wesley followed this advice for the next sixty years, always avoiding the pitfall of "solitary religion."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1997) is especially helpful here.

<sup>60</sup>See Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, 148.

This dynamic is the reason Wesley makes such a point of “social Christianity.” When Wesley spoke of “social holiness” he was pointing to New Testament *koinonia*. Christian fellowship meant, not merely corporate worship, but watching over one another in love; advising, exhorting, admonishing and praying with the brothers and sisters. “This, and this alone, is Christian fellowship,” he said. And this is what Methodism promoted: “We introduce Christian fellowship where it was utterly destroyed. And the fruits of it have been peace, joy, love, and zeal for every good word and work,” Wesley wrote in his “Plain Account of the People Called Methodists.”<sup>61</sup>

Although the connection has been largely lost in contemporary Wesleyan theology and practice, Wesley himself closely linked the theme of social Christianity with Christian perfection. That is, social Christianity, or social holiness, is the work of the Holy Spirit, creating a community of responsive and responsible love that gives corporate, visible expression to God’s love for us in Christ. Holiness is social, and social Christianity is possible only by the gracious restoring and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

We need to be clear that by “social holiness” Wesley meant the experience and demonstration of the character of Jesus Christ *in Christian community*, the church. For Wesley, “social holiness” does not mean social justice or the social witness of the church. That witness grows out of the “social holiness” that is the character of the church itself. The church’s role in society might better be called “kingdom witness” or something similar. Wesley was making a very specific and essential (and often neglected) point in using the term “social holiness”: Holiness (the character of Christ) is not solitary or lone or individualistic sanctity but a social (that is, relational) experience based on our relationship with God the Trinity and experienced, refined, and lived out jointly in Christian community.

Wesley was very clear on this, and it is a disservice to Wesleyan theology to use the term “social holiness” as equivalent to “social witness” without at least acknowledging that we mean something different than Wesley did.<sup>62</sup> For understanding Wesley’s view of social ethics and the

<sup>61</sup>See the discussion in Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, 148.

<sup>62</sup>“Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it. . . . it cannot subsist at all, without society, — without living and conversing with other men.” Wesley, Sermon. 24, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV,” I.1.



church's role in society, the key Wesleyan formulation is "justice, mercy, and truth," another theme and perhaps seed idea in Wesley.<sup>63</sup>

According to Wesley, insofar as salvation concerns our relation to God and other people, the goal is Christian perfection—that is, the maturing, perfecting, and restoring of Christian character. It is clear from his writings that by Christian perfection Wesley meant the Spirit-given ability to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and our neighbors as ourselves. The central issue is the work of the Spirit in transforming us (personally and communally, as the church) into the image of Christ; of forming in us the character of Christ, which is equivalent to the fruit of the Spirit. Christian perfection is having and living out "the fullness of Christ" or "the fullness of the Spirit."<sup>64</sup> We are called to holiness, which means (as Wesley often said) having the mind that was in Christ Jesus, being conformed to his image, and walking as he walked. This is where salvation-healing leads, if we walk in the Spirit. This healing makes the church a sign and agent of the larger, broader healing that God is bringing in Christ through the Spirit.

Wesley's stress on *preceding grace* and on the power of the Holy Spirit to *perfect Christian character* suggests an optimism of grace that should infuse the church's life and mission. If God can transform people into the likeness of Jesus Christ, he can build communities that transcend racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural differences. Wesley's conviction that *salvation is healing* suggests potent possibilities for building reconciled and reconciling communities that are a foretaste of the "great multitude" pictured in the Book of Revelation.

This Wesleyan emphasis on Christian perfecting has two fundamental aspects that are key for the church's life and witness: First, we must emphasize (and incarnate) the fact that the *goal* (the *telos*) is always growing up into the fullness of the character of Jesus Christ as the corporate experience of the church and the experience of each member of the body. Second, we must stress (and help Christians experience) the full-

<sup>63</sup>Wesley spoke of "living in the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth" (Serm. 66, "The Signs of the Times," II.9). "Justice, mercy, and truth" is an important, oft-repeated phrase in Wesley. See, e.g., Serm. 1, "Salvation by Faith," I.1; Serm. 61, "The Mystery of Iniquity," 29, 33; Serm. 63, "The General Spread of the Gospel," 22.

<sup>64</sup>Key passages are Eph. 3:19, 4:13, Col. 2:10, among others, and those that speak of being filled with the Spirit, such as Eph. 5:18.

ness of the Spirit—being filled with and walking in the Holy Spirit. Normally, as Wesley taught, this deeper work of the Spirit comes as a distinct experience subsequent to conversion, though (as Wesley acknowledged) it may be experienced more gradually or less perceptibly and thus, no doubt, through multiple fresh fillings (or deeper workings) of the Spirit. With the growing emphasis today on character, moral development, and growth, we must not lose the essential *crisis and process* link that is so central in Wesley. It would be un-Wesleyan as well as unbiblical to lose the crisis/process nexus.

As a practical matter of preaching, discipleship, and growth, we need to help believers understand the deeper life of the Spirit that is available to them in Christ. We should give believers opportunities to enter into that deeper life—to confront the dividedness of their own hearts and enter into the fullness, wholeness, and integration in *Christian community* that God offers to us. This is our inheritance in Jesus Christ and is a foretaste of that communion we will enjoy in the heavenly kingdom. This was Wesley's concern, and it should be ours.

## Conclusion

I have argued that the Babylonian captivity of Wesleyan theology consists in the frequent failure to overcome the *elitism* of Eastern spirituality, the *dualism* of both Eastern and Western theology, the *pessimism* of Augustinian theology, and the *individualism* of Enlightenment rationalism. I have tried to show, then, that Wesleyan theology's captivity can be traced to:

1. Neglect of Wesley's understanding of creation.
2. Neglect or distortion of Wesley's doctrine of grace.
3. An eclipse of Wesley's emphasis on Christian community and social solidarity.
4. In general, a failure to maintain the holism of Wesley's theology.

The themes elaborated here do not, of course, exhaust Wesley's theology and its implications for the church. In a holistic theology of church, mission, and Christian experience, more would need to be said about the Trinity; about the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology), particularly with regard to spiritual gifts and the priesthood of believers; and about the kingdom of God. In fact however, as I have already hinted, these themes remained relatively underdeveloped in Wesley's own theology.

Nevertheless, Wesley's mature theology was remarkably comprehensive. One can still be amazed at the vision Wesley set out toward the end of his life in "sermons" (really essays) such as "God's Approbation of His Works" (1782), "God's Love to Fallen Man" (1782), "The General Deliverance" (1782), "The End of Christ's Coming" (1781), and "The General Spread of the Gospel" (1783). To fully understand Wesley, these sermons must, of course, be interpreted in tandem with his earlier sermons. Despite differences of emphasis, they are all of a piece. The "analogy of faith" must be applied to Wesley's own writings.

Consider, finally, the conclusion to "The General Spread of the Gospel"—a sermon, as Gerald Bates notes, rich in missiological implications.<sup>65</sup> Here Wesley summarizes his fundamental conception of the salvation and restoration God is bringing. After quoting the promise in Isaiah 61:11 that "the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations," Wesley writes:

This I apprehend to be the answer, yea, the only full and satisfactory answer that can be given, to the objection against the wisdom and goodness of God, taken from the present state of the world. It will not always be thus: these things are only permitted for a season by the great Governor of the world, that he may draw immense, eternal good out of this temporary evil.... It is enough that we are assured of this one point, that all these transient evils will issue well, will have a happy conclusion, and that "mercy first and last will reign." All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes, that he is renewing the face of the earth. And we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus; that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises; until he hath put a period to sin and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, "Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever!"<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup>Gerald E. Bates, "John Wesley's Amazingly Modern Missional Vision," *Free Methodist Historical Society Newsletter* 3:3 (Spring 2003), 2-3.

<sup>66</sup>Wesley, Sermon 63, "The General Spread of the Gospel," 26-27. See *WJW* (Abingdon), 2:499.

This biblical, cosmic vision is highly relevant today to an increasingly global church. This one sermon picks up on several of the themes discussed in this essay: optimism of grace, salvation as healing, and spirit-matter integration in the new creation. There are resources in this and similar Wesley writings that, properly understood and constantly grounded in Scripture, can enrich the world church.<sup>67</sup>

One sign of hope today is the *globalization* of Wesleyan theology. This may be part of the solution to the Babylonian captivity. Wesleyan theology is decreasingly the province of the Western church and of Western theologians. Already Wesleyan scholars from Latin America, Africa, Korea, India, the Chinese community, and elsewhere are beginning to make their contributions. This is potentially a highly positive development.

As Christendom crumbles and a new, vigorous, largely non-Western Christianity gains strength and self-consciousness, the end of Wesleyan theology's Babylonian captivity may help release resources that make Wesley's vision of "the general spread of the Gospel" and "new creation" a reality as never before.

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<sup>67</sup>Jerry Walls has argued that the logic of "The General Spread of the Gospel" leads naturally to universalism, even though Wesley rejected universalism. Walls helpfully points out that theodicy was a long-standing concern of Wesley. He did not shy away from the issue of evil but sought to show how all evil is overcome and accounted for in God's work of redemption. Walls may be right that Wesley never fully resolved, on rational grounds, the tension between God's goodness and human freedom, on the one hand, and the reality of evil and judgment on the other. Yet Wesley believed that ultimately there was a rational explanation within the wisdom of God, even if this is not yet fully accessible to present human reason. Walls argues that Wesley "managed to develop a theodicy which was at once biblically motivated, theologically rich, daring in its speculations, and deeply practical in its implications," and that "Wesley's life is a powerful demonstration that those who engage [to defend God's goodness] need not be insensitive to the harsh reality of evil in the world." Walls, 560.

# THE CHURCH IN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE: CRUCIAL CHOICES, ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

by

Jeffrey Gros

The Holiness Churches have been involved in conversations with other Christians about the Church's faith and its unity since 1957, when the U.S. Faith and Order Commission was inaugurated.<sup>1</sup> Methodists have been charter members in ecclesiological discussions from their inception in the early twentieth century, internationally and the U.S. Classical Pentecostal theologians have been discussing the Church with fellow Christians in their dialogues with the Catholic Church since 1969, in the Society of Pentecostal Studies since its inception, in U.S. Faith and Order since 1984, and in the World Council since 1961.<sup>2</sup>

Three World Council documents in particular have benefited by Pentecostal and Holiness contributions: *Confessing the One Faith*, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, and *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* on hermeneutics.<sup>3</sup> With the forthcoming Faith and Order Conference in

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<sup>1</sup>John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity: a Centennial History of the Church of God*, Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1980.

<sup>2</sup>Jeffrey Gros, "A Pilgrimage in the Spirit: Pentecostal Testimony in the Faith and Order Movement," *Pneuma*, forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup>Faith and Order Commission, *Confessing The One Faith*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1991. *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Paper No. 181, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998.

North America on the theme “The Church: Its Faith and Its Unity,” and theological societies and churches being asked to contribute to the redrafting of the *Nature and Purpose of the Church*, might it not be time for the Society of Pentecostal Studies or the Wesleyan Theological Society to take on a project of responding to this text or its successor, a response to be available by 2004? George Vandervelde challenges the Pentecostal, Holiness, and evangelical communities to give *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* “close attention . . . Even if evangelical theologians were to disagree with much of the document, their response to this document could open up new perspectives on the integral relations between mission and church.”<sup>4</sup> The North American Conference is scheduled for 2005, by which time it is hoped that wide ecclesiological ecumenical discussion will have taken place. As the New Testament says:

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. Eph. 5:25-27

In this paper I would like to suggest the importance of sustained reflection on the nature of the Church for the internal renewal of all of our churches as vehicles of Christ’s mission in the world and the Holy Spirit’s embodiment in the community. This is not a systematic or biblical treatment of ecclesiology. Rather it is a programmatic piece designed to give an opportunity to focus ecclesiological ecumenical reflections in the context of Pentecostal and Holiness debates.

Since these two movements, the Holiness revival and Pentecostal renewal, emerged as spiritual reform movements against the background of existing churches, ecclesiological reflection has often come late in theological reflection and church life. However, like the other communities in the evangelical subculture, the challenge of ecclesiology and the nature of visible unity is important. Note:

For years the slogan of the World Evangelical Fellowship [Alliance] was “Spiritual Unity in Action.” Although it almost sounds like a contradiction in terms, it is an effective way to sum up the attitude of many evangelicals to the issue of Chris-

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<sup>4</sup>“The Challenge of Evangelical Ecclesiology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 27:1, January 2003, nt. 42, p. 15.

tian unity. There is a profound unity ultimately created by the Spirit (Eph. 4:3; 2 Cor. 13:14) in which we are to exist as Christians and which we are to express in our relationships, ministries and activities. While this is a sound approach, it is possible to use it as an excuse not to face the more difficult questions of visible unity, and worse, to use it as a shield to hide selfish and unchristian efforts of empire building or independence. In such cases, there is a shocking lack of theological and spiritual integrity.<sup>5</sup>

In order to be in conversation, it is first necessary to survey the ecclesiological perspectives of the various partners in the discussion. Secondly, it will be helpful to look at various emphases. Here I will emphasize directions in Pentecostal thought. Finally, it will be useful to reflect on a theological methodology that serves the process of discussion.

### **Ecclesiological Perspectives**

For convenience it will be helpful to note that there are many ecclesiological perspectives that churches and their theologians bring to the table. All of them, of course, claim to be biblically grounded and therefore have a normative character. They all affirm inculturation, unity in diversity, and affirm a pneumatological, eschatological, and Christological dimension. However, within each strain of theology, there are sectarian tendencies which would diminish the openness, spiritual diversity, and plurality of expression to which the theological formulations are open.

Most Christians see the visible, sacramental unity of the Church, as outlined in I Corinthians, Ephesians, and the Acts of the Apostles, as a core teaching of the faith, embodied in the creed, though they may disagree on what is necessary for the full visible unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Some Protestants have a more spiritual and individualistic view of the Church and its role in mediating salvation, as noted in the above quotation.

**Catholic Ecclesiologies.** First, I would like to group the ecclesiologies of the churches into three types: Catholic, Reformed catholic, and Restorationist. For the Catholic and Orthodox churches and some within Anglican and Lutheran churches, the historic succession of the biblical

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<sup>5</sup>David Parker, "Dynamics and Directions of World Evangelical Theology for the 21st Century," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 26:2, April 2002, p. 108.

community, founded by Christ, has continued unbroken in its faith, its continuity in sacraments and church order, and in its confessional authority from apostolic times. The Bible itself is a product of this apostolic tradition and gives witness to Christ as believed in the variety of visibly united Christian communities that made up the universal Church, embodying the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, following Pentecost. Along with the scripture and creed, the oversight of bishops is understood as carrying forward the apostles' ministry. These are essential elements in this understanding of the Church.

For the Orthodox, the orthodox faith, sacramental order and ministry and conciliar relations among the churches are intact, leading most of them to see, as the Russian Orthodox Synod reiterated in 1999, that the Western churches, with our internal divisions between Protestant and Catholic, can no longer be designated as true churches. The Catholic Church shared a similar understanding of itself as the Church. While such an ecclesiology embodies a strong sense of the Holy Spirit, mediated by the Christian community, it easily falls into institutionalism as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes: "The problem with this approach is that it makes the church and its structures absolute, divine in their origin, while the only task of the Spirit is to 'animate' the already existing ecclesiastical apparatus."<sup>6</sup>

Since 1965, the Catholic Church has developed away from this exclusive understanding of its self-identity. Before that time, it spoke of itself as the "one true Church of Jesus Christ," outside of which there were Christians, but not church. Since the second Vatican Council (1962-65), this view has been nuanced, claiming that the true Church "subsists in" the Catholic Church. That is, objectively all of the means of grace are available in the Catholic Church, though subjectively its members are as sinful and its institutions as limited as any other Christian community. Likewise, it recognizes the Orthodox churches as churches in the proper sense, though not in full communion with the Catholic bishops and the pope. Other churches embody elements of the one true Church, often more effectively than Catholic institutions do.

Anglicans and some Lutherans see themselves as branches of this one true church, as affirmed by Orthodox and Catholics. For some

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<sup>6</sup>Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, p. 74.



Lutherans, with bishops embodied in the local pastor where the “fullness” of orders is situated, the sacraments and conciliar structures for teaching the faith carry this apostolic continuity. Within this view of the Church and its organic, sacramental visibility in time and space, there are at least four sets of theological principles, which are only gradually coming toward consensus in ecumenical theological research.

These ecclesiologies, of course, are always caught in the delicate balance between the free, pneumatological dimension and the Christological dimension, as Walter Kasper notes:

Beside the christological criterium there also was for Paul the ecclesiological criterium. He links the Spirit with the building-up of the congregation and with the service in the church. The Spirit is given for the general good; the different gifts of the Spirit therefore have to serve each other (1 Cor. 12:4-30). The spirit is not a spirit of disorder but a God of peace (1 Cor. 14:33). The acting of the Spirit can neither be confined to the institutions of the church, and be claimed as their monopoly, nor can the Spirit or the charisma be seen to be separate from the sacramental structure and the ministries of the church. They, too, are effects and instruments of the Spirit. The Spirit acts not through opposition to each other but in togetherness and in working for each other. It is the enemy of all party business and all forming of fractions. The highest gift of the Spirit is love without which all understanding is worth nothing. It is not jealous and does not boast, is not arrogant or rude; it bears all things and endures all things. (1 Cor. 13:1-4; 7)<sup>7</sup>

Institutionalism is always the temptation, even in ecclesiologies with a pneumatological focus.<sup>8</sup>

**Reformed Continuity.** The Reformed catholicity of the classical reformers is embodied in the Calvinist ecclesiological tradition, some strains of Anglicanism and Lutheranism, and in some of the later Protestant developments like Methodism and some strains of the Baptist her-

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Kasper, “Spirituality and Ecumenism,” Catholic Theological Union, April, 2002, III, #3.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Kärkkäinen, op. cit., p. 84. Bradford Hinze, “Releasing the Power of the Spirit in a Trinitarian Ecclesiology,” in Bradford Hinze, Lyle Dabney, *Advents of the Spirit*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001, p. 351.

itage. The claim is to preserve the same apostolic continuity of faith, forms of worship, church order and authority, but with more serious reforms in sacramental faith and structure than in the first type. The loss of bishops at the time of the Reformation leads the churches of the first model not only to challenge their continuity in church office and authority, but also their sacramental understanding of the Church itself, and the Eucharist over which their ministers preside.

This ecclesiology is characterized by a strong emphasis on the invisible Church, often rooted in a particular understanding of pneumatology. The classical expression of this ecclesiology is found in the *Westminster Confession*:

The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children, and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, through which men are ordinarily saved and union with which is essential to their best growth and service.<sup>9</sup>

These ecclesiologies easily fall into individualism and a Platonic abstraction.

The ecumenical dialogues have brought about dramatic convergences between some of these churches and churches that claim apostolic continuity in sacramental doctrine and holy orders. These convergences in ecclesiology have been the result of renewed biblical scholarship, an understanding of historical development, and distinctions between the core of the faith, for example, in *episcopate* or in Christ's eucharistic presence, and the diverse theological formulations given to explain them. However, the detail of these theological convergences is not our subject here.

**Restorationist Ecclesiology.** Restorationist ecclesiology is characteristic of some of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, but has found its

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<sup>9</sup>Wallace Alston, *The Church of the Living God*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

most widespread development in the post-enlightenment, nineteenth-century communities, especially in the United States. The Campbelite tradition, of which there are three ecclesial expressions in the Christian Churches, attempted to go back beyond history to “reconstruct” or “restore” the biblical church without the intervening history.<sup>10</sup> The hermeneutical move was to use a rational exegesis to determine what the bare essential was for the Christian Church, and to require no creed or historical accretion to stand between the present community and its biblical progenitor. Other communities, some among the Pentecostal revivals, saw the rebirth of the restored apostolic gifts, from above as with the biblical gifts of healing, tongues or prophecy, or from below, with the experience of the Holy Spirit’s action in the individual and the community. In this understanding of Church, apostolicity is characterized by discontinuity rather than continuity in ministry and sacraments.

In order to deepen the unity among the churches it is first important to recognize these differences of biblical perspective and historical understanding before beginning the task of looking again at the biblical and historical sources to find consensus. Catholics and Orthodox, especially Europeans or those who have grown up relatively isolated from Protestants, have a hard time understanding how those who have a “restorationist” theology can speak of themselves as church at all, since there is no claim to continuity in history with the apostolic community. Catholics, for example, even when they live in a Baptist or Pentecostal environment will begin their ecumenical study with Lutherans, after the Orthodox, because they “start” the new churches outside of community with it.

On the other hand, some Protestants are offended when they find out that Catholics and Orthodox do not consider their communities “churches in the proper sense,” even though this position has been on the books for two millennia. Truth claims on all sides are no inhibition to genuine ecumenical dialogue, fellowship among Christians, or the work toward that theological convergence on which full, visible communion can eventually be built. Indeed, it is among ecclesiologists from different traditions who know one another’s positions, the classical biblical and patristic sources, and who share the hopes for a reconciled future that some of the most exciting ecclesiological interchange occurs and some of the most interesting research and writing is accomplished.

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<sup>10</sup>Richard Tristano, *The Origins of the Restoration Movement: Intellectual History*, Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1988.

## Ecclesiological Options

For Pentecostals, and I suspect Wesleyans as well, there are two documentable strains of ecclesiology that have developed to explain their ecclesiological location. We are fortunate in our generation to have a burgeoning literature contributing to this discussion.<sup>11</sup>

For some scholars, the continuity of the holiness revival and Pentecostal renewal with pietistic and charismatic movements through the ages is essential to the understanding of these churches.<sup>12</sup> Hollenweger and Campos attempt to link the emergence of Pentecostalism with the continuity of the Church catholic through the ages, rooted in John Wesley's Anglicanism and the great catholic Tradition.<sup>13</sup> The other ecclesiological option pursued by Pentecostal scholars like Blumhofer and S. D. Moore and embodied in many of the claims of early movemental leaders, is clearly restorationist.<sup>14</sup> The Latter Rain movement, the emergence of entrepreneurial apostles, and the focus on the immediacy of the experience of the Holy Spirit all make this ecclesiological option significant for understanding certain strands of Pentecostalism and its approach to "overcoming" history.

Whether Pentecostal and Holiness churches come to consider themselves as heirs of the faith of the church through the ages, and as linked to the Church of the apostles through history, or whether they present themselves as newly restored embodied, restored, churches of the apostolic

<sup>11</sup>Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998. Amos Yong, "The Marks of the Church: A Pentecostal Re-Reading," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 1:26, January 2002, 45-67. Miroslav Volf, "The Nature of the Church," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 1:26, January 2002, 68-75. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction To Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Dale Irvin, Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement: Earliest Christianity to 1453*, Vol. I, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001.

<sup>13</sup>Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997. Bernardo Campos, *De La Reform Protestante a La Pentecostalidad de La Iglesia: Debate sobre el Pentecostalismo en América Latina*, Quito: Ediciones Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias, 1997.

<sup>14</sup>Edith Blumhofer, Russell Spittler, Grant Wacker, eds., *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999. Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture*, Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1993.

age, will have a determinative impact on their approach to other Christians. The eschatological dimension of ecclesial understanding, especially in the Pentecostal world, will also have an important contribution both in the evaluation of other Christian communities and in their willingness to find wisdom in their heritage. Of course, the eschatological hermeneutic of the ecumenical movement itself will be an important component of Pentecostal interpretation in dialogue with fellow Christians.<sup>15</sup>

### Ecclesiological Method

Finally, I suggest that certain conversation methods among churches and their theologians can helpfully point a way towards that convergence that will serve the unity for which Christ prayed. Of course, those who come to the table will need to clear away misunderstandings first by looking at their understandings of Scripture and its role in the Church, their use of history and the authority attributed to it, and the relationship of Scripture, tradition, and authority. Much has been done among the churches on these issues, but at least a mutual understanding, if not a common method, is necessary before tackling the ecclesiological issue.

The second methodological question, after establishing the authorities and sources for our research, is to understand one another's ecclesiologies in both theological theory and spiritual and institutional practice. This will include deciding what will stand as *theology* in our discussion.<sup>16</sup> Often what we say about ourselves is quite different than the way we really think and act. Some would speak of this as "comparative ecclesiology," others at the "dialogue of love." We really can't seek a common base until we understand, appreciate, and value the partner with whom we are in dialogue. This would seem obvious, but our individualistic, competitive academic culture can seep into our systematic theological method and place individualism, institutional or intellectual triumphalism, or functional specialization over the holistic ministry that is doing theology ecumenically.

Thirdly, a decision will be made about what most Christians see as an evangelical call for Christians to be one. Is this call merely spiritual,

<sup>15</sup>Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, p. 232.

<sup>16</sup>"... should one search only for a *theology* of the church, or is it legitimate to try to derive the ecclesiological views by looking at how the movement lives out its ecclesiality. The fact is that many of those newer Christian traditions have not yet produced much *theology* of the church, even if in their everyday life they do, of course, live out their "churchliness." Ibid., p. 16.

without visible parameters, or is there a biblical doctrine of the Church which calls for embodiment in this world? The Faith and Order movement has embodied the imperative “To call the churches to full, visible unity in one faith, one Eucharistic fellowship, in common worship and mission that the world might believe.” Is this call too threatening for the Pentecostal and Holiness scholar? I think not.

We have only to look at the articulations of Miroslav Volf or Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen to note how a free church perspective can be articulate, with full integrity, in dialogue with the strongest among the Orthodox and Catholic perspectives. At the core of this call is biblical fidelity and witness to the shape of the biblical church as we might see it from our tradition, and as we might pursue the search for that future to which the Holy Spirit may lead us.

Fourthly, based on common sources, mutual respect, and a commitment to follow the Holy Spirit’s call where it may lead us, then the dialogue of truth can begin. Here we begin to explore, together, the biblical, historical, and theological sources, and to recognize the gifts of our various institutional and spiritual expressions of the Church and begin to search for common understandings and common formulations.

In our work together on ecclesiology or any other issues, our vision of future unity dare not neglect any of the gifts of the Spirit we have received in our separation. For me, this is one of the reasons why the Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue has been most fascinating. Certainly, helping the wider ecumenical movement understand the restorationist ecclesiology is a great challenge, even though it is not an ecclesiology I can affirm as an adequate account of the biblical faith.

## **The Way Forward**

For ecclesiological research to be productive ecumenically, it will first need to find partners that comprehend one another’s self-understanding. It is only by knowing the theological heritage, spirituality, and culture of other communities that a fruitful interchange and a search for a common basis can develop.

Secondly, the biblical and historical research that is necessary for consensus can emerge. The dialogue will be served best neither by pressing one’s own systematic formulations without detailed knowledge of the other nor by the setting aside of all truth claims, as though God’s revelation does not matter or that the understanding of the nature of the Church

is a human impossibility. Both empathy and common research; and facing the difficult, church-dividing issues are essential if we are to move forward together on the path toward that truth on which the unity of the Church can be built.

Certainly the biblical and patristic resources, the pneumatological and Christological ecclesiologies developed by theologians in a variety of traditions, and the new insights learned from face to face, contextualized theological dialogue with the living traditions provide resources for this dialogue. While incarnational and pneumatological ecclesiologies can tend to privilege the institutional or the abstract-individual, as Bradford Hinze notes: "To set up an opposition between a Spirit-centered and an Incarnational ecclesiology is false and fruitless. Instead, we need to develop a Trinitarian ecclesiology that can release and receive the full power of the Spirit."<sup>17</sup>

The Gospel imperative to serve the unity of the Church and to find common ground for mission and witness with fellow Christians makes both understanding one another and finding a common ground in truth and love a central task of the theological community in service to the Church. This is first of all a function of religious conversion, under the power of the Holy Spirit; then it is the subject of research and education both in understanding and witnessing credibly to one's own tradition, to understanding the ecclesiological method and content of fellow Christians, and embarking on the common task of developing the common ground from which Christians can move together toward that unity for which Christ prayed.

By way of conclusions, it is this dialogue of charity and truth which I find not only personally and ecclesially enriching, but also a tangible vehicle of the Holy Spirit's presence among us. How we will be able to articulate together a vision of the Church, its faith and its unity, which will both serve our common mission in the world and the visible unity to which Christians are called in the Gospel, is a theological task well worth our efforts.

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<sup>17</sup>Hinze, *op.cit.*, 366.

## A RESPONSE TO JEFFREY GROS

by

Paul M. Bassett

First, I want to thank Brother Jeff Gros for his paper—especially its thoughtfulness, its irenic spirit, and its plain-speaking—and for his continuing and often pro-active efforts across more than twenty years to see to it that the Pentecostals and Wesleyan/Holiness people have gotten into the ecumenical conversation, both to listen and to speak. In consequence of his work and that of Donald Dayton more than that of any other persons, we Pentecostals and Wesleyan/Holiness people are at last bringing our contributions to and receiving, however slowly, from others in what Margaret O’Gara has so aptly called “the ecumenical gift exchange.”<sup>1</sup>

And now Brother Jeff is prodding us to come again to that gift exchange, this time with our ecclesiologies. His prod, like Neptune’s, is three-pronged. To get us moving, he suggests three possible paradigms. He asks, implicitly, whether our ecclesiologies are essentially catholic, or Reformed, or Restorationist. His test case is the Pentecostals—not all, but probably a majority. There, he finds “two documentable strains of ecclesiology.” They are an essentially catholic strain, as it is represented by the work of Walter Hollenweger and Bernardo Campos<sup>2</sup> and one that is

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret O’Gara, *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism; the Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (tr. of Hollenweger, *Enthusiastisches Christentum: die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*; Reprint of English tr.: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997, of edition published in Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House,



essentially Restorationist, as it is represented by the works of Edith Blumhofer and S. D. Moore.<sup>3</sup> He “suspects,” he says, that the same two strains characterize the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. He is reduced to *suspecting* simply because, with some very vocal exceptions, and one silent exception, the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement has generally sought to avoid formal, theological ecclesiologies.

The vocal, even vigorously vocal, exceptions to avoidance within the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition have very well-developed theological ecclesiologies. The two clearest examples stand well within the Restorationist tradition as well. The Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), as it is represented by the works of Daniel Sidney Warner and John W. V. Smith<sup>4</sup> and The Church of God (Holiness), as it is represented by the works of John P. Brooks and A. M. Kiergan,<sup>5</sup> hold to ecclesiologies dissimilar in some details, but in “root and branch” clearly Restorationist. These writers are quick to say that these ecclesiologies are of their respective community’s *esse*, not simply attributes of their *bene esse*. The “call” of the

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1972); and Bernardo Campos, *De la reforma Protestante a la Pentecostalidad de la Iglesia: Debate sobre el Pentecostalismo in América Latina* (Quito: Ediciones del Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias, 1997).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Edith Blumhofer, Russell Spittler, Grant Wacker, eds., *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* (Urbana, IL: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1999); Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Champaign, IL: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1993). Gros does not give a bibliographical reference to Moore. However, making much the same point, one may refer to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical, and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Daniel S. Warner and H. M. Riggle, *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary, or The Church of God in Type and Antitype, and in Prophecy and Revelation* (First published in Moundsville, WV: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1903; Photocopy Reprint; Faith Publishing House: Guthrie, OK, 1967); and John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity: A History of the Church of God Reformation Movement* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. John P. Brooks, *The Divine Church* (First published in Columbia, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1891; Photocopy Reprint; New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1984); and A[rthur] M. Kiergan, *Historical Sketches of the Revival of True Holiness and Local Church Polity from 1865-1916* (Fort Scott, KS: Board of Publication of the Church Advocate and Good Way, 1972). Kiergan died in 1933, but this work, which is autobiographical, was ordered published by the 1971 Convention of the Churches of God (commonly known as the Independent Holiness People).

Faith and Order Movement to “full, visible unity in one faith, one Eucharistic fellowship, in common worship and mission that the world might believe,” does not threaten them in the least, for, they would say, “That is precisely what *we* are about.”

The silent exception to the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement’s avoidance of formal, theological ecclesiologies is the Salvation Army. That the Army certainly has an ecclesiology is patent. But with which paradigm does it fit? The spirit of the Army’s ecclesiology is Restorationist, by Gros’ definition (which I accept as adequate), but that very spirit arose out of a clear commitment to avoiding an ecclesiology.<sup>6</sup> Hence the irony of one of the largest Wesleyan/Holiness bodies, which the Army is, refuting a fundamental Restorationist principle in the spirit of Restorationism.

Again, Restorationism’s well-developed ecclesiology stands as an exception in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. And this has nettled both the Restorationists and most of the rest of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. Permit me to focus more closely at this point on that “most of the rest of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement” and respond both “yes” and “no” to Brother Jeff’s suspicion that “the Wesleys” tend toward either the catholic or Restorationist ecclesiologies.

To do this, we must take a look at Methodist ecclesiology. In 1964, Dow Kirkpatrick published an article by Albert Outler in a book entitled *The Doctrine of the Church*. Outler’s article asks: “Do Methodists have a doctrine of the Church?”<sup>7</sup> Along the way to answering his question, Outler makes the case that Wesleyanism originated as “an emergency order” within the Church of England. Wesley and his adherents did this in response to their perception that Anglicanism was neglecting a central commitment of its very “being”—namely, the doctrine and experience of Christian perfection and its active consequence, ministry to all in every possible way, especially, as John Wesley himself put it, ministry to the “bodies and souls” of the poor. Wesley put it succinctly: the task of the

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<sup>6</sup>Cf., Salvation Army, *Handbook of Doctrine* (London: Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1969).

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Albert Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?” in Dow Kirkpatrick, ed., *The Doctrine of the Church* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1964; Reprint in Thomas C. Oden and Lester R. Longden, ed., *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 211-226. The next four paragraphs largely review Outler’s argument.

Methodists was to “spread scriptural holiness over the land and to reform the nation.”<sup>8</sup>

Outler goes on to say that this placed *mission*, not an apparatus, at Wesleyanism’s core. The Methodists were not “bell, book, and candle,” but “mission, proclamation, nurture, service.” Wesley placed in the foundation of his ecclesiology the “bedrock deposits in the Anglican tradition, laid down by the tradition of anti-Roman English ‘catholics’ such as John Jewel and Richard Hooker: the church’s subordination to Scripture, the church’s unity in Christ and the essentials of doctrine, the idea that paradigmata for ecclesiology should be drawn from the patristic age, the ‘apostolic doctrine,’ and the idea of a functional episcopacy (i.e., that episcopacy belonged to the *bene esse*, not the *esse* of the church).”

Wesley heartily agreed with the positive declaration of Article XIX of the *Thirty-nine Articles*: that the catholic or universal church is the entire company of those whom God has called out of the world to give them the power of living faith. He rejected the negative interpretation of Article XIX, by means of which many Anglicans would have excluded Roman Catholics from the church catholic. Here, he broke with those of his mentors who believed Roman Catholics to be among the great unwashed. Wesley remained in the Church of England on the principle that as long as it did not require him to do anything which Scripture forbids, or omit anything which it enjoins, it was his “indispensable duty” to continue in that body.

What American Methodism picked up from Wesley was precisely the essence of his functional view of the church. But the American Revolution had wiped away the larger, more catholic context of the Church of England. It left the Methodists without the sense of being an emergency order within a church catholic. They were now, in the American sense, a denomination and therefore a church. And this, so Outler believed, left Methodism with an awful problem, which he saw as persisting as late as 1964. He says, “We need a catholic church within which to function as a proper evangelical order of witness and worship, discipline and nurture. . . . Meanwhile . . . we must ourselves beware lest, in this business of having to be a church while waiting for the church that is to be, we should

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<sup>8</sup>John Wesley, ed., *Minutes of Several Conversations between Mr. Wesley and Others from the Year 1744 to the Year 1789 (The Large Minutes [London, 1789](Works [Jackson ed.]) VIII, 299.*

deceive ourselves by falling further into the fatuity that this business of ‘being a church’ is really our chief business!”<sup>9</sup>

And here’s the rub for that wide expanse of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement that has generally avoided ecclesiologies of any theological depth but are churches in the American sense—i.e., denominations. The Wesleyans, the Free Methodists, the Nazarenes and several other Wesleyan/Holiness bodies formed around the very Wesleyan understanding that they were “emergency orders,” although at the time of formation they did not use those words as descriptive. In Outler’s terms, they saw themselves as emergency orders within Methodism, although none of the three was exclusively Methodist in its roots. In fact, when the Civil War ended, significant proportions of the Wesleyan Connection and the Free Methodist Church, clergy and laity, returned to episcopal Methodism. The nation had abolished slavery, at least *de jure*, and advocates of the doctrine and experience of Christian perfection still flourished in the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) and in the Border States, and it was at least alive, if not well, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It also flourished in the Methodist Protestant Church, which had originated in 1830, in the then-heated debate over the authority of the bishops to appoint pastors to congregations.

But with the coming of age of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement in the late 1860s, misunderstanding and opposition to at least the revivalist paradigm for the proclamation, teaching, and reception of Christian perfection met opposition in episcopal Methodism, North and South. In this circumstance, the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement became an emergency order within an emergency order which had been “forced,” sociologically, and largely by the American Revolution, to become a church (two churches from 1845 to 1939). As early as the late 1870s, some adherents to the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement were claiming that they were being mistreated and spurned, or at least discriminated against, within episcopal Methodism and that such treatment was forcing them to form denominations in order to conserve those who had been converted or sanctified where they had been evangelizing and to ensure proper nurturing of their children. As the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement spawned denominations, each new body, along with the Wesleyan Connection and the Free Methodist Church, argued for their existence on the basis of the supposed

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<sup>9</sup>Outler, *ibid.* (reprint), 226.

loss of what they saw as the central doctrine of Methodism. They existed to preach and teach “holiness”—the doctrine and experience which the episcopal Methodists were losing, whether by neglect or rejection.<sup>10</sup> They developed less pressing arguments that Methodism’s episcopacy had grown more concerned about their authority and Methodism’s place in the wider culture than in “spreading scriptural holiness.”

The Church of the Nazarene, for instance, declared its mission precisely in terms of the ideology of an emergency order: it would “christianize Christianity,” said its principal galvanizer, P. F. Bresee. The “Preamble” to the Nazarenes’ “Articles of Faith” begins with the words, “In order to preserve our God-given heritage, the faith once delivered to the saints, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, and in order that we may co-operate effectually with other branches of the Church of Jesus Christ in advancing God’s Kingdom, [we set forward these articles of faith].”<sup>11</sup>

That is the language of the emergency order. We might expect an emergency order to take its ecclesiology from its larger context. But in the case of the Church of the Nazarene, and of much of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, we have an emergency order within an emergency order—the latter being episcopal Methodism. And, as did Methodism, so the Church of the Nazarene picked up the functional character of ecclesiology.

However, in the past three decades, the various denominations of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement (in particular, the Church of the Nazarene) have begun to attempt to underwrite both their character as expressions of an emergency order and their functional ecclesiologies with theological ecclesiologies. Again, using the Church of the Nazarene as a concrete example, we note that first in its 1985 General Assembly it voted to add an article on the Church to its long-standing fifteen “Articles of Faith.” Since 1985, that article has undergone continued editing, but not from any

<sup>10</sup>This struggle occurred almost entirely within Caucasian Methodism. The historic, predominantly African-American Methodist Episcopal bodies (AME, AME Zion, and CME) retained strong Wesleyan perfectionist roots and emphases well into the twentieth century. With but a few exceptions they were not made welcome in either of the ME churches nor in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Church of the Nazarene, *Manual* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House. The *Manual*, published on orders of each [usually] quadrennial General Assembly, is the denomination’s equivalent to the United Methodist *Discipline*.

consistent theological foundation. The editing process is open to the vagaries of trends, titillations, and occasional bureaucratic or other tizzies. Those desiring such an article have raised conflicting, or at best, inconsistent rationales for creating it. It certainly has not arisen from positive theological reflection on the nature of the denomination, nor has the church or, more particularly its theologians, really engaged in ecclesiological study and discussion.

On the other hand, at about the same time that the article on the church was added to the “Articles of Faith,” the General Assembly passed a re-writing of the historical statement which appears in the denomination’s constitution, and that statement at least implied a catholic ecclesiology in the making. It reads:

The Church of the Nazarene, from its beginnings, has confessed itself to be a branch of the “one, holy, universal, and apostolic Church,” and has sought to be faithful to it. It confesses as its own the history of the people of God recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and that same history as it has extended from the days of the apostles to our own. As its own people, it embraces the people of God through the ages, those redeemed through Jesus Christ in whatever expression of the one church they may be found. It receives the ecumenical creeds of the first five Christian centuries as expressions of its own faith. While the Church of the Nazarene has responded to its special calling to proclaim the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification, it has taken care to retain and nurture identification with the historic church in its preaching of the Word, its administration of the sacraments, its concern to raise up and maintain a ministry that is truly apostolic in faith and practice, and in its inculcating of disciplines for Christlike living and service to others.

The Historical Statement then moves on to tell of the debt of the Church of the Nazarene to the Evangelical Revival in Britain, to Pietism, to Puritanism, and to the First Great Awakening in North America. It notes the ecclesial and theological breadth and depth of the streams that converged about a century ago to form the Church of the Nazarene; and it notes as well the contributions of groups that have joined the denomination throughout the twentieth century.

So, in the case of at least this particular Wesleyan/Holiness denomination, calls for serious ecclesiological study have arisen on all sides and a very serious tension is building between the move of some toward a catholic paradigm and the desire of others to retain a strictly functional one. Whether that tension will be constructive or destructive, one dare not guess. But it does seem to me that Outler's warning to the Methodists is a timely one for the Church of the Nazarene, and perhaps for much of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement: we must not deceive ourselves by falling into the fatuity that this business of "being a church" is really our chief business. It does not warn us away from ecclesiological discussion and formation. In fact, it would seem to open us up to ecumenical discussion. But it does warn us against mistaking the instrument for the music.

# **GENDERED SIN? GENDERED HOLINESS? HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND HOMILETICAL IMPLICATIONS<sup>1</sup>**

by

**Diane Leclerc**

It is often stated that the church is some twenty years behind the times. This is most typically said with a negative tone by those of us who fashion ourselves to be the progressive ones in our respective denominations. We bemoan how the church drags its feet behind contemporary culture. We stand around, look at our metaphorical watches, and wonder when they might finally appear in the distance. But I (someone who would certainly want to see and even portray myself as a progressive) wish to say today that, in one small way, I am grateful that my church is twenty years behind.

Call me naive, but I believe my church, if not my tradition, is beginning to take second-wave feminism seriously; yes, sometimes critically, but at least seriously. Ironically, however, most of the group that used to identify themselves as feminists in more liberal political, academic, and certainly theoretical circles, readily state that we have reached the post-feminist age. It truly would be an ironic twist of events if post-feminist theology, where the category of “woman” is contested under a deconstructionist agenda, and traditional theology, where “woman” is not taken

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<sup>1</sup>Portions of the essay presented here have been gleaned from my book *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness in Historical Perspective*, published by Scarecrow Press (2001). The general intent is to take some of my conclusions published previously and apply them to the study of homeletics.



seriously under the antiquated assumption that human experience is perfectly generic, were to become unknowing bed fellows—both speechless about and sleepily apathetic toward “woman” as theologically relevant.

It is apropos to apply Susan Bordo’s words to the field of theology: “Most of our institutions have barely begun to absorb the message of modernist social criticism; surely it is too soon to let them off the hook via postmodern heterogeneity and instability.”<sup>2</sup> Surely the work of feminist theology is not done. I’m not done! And so, I’m glad my church is behind the times. Maybe I have something to say to someone. Maybe feminist theology of our stripe, maybe Wesleyan-Holiness, maybe Pentecostal Feminists are still relevant in our contexts, even though passe in the broader deconstructionalism of the age. I seek to challenge my own tradition to reclaim its own history, which I believe will open the future, and open the potential for authentic subjectivity *for its women*. Over the last half-century, the holiness movement has evidenced a “fundamentalist leavening” that has had drastic negative consequences especially *for its women*.

It is my intention to join those feminists who have challenged the traditional assumption, given to us by Augustine, that original sin is best defined as pride. Feminist theologians first rebelled against Augustine’s hamartiology over 40 years ago. It further is my intent to explicitly consider what that rebellion means for holiness theology. But my primary purpose is to take the theological construction that has occupied that last 15 years of my life, and tease out implications for the homiletical process. If what I have proposed theologically has any relevance, how then should holiness be preached? Female holiness voices that will aid me along the way feature Phoebe Palmer and Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, constant companions in my own scholarship and religious devotion.

### **A Theology of Sin: Historical and Theological Considerations**

The Augustinian understanding of the essence of original sin as pride has dominated the theological trajectory of Western Christianity. His hamartiology, however, not only neglects Eastern Christianity (to which Wesley is so indebted), but also neglects insights that arise when “women’s experience” is given credence as a theological source. Cather-

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<sup>2</sup>Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), 242.

ine Keller succinctly articulates feminist concerns with an Augustinian construct: "Feminist theology has shown . . . that the traditional definitions of sin as pride, arrogance, self-interest, and other forms of exaggerated self-esteem *miss the mark* in the case of women, who in this culture suffer from too little self-esteem, indeed too little self."<sup>3</sup>

In an article first printed in 1960, Valerie Saiving (Goldstein) embraced the difficult task of critiquing the Augustinian definition. She wrote:

The temptations of woman as woman are not the same as the temptations of man as man, and the specifically feminine forms of sin—"feminine" not because they are confined to women or because women are incapable of sinning in other ways, but because they are outgrowths of the basic feminine character structure—have a quality which can never be encompassed by such terms as "pride" and "will-to-power." They are better suggested by such terms as triviality, distractibility, and diffuseness; lack of an organizing center or focus; dependence on others for one's own self definition . . . in short, underdevelopment or negation of the self.<sup>4</sup>

A slightly later thinker, Judith Plaskow, defines a woman's sin as "the failure to take responsibility for self-actualization."<sup>5</sup> Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki adds to a working definition. She summarizes:

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<sup>3</sup>Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 40. Italics mine.

<sup>4</sup>Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Womenspirit Rising*, eds. Carol Christ & Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 37. Reprinted from *Journal of Religion* 40 (1960):100-112. Working closely with the Danish text, Sylvia Walsh interprets a key passage in Kierkegaard that is suggestive of the feminist understanding of sin: "In abandoning or throwing herself altogether into that which she devotes herself, woman tends to have a sense of self only in and through the object of her devotion. When the object is taken away, her self is also lost. Her despair, consequently, lies in not willing to be herself, that is, in not having any separate or independent self-identity" (Sylvia Walsh, "On 'Feminine' and 'Masculine' Forms of Despair," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Sickness Unto Death*, ed., Robert L. Perkins [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987], 124).

<sup>5</sup>Judith Plaskow, *Sex, Sin, and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), 63.

[F]eminist scholars see the sin of pride as describing the sins of the powerful who refuse to recognize the rightful boundaries of others, and the sin of hiding as the refusal of the responsibility to become a self that is so often the plight of [many] who are not in positions of power. In the process, they effectively show [that a] one-sided treatment of sin through the notion of pride demonstrates the bias of . . . culture and gender, and therefore the particularity rather than universality of [this] description of sin.<sup>6</sup>

The task of providing *historical* foundations for these and other feminists' alternative "gendered" doctrine of sin is the subject of my book, *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness in Historical Perspective* (Scarecrow, 2001). There I examine Augustine's contemporaries, Jerome and John Chrysostom, and their rhetoric around women's devotion; John Wesley's correspondence with Methodist women; and Phoebe Palmer's doctrines of sin and holiness. I will briefly summarize some of my conclusions here.

There are sharp divergences between Augustine and the Origen-influenced ascetics in the area of anthropology, with Augustine insisting on the originality and permanence of gender distinctions and hierarchies. Chrysostom and Jerome, on the other hand, allow for a much more fluid understanding of gender and envision earthly possibilities for approximating gender's neutralization. The rhetoric of Jerome and Chrysostom, which demanded a renunciation of the traditional feminine sphere, actually opened opportunity for ascetic women to occupy space that can in turn be interpreted as liberating. The life of a female virgin associated with Jerome and Chrysostom disrupt the notions of female silence (she found voices even to instruct men), she transmigrated her physical location (she traveled much more freely than matrons), and she transcended her social location (she challenged hierarchical male superiority by renouncing her gendered social roles). Augustine's rhetoric, in contrast, affirms aspects of femininity. And yet, the inherent misogyny of Augustine's theology has had lasting negative consequences for women in the West. As Kim Power articulates, "Augustine's perceptions of women and the feminine are consistently and overwhelmingly pessimistic."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Co., 1994), 32.

<sup>7</sup>Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine's Writing on Women* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1996), 159.

In sum, extensive reading of Jerome and Chrysostom shows an implicit definition of sin as relational “idolatry” and the highest virtue as complete devotion to God. These create the possibility for women’s transcendence of conventional, subordinated, domestic social roles. In Augustine’s texts, however, the definition of sin as pride tends to cement women to such traditional roles by demanding a “virtuous,” silent, passive humility and a willing submission to present God-ordained social stratification. There are other moments in history when sin was defined under the alternative rubric of relational idolatry and where women found new voices. The life of John Wesley can be seen as one of these other historical moments.

Wesley clearly speaks of pride when he considers “inbeing sin.” He also identifies self-will as a remaining sin. But he goes on to offer a somewhat surprising classification of these two sins. “Now self-will, as well as pride, is a species of *idolatry* and both are directly contrary to the love of God.”<sup>8</sup> Wesley continues, “The same observation may be made concerning the *love of the world*. . . . He may feel the assaults of *inordinate affection*; yea, a strong propensity to ‘love the creature more than the Creator;’ whether it be a child, a parent, a husband, or wife, or ‘the friend that is as his own soul.’ ”<sup>9</sup> Pride is portrayed as one sin among many, and in this case “a species of idolatry.”

Wesley offered a similar interpretation of pride in his most direct sermon on the topic, “Original Sin” (1854). Here, idolatry is unmistakably classified as the primary definition of original sin, with “pride,” “self-will,” and “love of the world” listed under it.<sup>10</sup> He says, “all pride is idolatry,”<sup>11</sup> as is “love of the world.” In other words, in my interpretation of Wesley’s hamartiology, there are two forms of original sin: inordinate love of self (pride); and inordinate love of others, often listed as “love of the world.” Wesley further explains this phrase: “What is more natural to us than to seek happiness in the creature, instead of the Creator?”<sup>12</sup> He also wrote a sermon entitled “Spiritual Idolatry” which he penned nearer the end of his life. It will be helpful to quote one passage at length:

<sup>8</sup>Sermon 14, “Repentance of Believers,” ¶I I.3, *Works* (Jackson) 5:158.

<sup>9</sup>Sermon 14, “Repentance of Believers,” ¶I I.3, *Works* (Jackson) 5:159.

<sup>10</sup>See Sermon 44, “Original Sin,” ¶II.1-10, *Works* (Jackson), 6:57-62.

<sup>11</sup>Sermon 44, “Original Sin,” ¶III.7, *Works* (Jackson), 6:60.

<sup>12</sup>Sermon 44, “Original Sin,” ¶II.9, *Works* (Jackson), 6:60.

Undoubtedly it is the will of God that we should all love one another. It is his will that we should love our relations and our Christian brethren with a peculiar love; and those in particular, whom he has made particularly profitable to our souls. These we are commanded to “love fervently;” yet still “with a pure heart.” But is not this “impossible with man?” to retain the strength and tenderness of affection, and yet, without any stain to the soul, with unspotted purity? I do not mean only unspotted by lust. I know this is possible. I know a person may have an unutterable affection for another without any desire of this kind. But is it without idolatry? Is it not loving the creature more than the Creator? Is it not putting a man or woman in the place of God? giving them your heart? Let this be carefully considered, even by those whom God has joined together; by husbands and wives, parents and children. It cannot be denied, that these ought to love one another tenderly: they are commanded so to do. But they are neither commanded nor permitted to love one another idolatrously. Yet how common is this! How frequently is a husband, a wife, a child, put in the place of God. How many that are accounted good Christians fix their affections on each other, so as to leave no place for God!<sup>13</sup>

While Wesley did not hesitate to use the word pride (i.e., idolatry of self), he gave equal attention to a relational idolatry. Such evidence thus challenges the assumption that Wesley’s understanding of the essence of original sin simply mimics Augustinian pride.

This is seen very clearly in Wesley’s correspondence with the women of early Methodism; there he often expressed the depth of his concern, his outright fear that they would succumb to the temptation of inordinate affection. To countless women he advises against marriage. The majority of “his” women “transcended” this temptation to depend excessively on men and “transcended” their station and embraced a type of power rare for women of the eighteenth century. The women of early Methodism could be seen as those who “transcended” even their gender. Wesley’s repeated charge to submit only to God and not to any creature allowed many women to defy convention and centuries of suppression. The fullest

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<sup>13</sup>Sermon 78, “Spiritual Idolatry,” ¶II.18, *Works* (Jackson), 6:441.

expression of this devotion was liberation to answer God's call. Put simply: Methodist women preached. Their single devotion to God freed them to do so.

Phoebe Palmer—writer, evangelist, and in my estimation, theologian—developed doctrines of sin and holiness that had significant implications for the holiness movement and for the “cult of true womanhood” of the nineteenth century. Rather than reciting the usual litany of those things that interfere with the spiritual life, selfishness, lack of faith, betrayals of the flesh, “Palmer, with striking frankness, admitted that the primary obstacle to her spiritual growth had been ‘a large house involving proportionate cares.’”<sup>14</sup> Her own experience of entire sanctification involved her relinquishing of the “idols” of husband and children. It is crucial to note that while Palmer's “experience of sanctification involved a kind of liberation from earthly affections and domestic obligations,” such liberation “did not develop out a discontent with family ties.”<sup>15</sup> As Anne Loveland insightfully recognizes, Palmer “was only too willing to make family ties everything, even to the exclusion of religion.”<sup>16</sup> This conceptual framing of *sin* allowed her to shift her perception of domestic responsibilities. Margaret McFadden observes,

In the “altar transaction,” a woman could lay all the details of house and children on the altar and thus be freed from . . . attachments and responsibilities. . . . Additionally, the altar phraseology encouraged the individual to become less emotionally dependent on husband and children, to become spiritually independent and to consecrate the domestic sphere to the inner life of heart holiness.<sup>17</sup>

Theodore Hovet recognizes that “the laying of all on the altar served a dual purpose. It not only freed her from attachments to the world in the conventional religious sense but it also provided a means of freeing her religious life from the chains of domestic responsibility.”<sup>18</sup> Thus it is pos-

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<sup>14</sup>Theodore Hovet, “Phoebe Palmer's ‘Altar Phraseology’ and the Spiritual Dimension of Woman's Sphere,” *Journal of Religion* 63 (1983): 271.

<sup>15</sup>Anne C. Loveland, “Domesticity and Religion in the Antebellum Period: The Career of Phoebe Palmer,” *The Historian* 39 (1977): 460.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>Margaret McFadden, “The Ironies of Pentecost: Phoebe Palmer, Word Evangelism, and Female Networks,” *Methodist History* 31 (1993): 70.

<sup>18</sup>Hovet, 271.

sible to interpret Palmer as drastically shifting the meaning of the “home” in nineteenth-century religious life.<sup>19</sup> No longer was the home the means of personal piety as believed by the “cult of domesticity”; it had now become a potential spiritual hindrance. Yet, unlike the admonitions of Jerome, Chrysostom, and Wesley who saw a very practical denial, even rejection of family relationships as a requisite for holiness, Phoebe Palmer’s view of original sin allowed her to spiritually detach herself from relational idols without dissolving the relationships themselves. She went on to have a very long marriage and three other children. Thus, “she was not advocating a radical feminist position.”<sup>20</sup> Instead:

To set her readers’ minds at ease . . . she assured them that “at this interesting point in her experience” she did not intend to “neglect” the members of her family, but had only “resolved that they should cease to be absorbing”—a disclaimer that reflected how aware she was of the domestic implications of her religious actions (*The Way of Holiness*, 91).<sup>21</sup>

This “non-absorbed” posture could have perhaps been the end of Palmer’s story—to “return home” with a new *emotional*, spiritually-based freedom. However, the implications of Palmer’s hamartiology and the subsequent requisites she demanded of any who would retain the sanctification experience writes a new chapter in the history of Palmer’s life and in the history of the holiness movement.<sup>22</sup> The “world,” although still portrayed as sinful in Palmer’s own thought, is no longer to be avoided through a retreat back into the safety of the domestic sphere; rather, society becomes, for Palmer, the most explicit place for expressing new-found freedom. Freedom from others (i.e., from relational idols) becomes freedom *for others*, perhaps even *especially* for others outside the home.

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<sup>19</sup>For an extensive study of the home as the primary religious symbol in American Methodism prior to 1830, see A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1993).

<sup>20</sup>Hovet, 271.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 271-272.

<sup>22</sup>“Wesleyan/Holiness Theology, with its emphasis on prophetic authority and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit made possible by sanctification, offered a social ethic for women that enabled them to question the ethic of domesticity,” Susie C. Stanley, *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers’ Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 21.

“The loss of half her children . . . drove her deeper into religion, and gave her the mission to save souls.”<sup>23</sup> The first commandment, then, enables the second: Loving God with *all* one’s being (unrivaled) enables love for others. Thus, Wesley’s own preferred definition of holiness, love, is made possible not only through an overturning of the traditional idolatry of *self*. It is also made possible through an overturning of an idolatry of others.

### The Homeletics of Love: Historical and Methodological Implications

*Phoebe Palmer and Holiness Preachers.* John Fletcher was the first to link entire sanctification with “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” Asa Mahan gave biblical and theological justification for linking the Pentecostal image with the experience of entire sanctification. Palmer took the image and popularized it.<sup>24</sup> What occurred in Acts 2 occurred to the disciples, to those who already believed in Christ for salvation. Their Pentecostal baptism was thus interpreted by Palmer as an instantaneous event and a “second work” of the Spirit, different from anything they had experienced previously. Later theologians would more delicately define the relationship of this second work with holiness terms such as “cleansing” and “eradication of the carnal nature.”<sup>25</sup> But Palmer readily adopted the Pentecostal experience as a transferrable experience for all believers and

<sup>23</sup>William Sims Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 64.

<sup>24</sup>Susie Stanley suggests that Wesleyan/Holiness theology represents a type of “egalitarian primitivism” in that it particularly uses the New Testament in defense of women in ministry. “Wesleyan/Holiness adherents are egalitarian primitivists who affirmed women preachers because they saw that the Bible documented women’s leadership and public ministry in the early Church. . . . A favorite passage was the account of Pentecost in Acts 2. . . . These verses attest that the Holy Spirit was no respecter of persons; therefore it did not discriminate between the sexes,” Stanley, 7.

<sup>25</sup>For an extensive treatment of later usage of eradication language, see Leroy E. Lindsey, Jr., “Radical Remedy: The Eradication of Sin and Related Terminology in Wesleyan-Holiness Thought, 1875-1925” (Drew University, Ph.D. thesis, 1996). Also see Paul M. Bassett, “Culture and Concupiscence: The Changing Definition of Sanctity in the Wesleyan Holiness Movement, 1867-1920,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 28 (1993): 59-127. Bassett’s thesis can be summarized by the following quotation: “Wesleyan Holiness people as a whole, in the period between the late 1860s and the late 1910s . . . re-defined some of the most critical elements in their theology. Most important were the nuances of the understandings of original sin/inherited depravity, and, by implication, of entire sanctification. More precisely, in the 1860s and 1870s, Wesleyan/Holiness people



preached its necessity in her revivals and camp meetings and in her written works. This would greatly affect the way the doctrine of entire sanctification was expressed in the holiness movement; and "her popularization of Pentecostal language . . . laid a firm foundation for later Pentecostal developments."<sup>26</sup>

Arising out of the conceptualization and utilization of baptism language is the linking of holiness with power. "Holiness is power" is an oft-repeated phrase in Palmer's writings. According to Palmer, through the empowerment and "unhindered" freedom that comes from entire sanctification, a person was enabled to progress in his or her spiritual journey as never before and to accomplish what was beyond human expectation or conventional custom. This theology was particularly significant for women's religious experience. "Palmer's 'Way of Holiness' more than any other Christian doctrine available during the first half of the nineteenth century brought the Romantic vision of inner autonomy and unlimited personal growth to middle-class women, in itself a highly significant development."<sup>27</sup>

Palmer's theology contains a strong call for women to live out their new spiritual potential. Since her theology contained an idealism that made all things seem possible, limitations were determined only by one's own disobedience; as a result of this theological premise, women began to strive toward the realization of the "new life" they claimed. These women believed they had equal access to the "Pentecostal power" available through the Holy Spirit; they were equally capable of being "Pentecostal witnesses" to what God can do in a life that is entirely devoted. To be empowered through sanctifying grace compelled women to enter the sphere of society and effect change. It often meant ministering to the physical needs of others, especially to those of a lower social position, as evidenced by Palmer's strong emphasis on "mission" work. But most

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believed that original sin/inherited depravity characteristically manifests itself in 'worldliness.' By the 1880s, they began to believe that the characteristic manifestation of original sin/inherited depravity is *pride*. By around 1900, the grassroots of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, if not its theologians, had come to believe that *lust* is the characteristic mark" (60-61).

<sup>26</sup>Charles White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 158.

<sup>27</sup>Hovet, 279.

importantly for our purposes here, sanctifying power meant empowerment to speak. According to Susie Stanley, “Public preaching, in itself, undermines the assertion that Wesleyan/Holiness women preachers were traditionalists. Their preaching fragrantly challenged traditional notions of woman’s sphere since the pulpit was the literal symbol of the male domain.”<sup>28</sup>

The final requisite of Palmer’s three-step formula, following consecration and faith, that led one through the experience of entire sanctification was testifying to the experience. Even if a person had surrendered everyone and everything to God and had faith in Him, if she was not willing to testify, she would lose the experience, without exception. Testimony was a verifiable *performance* of the fact that the domestic sphere had ceased to be absorbing and that a woman was in fact entirely devoted to God. As Porterfield expresses, “it was better to refuse the coming of the Spirit than to refuse afterward to prophesy.”<sup>29</sup> Palmer describes her own experience:

The Spirit then suggested: If it is a gift from God, you will be required to declare it as his gift, through our Lord Jesus Christ, ready for the acceptance of all; and this, if you would retain the blessing, will not be left to your own choice. You will be called on to profess this blessing before thousands!<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, if a woman professed entire devotion to God and counted herself free from idols and an absorption in domestic cares, she must be willing to do what God next asked of her, even if it went against social norms or protocol. Thus, in Palmer’s theology there was an intricate connection between the requisite to surrender idols and the requisite to speak. “Palmer declared that a person must first consecrate everything to God. Volumes of subsequent testimonials showed this to usually include one’s children, spouse, material possessions and reputation; for women it often included being willing to preach.”<sup>31</sup> Sacrifice could mean a “giving up,” but also a “willingness to.”

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<sup>28</sup>Stanley, 20.

<sup>29</sup>Amanda Porterfield, “Phoebe Palmer,” 19. Presented at the “Women in New Worlds Conference,” Cincinnati, Ohio, February 1980; presently held by the United Methodist Archives, Madison, N.J.

<sup>30</sup>Phoebe Palmer, *The Way of Holiness, With Notes by the Way* (New York: Walter C. Palmer, [1843], 1867), 39-40.

<sup>31</sup>Nancy A. Hardesty, *Great Women of Faith: The Strength and Influence of Christian Women* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1980), 90.

While Palmer does speak in terms of freedom, her rhetoric often identifies speech as “self-sacrifice.” It is crucial to see that for Palmer “self-sacrifice” did not mean playing the typical, martyr-like role of the subservient wife and mother. This, if fact, would have been the *easiest* or “widest” road in her mind. Rather, sacrifice meant being *courageous* in the secular sphere: it was a personal sacrifice for a woman to be considered “undignified” by society for overstepping her feminine boundaries. Such an undignified position, according to Palmer, was *required* by God. Rather than fulfilling their Christian responsibilities in the home alone, women were finding in Palmer’s theology a religious imperative that necessitated a conceptual shift of women’s calling and women’s place. “What is clear . . . is that [women] in the 1840s and 50s, emboldened by a religiously-engendered individualism . . . were forging an autonomous self and voice. They were allowing themselves to view this self-development as part of their Christian duty, rather than something egotistical or evil.”<sup>32</sup> Palmer’s religious vision provided nineteenth-century holiness women with a new confidence, not only to know themselves as fully devoted to God, but also to be fully themselves in following God’s call.<sup>33</sup>

**Mildred Bangs Wynkoop on Preaching Holiness.** Mildred Bangs Wynkoop is known as the theologian of love in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. The impact and significance of her work cannot be overestimated. For many scholars in the tradition, her book *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* is seen as a watershed; for some, it is the work that saved holiness theology from a destiny of legalism, stagnation and irrelevance, just in the nick of time. There have been critics. There are those who see her relational theology as succumbing to the great ominous threat of “postitional holiness.” But there are others who have stood by her side as advocates of her relational paradigm of Wesleyan love. There are countless students of Wynkoop who testify to remaining a holiness person, perhaps even a Christian, because of her dynamic under-

<sup>32</sup>Joanna Bowen Gillespie, “The Emerging Voice of the Methodist Woman: The Ladies Repository, 1841-61,” in *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays*, eds. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993), 255.

<sup>33</sup>Stanley adds, “Sanctification creates a significant change in the dynamics of submission. Sanctified women were no longer subject to society’s constraints or male authority but relied on God’s authority to challenge efforts to thwart their public ministries,” Stanley, 16.

standing of Wesley's views on sanctification and her attempt to express holiness with integrity and in continuity with actual experience.

Now comes the irony. What was the dangerous source of stagnation from which Wynkoop rescued us, according to some of her most sympathetic devotees? It was Phoebe Palmer's altar covenant theology! For those who have wished to reclaim the "dynamics of Wesleyanism," the nineteenth-century expression of holiness and entire sanctification perverted Wesley, and Palmer is named as the greatest perverter! And so, for some, my own very intentional juxtaposition of these two women here may seem forced at best. But I am hoping that my interpretation of Palmer has revealed that there is a breadth and depth, and *balance* in her theology that, at the very least, allow Palmer and Wynkoop to be in conversation.<sup>34</sup>

Thus far I have attempted to show that Phoebe Palmer's *theology* (not just her direct addresses on the topic of women in ministry) gave women a theological foundation on which to find liberation, particularly liberation to preach. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop is recognized as a theologian, first and foremost. And yet, in 1969, she wrote an article in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* entitled "A Wesleyan View on Preaching Holiness" and thus gave practical application to her own emerging theological vision. It is my aim here to bring together Palmer's *theology* and Wynkoop's attempt at *praxis*.

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<sup>34</sup>Leon Hynson is attracted to Mildred Bangs Wynkoop's "relational" interpretation of Wesley and sees relational theology as a means to "avoid the Augustinian and Reformed associations of original sin with the body and sensuality," Leon O. Hynson, "Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into the Theology of Sin and Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22 (1987): 70. Also see Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 155-156. Although it is clear that simply adopting a relational theology will not automatically delete error from one's interpretation of Wesley, I concur with Hynson's appreciation of Wynkoop, despite her interpretation that places Wesley in Augustinian categories. She writes, "[People] find themselves locked by their own love into an orbit about a center. Sin is love locked into a false center, the self. . . . The epitome of pride and carnal arrogance is to raise one's own miserable self to the pretension of being a god" (Wynkoop, 158). However, there seems to be some latitude in Wynkoop's own analysis. Elsewhere she states, "Sin must be interpreted in keeping with the 'existential' terminology of Scripture. . . . In the Bible [sin] is an active spirit of 'yielding' or dedication to *any* center outside of God," Wynkoop, 150. Italics mine.

Wynkoop begins her discussion by admonishing that holiness preaching must encompass the whole and not just the “circumstance” of entire sanctification. Holiness’s “content” is much broader than the narrow definitions that result from too much focus on crisis (which will come as no surprise to Wynkoop’s admirers). Narrow thinking can produce, according to Wynkoop, self- or works righteousness, intellectualism on one hand (which “talks holiness theology into the grave”<sup>35</sup>) or emotionalism on the other. Holiness preached holistically, as a lifestyle and as a lifelong process,<sup>36</sup> will help avoid these dangers. Wynkoop’s cautions against works righteousness, intellectualism, and emotionalism interestingly (and independently) parallel some of the charges made against Palmer. Palmer’s theology has been accused of Pelagianism, rationalism, and the movement that arose out of her theology, emotionalism.

According to Palmer’s scheme, a person who seeks entire sanctification must first and foremost consecrate everything completely to God by “placing” all (all of one’s being and all of one’s “idols”) on God’s “altar.” After this consecration is complete, the seeker must then have faith that the “altar sanctifies the gift.” Because of Palmer’s emphasis on the human element in this step of faith, she has been accused not only of rationalism but also of a type of Pelagianism.<sup>37</sup> Yet I suggest that this is a gross over-reading of Palmer’s point.<sup>38</sup> Palmer affirms that one’s ability to turn from idols, consecrate everything, and “believe the promise” is not accomplished through human ability, but rather through one’s reception of God’s prevenient grace. She writes often, as she does here, of the absolute necessity of grace: “I saw that nothing less than the omnipotence of grace could have enabled me thus to present my whole being to God.”<sup>39</sup> She resists and rejects her own efforts as utterly fruitless. She writes to a friend, “such a deep, piercing sense of helplessness prevailed, that it

<sup>35</sup>Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, “A Wesleyan View on Preaching Holiness,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 4 (1969): 17.

<sup>36</sup>Palmer often exhorted that the consecration that began the holiness journey must be ratified each successive day.

<sup>37</sup>E.g., Harold Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 260-262.

<sup>38</sup>Palmer’s preference for Pentecost as the primary paradigm for entire sanctification in itself argues against any type of human or Pelagian attainment of holiness.

<sup>39</sup>Palmer, “Letter XIII, to Mrs. W.,” in *Faith and Its Effects*, 86.

seemed as though I could not go forward until endued with power from on high.”<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere she writes, “The idea that I can do anything myself, seems so extinct, that the enemy is not apt to tempt me in that direction.”<sup>41</sup> Her assertion of faith is filled with language of God’s prior, prevenient action, specifically through His Spirit.

Charges of Pelagianism also represent a reading that fails to take into account the rhetorical difference between *The Way of Holiness* and Palmer’s description of sanctification elsewhere in her writings, particularly in her letters and diaries. When charges of rationalism and Pelagianism are made, it is *The Way of Holiness* that is most often quoted. However, like Wesley, Palmer’s theology takes on different nuances and emphases in her more “personal” works. *The Way of Holiness* is written as a testimony of Palmer’s sanctification and therefore has been interpreted as if it were an exact replica of her actual experience. In my reading, producing a simple summary of her experience was not Palmer’s agenda or literary motivation. Rather, it was written for popular consumption<sup>42</sup> and therefore structures and formalizes its agenda so that the reader may also take specific steps to attain a similar experience. Failure to make this rhetorical distinction has skewed interpretation of Palmer’s broader theology.

Al Truesdale considers the question of emotionalism. He has examined the holiness movement’s “reification” of and demand for a specific type of experience in the circumstance of entire sanctification. According to Truesdale, “The fallacy of reification and misplaced concreteness are the same. The fallacy consists of treating an abstraction as a substantive.”<sup>43</sup> He examines several nineteenth-century holiness figures and highlights how a particular type of experience of entire sanctification is demanded by such figures. But rather than charging Palmer among the others, Truesdale calls Palmer a “creative detour” to this tendency in Methodism. He says:

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<sup>40</sup>Palmer, “Letter IX to Mrs. W.,” in *Faith and Its Effects*, 66.

<sup>41</sup>Richard Wheatley, *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer* (New York: Walter. C. Palmer, 1881), 83.

<sup>42</sup>This parallels the differences scholars have noted between John Wesley’s journals and diaries.

<sup>43</sup>Al Truesdale, “Reification of the Experience of Entire Sanctification in the American Holiness Movement,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31 (1996): 96.

Palmer did not simply correct popular Wesleyanism. In important respects she replaced it by setting aside its reification of experience and inserting a predictable theological formula that minimized (if not negated) experience, and could not fail to deliver certainty. In the replacement, there were no experiential patterns to approximate and no hurdles to overcome.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop essentially agrees with Palmer when she states that emotionalism, where experience takes precedence over objective truth, is dangerous to holiness theology, certainly holiness preaching. Holiness must also be preached by “drawing, not driving” a person to a decision (referencing Wesley), according to Wynkoop. Driving will only lead to a haste that dissipates depth. Perhaps the key question here is whether Palmer “drove” or “drew” people to the experience of entire sanctification. I argue that, in the case of women, Palmer’s theology drew them to an expanded vision of their own potentiality.

Wynkoop continues her discussion by stating that a “drawing” ethos will lead to an understanding that at its essence, holiness is love; love can never imply an end or a sense that all is accomplished. “Love is the atmosphere of holiness. . . . In the best sense, holiness cannot happen in a moment. It may begin in a moment, but as love cannot mature without expression, so holiness, which is love, cannot exist apart from the life expression of it.”<sup>45</sup> Wynkoop’s whole theology, which has been redemptive to so many, can be summed up in the previous quote. Can the theme of love be found in Palmer? Perhaps, indirectly. Susie Stanley rightly states that there are various ways in which sanctified women of the nineteenth century “exhibited love toward others,” including relief work, homes for prostitutes, labor laws, women’s rights, temperance, and abolitionism.<sup>46</sup> Palmer’s theology affirms these types of loving activities. “For most Wesleyan/Holiness women [perfection] signified a process of maturity characterized by love.”<sup>47</sup>

Despite all of Wynkoop’s cautions, she clearly and forcefully declares that holiness preaching, when properly emphasized, points toward a crisis. She writes, “‘the second work of grace’ constitutes the heart of the Christian gospel.” She gives this statement biblical support:

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 116-117.

<sup>45</sup>Wynkoop, “Wesleyan View,” 20.

<sup>46</sup>See Stanley, 90, and chapter 7.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 91.

The New Testament is largely and principally written to Christian believers, and it is not all comfortable reading. Biblical reading gives us the impression that great danger exists that the grace of God may be received in vain, that the Spirit may be grieved, that the sin of our first parents may be repeated in us. The urgent calls to self-purging, pursuing sanctification, perfecting holiness, yielding to God, bringing thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, and many others, are not to be lightly regarded. If not heeded, they all carry serious consequences. . . . All of these urgent exhortations drive one to the place of total commitment.<sup>49</sup>

Her words are strong. “The crisis of which we speak is that moment to which the Holy Spirit drives us in his relentless searching of our motives when we meet a deeper test of fidelity to Christ than any other we will meet in life.”<sup>50</sup> Wynkoop’s commitment to a point of consecration is clear, despite her desire to underscore the broader meaning of holiness. She goes on to emphasize that holiness preaching should attend to certain basics, including the following: pressing for a personal encounter, for a “clear, clean, and sharp” decision; presenting Christ and holding up the cross of Christ as paradigmatic of our sacrifice; stressing that the commitment is ongoing; and exhorting that growth in holiness is growth in love.<sup>51</sup> She attempts to balance process and gradualism with crisis and instantaneity. She does not, however neglect the latter; this has perhaps been forgotten, in my estimation, by some who have sought comfort in her more relational theology. “[When] the Holy Spirit ‘takes over’ with our deepest consent, the denotation of ‘second’ seems strangely appropriate.”<sup>52</sup>

Phoebe Palmer, writing over 100 years earlier, stood in a particular place when she penned books and articles and tracts that advocated a “shorter way” to this second crisis experience. Palmer had chafed under the theological sophistication of Methodist theologians, and under the elusive emotional experience demanded by her contemporaries, for they kept her from finding the “way of holiness” she so desperately sought. Her interpretation of Wesley appropriately made holiness *easier*. Mildred

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<sup>48</sup>Wynkoop, “Wesleyan View,” 20.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*



Bangs Wynkoop also stood in a particular historical place when she penned the essay summarized above and completed her book. She was countering a very dysfunctional view of holiness that made the experience of entire sanctification an easily accessible doorway to spiritual bliss (that actually led most often to a suffocating legalism and disingenuous faith). Wynkoop's dynamic interpretation of Wesley appropriately made holiness *harder*.

In light of their historical placement, it would be just as incorrect, I believe, to say that Wynkoop was arguing against Palmer as is to say that Palmer was arguing against Wesley. Wynkoop's article on preaching ends with sentiments that parallel the implicit conclusions of Palmer's theology of sin and salvation. She writes:

The "last word" is an intensely personal word. . . . It is said that to be a Christian requires an inhibition of life and vitality and creativeness. But Christian faith is not a negation of life. Rather, everything we find in the Bible suggests that God. . . wants us, in this life, to live fully, creatively. Being good is not simply not doing some things, but living out the dynamic of God's purpose. . . . There is a basic urge to self expression without which wholesome personality is impossible. . . . Rather than Christ curbing our personal development, He requires that we put our whole personality to work.<sup>53</sup>

To this, Phoebe Palmer would have said a hardy amen. As the discussion above has shown, holiness theology had a dramatic effect on the lives of nineteenth-century women. It opened space for women to defy traditional domestic roles, and to live out, indeed, the "dynamic of God's purposes." Woman's *work*, as Palmer's life showed, and as Wynkoop suggests, is not "curbed" by a commitment to Christ, but expands beyond the expected.

### **Leclerc: On Preaching Holiness to Women**

Despite Wesley's emphasis on idolatry as the primary hamartiological category, and Phoebe Palmer's altar theology that uses a powerful and symbolic metaphor that allowed women to give over their "idols" and devote themselves entirely to God, holiness preaching has been, and still is, filled with images that keep Augustine's doctrine of sin in the fore-

<sup>53</sup>Wynkoop, "Wesleyan View," 25.

front. Augustine's doctrine has been used throughout the centuries to keep women suppressed and silenced in the name of Christian humility. In Augustine's texts, the definition of sin as pride cemented women to domestic social roles by demanding a "virtuous" passivity and willing submission to present "God-ordained" social stratification. This is clearly counter-purposed to the holiness movement's commitment to the full humanity and equality of persons, regardless of race or gender.

Many scholars before me have made connections between holiness theology and abolitionism and first-wave feminism. It is no secret that our roots should make us proud (in the positive sense of the word). And yet, as Paul Bassett has shown, the precise definition of original sin shifted in subsequent decades. Whereas Palmer's theology emphasizes placing "all on the altar" quite inclusively, "all" eventually shifted in meaning, finally by 1920 to mean narrowly one's own ego or pride or even lust. Bassett comments directly: "this development practically destroyed the commitment of the earlier Wesleyan/Holiness Movement to the full equality and full rights [of women], including the right to clerical ordination."<sup>54</sup> It is my strong belief that history bears out that when an Augustinian definition of original sin as pride and its primary evidence as concupiscence are emphasized, women are silenced. More than that, if the "ego" is the main problem presented, women who "have too little self" will only be tormented by the requisite demand of self-crucifixion.<sup>55</sup>

There are multiple images of sin that can be used to counter Augustine. When sin is defined as a "lack of an organizing center or focus, [or] dependence on others for one's own self definition,"<sup>56</sup> sin is overcome by an appropriate interdependence. When sin is defined as (misplaced) exocentricity (the opposite of ego-centricity), sin is overcome by an appropriate centrality, or more precisely, sin is overcome by an appropriately placed exocentricity (i.e., an exocentricity centered on God) which in turn opens a person to a subjective centrality. When sin is defined as a female despair that does not will to be a self (as Kierkegaard once suggested), sin is overcome by willing to be a self (related to the Power that constitutes

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<sup>54</sup>Bassett, 61.

<sup>55</sup>See Stanley for an excellent discussion of the relationship between sanctification and the empowered self. Stanley, 91-99.

<sup>56</sup>Saiving, 37.

it). When sin is defined as relational idolatry, or as “female devotion,” sin is overcome by having no idols, or as *entire devotion to God*.

While I have utilized several images here to denote an alternative to Augustine, it is my conviction that entire devotion is the most powerful foundation on which to build a Wesleyan-holiness-feminist soteriology. Not only does the concept of entire devotion have a long theological history, it also has present theological relevance, particularly for those in the holiness tradition. Entire devotion is crucial to constructing an image, indeed a new *imago* of the contemporary “holy woman.” Female virtue need no longer to be tied to images of coerced humility, submissiveness, complicity, and silence. Rather, “relational idolatry” and “entire devotion to God” re-imagine the holy woman as strong, dependent on God alone, free through grace, and vocal, even loud.

In sum, as the very means for the construction of this new *imago* of the holy woman, I am calling for a critical reclamation of Phoebe Palmer’s hamartiology (and its historical precursors) and of her integral theology of holiness as a process for offering persons, particularly women, theological and experiential space for embodied, active, speaking, *subjectivity*. Wynkoop’s theology of love and call for holistic holiness preaching only enhance Palmer’s construction. How then should holiness be preached to women? Put most simply, as Wynkoop expresses it and as Palmer’s theology implies, a woman can find **herself** in Christ, and live fully, vitally and creatively. This does not come through a relinquishing of “pride,” but often through a “giving up of idols,” and a willingness to be used of God.

# **CONTRIBUTE OR CAPITULATE? WESLEYANS, PENTECOSTALS, AND READING THE BIBLE IN A POST-COLONIAL MODE**

by

**Joel B. Green**

What might we who have been formed as Wesleyans contribute to the study of Scripture? In the early decades of the twenty-first century, will we help to set the agenda for the study of Scripture and, if so, in what directions will we lead? Will we ignore the contemporary hermeneutical landscape, will we segregate ourselves from our own Wesleyan tradition, or will we reach deep into and engage critically with our own tradition, we the people who are called “methodists”?<sup>1</sup>

From my vantage point as a pastor and New Testament scholar, these are pressing questions for which clear answers remain elusive. This is because the obstacles to the practice of biblical exegesis in a genuinely Wesleyan mode are clear and present. In this essay I want to argue that, among the threats to an authentically Methodist engagement with the Bible, two are especially enticing. They are (1) the gravitational pull of scientific interpretation of the Bible, in all of its myriad forms; and (2) pressure to adopt, if not to continue to embrace, a view of biblical authority more at home in the conservative evangelicalism of the Modern Era than in the Wesleyan tradition or, for that matter, in the Christian movement more generally.

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<sup>1</sup>Here and elsewhere in this essay, I refer to “methodists” with a lower-case “m” in order to draw attention to an ecclesial tradition without referring more narrowly to a particular denominational instantiation of that tradition.

I urge that the contemporary hermeneutical landscape is such that we in the Wesleyan tradition may faithfully exercise our craft free from either of these constraints and that we may operate creatively within and from our ecclesial and theological community, if only we will. Finally, I will sketch three areas where we have work to do if we are to seize the opportunity, even vocation, set before us. In this constructive part of my essay I will urge that we reclaim the importance of theological formation for biblical interpretation, that we recast the authority of Scripture in soteriological terms, and that we reforge, especially in theological terms, the wider discourse on “validity in interpretation.” I will stress the need for Wesleyans to cultivate a renewed emphasis on the community of interpretation.

### A Post-Colonial Moment

According to Edward W. Said, writing in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, “Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination. . . .”<sup>2</sup> Postcolonial studies, a critical sensibility that arose in literary and cultural studies in the last two decades of the twentieth century, has sought to account for the way texts embodied and broadcast the philosophical assumptions and arrangements of both empire and colony—taking as its point of departure the fact that “by the 1930s, European colonies and ex-colonies encompassed 84.6 percent of the land surface of the globe.”<sup>3</sup> Introduced into biblical studies, postcolonial sensibilities have focused on how biblical interpretation has been deployed as an agent of imperialism and colonialism, recognizing that our engagement with ancient texts cannot escape the gravitational pull of the culture of those doing the interpretation.

<sup>2</sup>Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Stephen D. Moore, “Postcolonialism,” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (ed. A.K.M. Adam; St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice, 2000), 182–188 (182). For introduction, see, more broadly, Homi K. Bhabha, “Postcolonial Criticism,” in *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies* (ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn; New York: MLA, 1992), 437–465.

In a parody of postcolonial studies, I want to reflect on the degree to which the work of theological engagement with Scripture indigenous to Wesleyans (as well as other theological traditions) has been colonized by the empire of scientific exegesis, to the end that even to ask the question, “How might the Wesleyan and Pentecostal movements contribute to biblical studies?” will seem odd to many. This is true for many persons who find their home in the Wesleyan and Pentecostal traditions, as well as those who do not share our history. This is because, in post-Reformation hermeneutics, in biblical studies as in natural science, focus on “literal interpretation” pressed for commitments to observer objectivity and, eventually, observer neutrality. As Umberto Eco observes, according to the medieval encyclopedia, the universe was “nothing other than an emanative outpouring from the unknowable and unnameable One down to the furthest ramifications of matter,” with every being functioning as “a synecdoche or metonymy of the One.”<sup>4</sup> If both Bible and the entire sensible world are books written by the hand of God, then biblical text and, with it, all of nature serve metaphorically to reveal the Divine Author. Prior to the 1600s, then, exegesis of the cosmos proceeded along the lines of exegesis of the Bible, in accordance with the traditional theory of the four levels of interpretation: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the analogical. When Protestant interpretation countered this fourfold method of exegesis, in favor of the *sensus litteralis*, it followed only naturally that nature too would be examined along different lines. Specifically, the work of interpretation, broadly conceived, was loosed from the specifically religious concerns to which it had previously been tethered.<sup>5</sup>

Although he has antecedents, we may find it helpful to recall Johann Philipp Gabler, writing in the latter 1700s, who proffered a methodological distinction between dogmatic theology and biblical theology which, in many of its basic points, would carry the day.<sup>6</sup> Gabler sketched a three-

<sup>4</sup>Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 103.

<sup>5</sup>See Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and the more nuanced Kenneth J. Howell, *God's Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup>See John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (1980), 133-158.

stage process by which one might move from historical analysis of the biblical texts to a biblical theology: (1) linguistic and historical analysis; (2) identifying and synthesizing those ideas common among the biblical writers; and (3) arrival at the timeless and universal principles of the Bible. If one were to engage in dogmatic theology, one would begin here with these transcendent ideas so as to adapt them to particular contexts. Consequently, the New Testament especially was positioned as the foundation or fountainhead of all theology. With some modifications, this essential process won widespread support over the next two centuries and continues to have its champions into the present.<sup>7</sup> In biblical studies, this interpretive procedure has been long on *description*, but has generated very little in the way of *appropriation*, having segregated into discrete questions “what it meant” and “what it means.” Scientific exegesis has proven to be more adept at the former than itself engaging or funding the engagement of the latter. We have heard more and more about less and less, requiring us to sift through mountains of analysis to uncover a molehill of significance.

Scientific exegesis, known to most of us as the historical-critical paradigm, thus colonized the ecclesial world of biblical interpretation, segregating further and further professional biblical studies from the everyday interpretive practices characteristic of the church, and disconnecting not only biblical scholarship but often the Bible itself from homiletics or constructive theology. Given its accredited status, legitimated by its longevity in the modern era and authorized by powerful cultural forces associated with modernity, the historical-critical paradigm continues as standard operating procedure for many. Indeed, persons engaged in discourse and practices at the interface of biblical studies and theological reflection find not only that they must mine the distant past for exemplars of the craft of theological exegesis,<sup>8</sup> but also that they are required to mount an apology for their engaging in this form of interdisci-

<sup>7</sup>E.g., Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990); Peter Balla, *Challenges to New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Justify the Enterprise* (WUNT 2:95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1: *Grundlegung: Von Jesus zu Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992).

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Stephen Fowl, ed., *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

plularity in the first place. Is theological exegesis *serious* biblical studies? Is it not widely presumed that critical biblical scholarship and ecclesial engagement with Scripture constitute two categories with little overlap?

That the net effect of this dominion has been the theological emasculation of the biblical studies academy will appear to some as a desirable outcome, to others as regrettable, and to others still as a sign that the tools associated with historical-critical simply have not been put to good use. In any case, it is difficult to overlook the overgrowth that now hides from view the pathway from biblical text to Christian theology, and, for many the existence of such a pathway is itself questionable. Deploying a different metaphor, Brevard Childs wrote only a decade ago of the “iron curtain” separating the two disciplines, biblical studies and systematic theology,<sup>9</sup> though recent years have witnessed increasing efforts to scale, or raze, this wall.<sup>10</sup>

If this state of affairs is true of the relation of biblical studies to the theological enterprise more generally, it is also true of biblical studies in the Wesleyan and Pentecostal traditions. Until the 1990s, the idea of a particularly Pentecostal contribution to engaging Scripture would have been difficult to identify, though contributions in this arena have now begun to coalesce around at least four characteristics: an emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit, an emphasis on the role of experience, an emphasis on narrative texts as theologically potent and normative, and an emphasis on the significant role of the community of faith as the primary context of interpretation.<sup>11</sup> A cursory examination of two decades of pub-

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<sup>9</sup>Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), xvi.

<sup>10</sup>Cf., e.g., Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000); Charles J. Scalise, *From Scripture to Theology: A Canonical Journey into Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1996); Christopher R. Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998); Francis Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1994); *idem*, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>11</sup>Cf., e.g., Kenneth J. Archer, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect,” *JPT* 8 (1996), 63-81; Arden C. Autry, “Dimensions of Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Focus,” *JPT* 3 (1993), 29-50; Robert O. Baker, “Pentecostal Bible Reading: Toward a Model of Reading for the Formation of Christian Affections,”



lication of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* suggests that, if anything, Wesleyans have been even less fecund in their thinking about what it might mean to engage Scripture self-consciously as Wesleyans; indeed, less than five percent of the articles published during the period 1981—2001 focus in some substantive way on a Wesleyan approach to the Bible.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, beginning early in the twentieth century, innovations in hermeneutical theory began to shift the weight of emphasis from interpretation as the discovery of meaning or achievement of understanding toward interpretation as the generation of meaning. Whenever such philosophical considerations were taken seriously, the imperial rule of scientific exegesis was repealed. In this hermeneutic, emphasis is placed on the process whereby “the right of the reader and the right of the text converge in an important struggle that generates the whole dynamic of interpretation.”<sup>13</sup> Gadamer moved hermeneutics in this direction by insisting that the scientific quest for truth, based on the experimental method, is not the only path to truth; art, for example, is “known” through a hermeneutical “game” in which we are transformed in relation to it. With regard to texts,

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*JPT* 7 (1995), 34-48; Richard D. Israel et al., “Pentecostals and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals and Community,” *Pneuma* 15 (1993), 137-161; Jackie David Johns and Cheryl Bridges Johns, “Yielding to the Spirit: A Pentecostal Approach to Group Bible Study,” *JPT* 1 (1992), 109-134; Roger Stronstad, “Trends in Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *Paraclete* 22 (3, 1998), 1-12; John Christopher Thomas, “Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions: A Pentecostal Hermeneutic as Test Case,” in *Between Two Horizons*, 108-122.

<sup>12</sup>Exceptions include J. Kenneth Grider, “Wesleyanism and the Inerrancy Issue,” *WTJ* 19 (1984), 51-61; Frank A. Spina, “Wesleyan Faith Seeking Biblical Understanding,” *WTJ* 30 (1995) 26-49; Robert W. Wall, “Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic of Scripture,” *WTJ* 30 (1995), 50-67; idem, “The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies,” *WTJ* 33 (1998), 101-115; Joel B. Green, “Reading the Bible as Wesleyans: A Response to Robert Wall,” *WTJ* 33 (1998), 116-29; Richard P. Thompson, “John Wesley’s Concept of Inspiration and Literary-Critical Approaches to Scripture,” *WTJ* 34 (1999), 151-176; Russell Morton, “Studying Text in a Wesleyan Context (A Response to Robert Wall and Joel Green),” *WTJ* 34 (1999), 243-257; Thomas E. Phillips, “Reading Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” *WTJ* 35 (2000), 32-48.

<sup>13</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 32. See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992); and the eminently useful Dan R. Stiver, *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

Gadamer analogously called for a type of hermeneutical consciousness whereby the act of understanding is imagined as a fusion of one's own horizon (i.e., confronting one's own historicity) with the historical horizon embodied in these texts from the past.<sup>14</sup>

From this perspective, one's historical and cultural distance from the text erects no barrier to but is a necessary factor in the process of interpretation. "Meaning," according to this way of thinking, is not so much something to be stalked and captured like an exotic animal-cum-safari-trophy; rather, meaning is expressed, embodied, proclaimed, performed. Today, numerous hermeneutical approaches are championed, most of which question the capacity of any particular text to divulge a single, congruous understanding of itself. At the turn of the twenty-first century the hermeneutical landscape is characterized by a swirling heterogeneity, though the importance of the location of the interpreter, including one's *theological* location within a tradition, is increasingly pervasive. And this opens wide the door for inquiring into how we in the methodist tradition might engage in biblical studies as methodists.

In short, the contours of contemporary theological hermeneutics allow fresh opportunities for Wesleyans to come into the marketplace of biblical studies with boldness to display our wares and, indeed, to practice our craft in ways that are distinctively our own. This is because ours is a time characterized by the failure of the dynasty of scientific study of the Bible—which for so long was regnant in the academy, seminaries, departments of religious studies, and which, to an astonishing degree, has infiltrated our congregations. Of course, to observe that the scientific study of the Bible has lost its pervasive authority is not to say that this form of study, the historical-critical paradigm, is no longer capable of taking prisoners or even recruiting loyal subjects. Indeed, I think that one of the real dangers facing Wesleyan biblical scholars is that we will be wooed by the promise of respectability promulgated by institutions built on and supported by scientific exegesis. Of course, some of us will see the loss of a single king to whom we bowed in obeisance as cause for concern; is it not the case that, in the absence of a king, all biblical readers do that which is right in their own eyes? As will already have become clear, my own sense is that the fall of the empire of scientific study of the Bible is *more oppor-*

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<sup>14</sup>Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2d ed.; New York: Crossroad, 2000).

*tunity than obstacle*, that this postcolonial moment allows us the opportunity to pursue a mode of inquiry far more conducive to our interests in a Wesleyan and theological engagement with the Scriptures.

### “Wesleyan” or “Evangelical”?

Before pressing ahead, however, I want to call our attention to another danger lurking on the horizon—namely, talk of or claims concerning Scripture which focus on the so-called objective authority of the Bible, its propositional veracity.

Simply put, our situation as Wesleyans has not been greatly helped by developments within the evangelical arm of the church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, among whom biblical authority has come to reside especially in the propositional content of the Bible and in affirmations concerning its trustworthiness.<sup>15</sup> In the past century, American evangelicals developed a well-nuanced vocabulary for speaking of Scripture—especially “infallibility” (“the full trustworthiness of a guide that is not deceived and does not deceive”) and “inerrancy” (“the total trustworthiness of a source of information that contains no mistakes”).<sup>16</sup> Such formulations as these are incongruous in relation to Wesley and, indeed, with the nature of Scripture itself, and, arguably, are of little benefit to the life of the church. Some will take my claims as rather extravagant, but let me suggest contemplation on three observations regarding such affirmations of the trustworthiness of Scripture as now characterize conservative evangelicalism. They incorporate no guarantees regarding the faithful interpretation of Scripture, they extract no commitments from persons regarding fidelity to the witness of Scripture, and they are implicated in a positivism and a reductionism that deserve little quarter in biblical faith.

If, as evangelicals and many others are right to affirm, the authority of Scripture is best discerned in the lives (and not only the assertions) of those communities oriented around Scripture, then I take it as axiomatic

<sup>15</sup>The next three paragraphs are adapted from Joel B. Green, “Scripture in the Church: Reconstructing the Authority of Scripture for Christian Formation and Mission,” in *The Future of Methodism: Trajectories into the Third Millennium* (ed. Paul Wesley Chilcote; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 38-51 (40-42).

<sup>16</sup>J. I. Packer, “Infallibility and Inerrancy of the Bible,” in *New Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright; Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1988), 337-339 (337). For greater nuance, cf. Robert K. Johnson, *Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 15-47.

that affirmations regarding Scripture are never enough. This truism is on display in the Gospels and Acts, where “the battle for the Bible” focuses not on *whether* the Scriptures of Israel are to be taken seriously, but on *how* those Scriptures are to be understood within the framework of God’s purpose and appropriated within the lives of God’s people. Pharisees have one view, the Jewish elite residing in Jerusalem have another view, and Jesus has still another—all with regard to the same authoritative Scriptures. This is not a struggle over how best to construe biblical authority; rather, it is a hermeneutical quandary—and one with such high stakes that differences of viewpoint surrounding the message of the Scriptures would lead eventually to the execution of one of its interpreters, Jesus. Moreover, that evangelicals today can agree on affirming the authority of Scripture and yet fail to agree on numerous issues regarding its message (on any number of questions, theological and ethical) is testimony enough that insistence on a high view of Scripture is inadequate.

We may express concern as well with the tendency among many of our brothers and sisters in the wider evangelical family to reduce the witness of Scripture to its propositional content and scriptural “truth” to what can be verified through observable data. The difficulties here are several. For example, the biblical witness comprises a complex and dynamic interaction of different sorts of language and modes of expression, including analogy, poetry, narrative, legislation, performative utterances, epistle, apocalyptic, parable, and more. What definition of “truth” can be used to deduce whether this variety of linguistic expressions is “true”? True according to what? What is more, claims to truth and trustworthiness in reference to Scripture are never made by persons occupying a neutral ledge on which to adjudicate such matters; they are, rather, theological judgments. Whether one believes that Jesus Christ is (or is not) the self-communication of God will have a determinative role in the credence one allows the biblical witness to Jesus and to the God who raised him from the dead. Whether we see the truth depends on our commitments and on whether we *do* the truth, on whether we present ourselves to God in willingness to be transformed (cf. John 7:17; Rom 12:1-2).<sup>17</sup> In fact, arguments in favor of the special status of the Scriptures tend to be convincing only to those who are already inclined to grant them this status. This is

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 194-196.

not surprising, given that theological arguments are themselves “faith seeking understanding.”

The issue here is not the authority of Scripture *per se*, but rather how best to articulate the role of Scripture in relation to our history as Wesleyans. Rather than joining many conservative evangelicals, especially those from the Reformed branch of the Christian family, in an embrace of the Bible as epistemological norm, we are challenged to articulate and practice the authority of Scripture in ways more congenial to our heritage.<sup>18</sup>

### What Can the Pentecostal and Wesleyan Movements Contribute?

It now remains for me to propose something of our commitments and practices were we to seize the opportunity before us to engage in the study of Scripture in ways that are nourished by our common history as methodists. I propose three.

**1. Reclaim the Importance of Theological Formation for Biblical Interpretation.** At first blush, the nature of Wesley’s appeal to Scripture seems straightforward enough: “Bring me plain, scriptural proof for your assertion, or I cannot allow it.”<sup>19</sup> Apparently to his detractors, Wesley’s commitments regarding Scripture went beyond straightforward to simplistic, even base; note the derisive labels directed at him and his movement: Bible-bigots, Bible-moths, and the like.<sup>20</sup> In the theological world of Wesley’s construction, however, “plain, scriptural proof,” “plain truth for plain people,” and “the plain sense of Scripture” comprised important hermeneutical mottos whose significance ought not be tied simply to Wesley’s high view of Scripture. Indeed, the higher the view of Scripture, the more central and, perhaps, controverted are issues of interpretation, since willingness to stand under Scripture raises the stakes on what the Scriptures say. At the turn of the twenty-first century, such issues are often parsed in terms of our

<sup>18</sup>See William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology: From the Fathers to Feminism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

<sup>19</sup>John Wesley, *Advice to the People Called Methodists with Regard to Dress*, §5.1. More generally, see, e.g., Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture* (Kingswood; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 55-65; Mack B. Stokes, *The Bible in the Wesleyan Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

<sup>20</sup>John Wesley, “On God’s Vineyard,” §1.1.

apprehension of Scripture's content, with laments regarding biblical literacy often voiced. Against the backdrop of Wesley's emphasis on the plain meaning of Scripture, however, concerns with biblical literacy bear closer consideration. Simply put, when Wesley and his methodists speak of the plain meaning of Scripture, we must ask, plain to whom? What sort of people would hear the message of Scripture in just this way?

Like those of the Protestant Reformation before him, Wesley moved away from the four senses of Scripture characteristic of much medieval exegesis in favor of "the plain, literal meaning." "You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour," he wrote, "if you depart ever so little from Scripture; yea, or from the plain, literal meaning of any text, taken in connection with the context."<sup>21</sup> We would be mistaken to imagine that Wesley has just put forward an argument for a reading of Scripture focused on "context" as this has been defined in subsequent biblical scholarship—either as historical context or literary cotext. When modern folk complain that, in his approach to Scripture, Wesley was "pre-critical," they appear to be denying Wesley's membership in the guild of modern, historical criticism; however mistaken in their truncated use of the term "critical," at least they are right on this score: Wesley was not a modern historical or literary critic.

What, then, might it mean to learn from Wesley on this point? Let me suggest three areas for reflection. First, contemporary work in hermeneutics has opened the way for us to grasp how it is that Wesley's "plain sense" could be so *Wesleyan*. I am thinking particularly of the recovery of the reader and, then, of communities of interpretation, in contemporary hermeneutics. To take two examples of a more moderate kind on the landscape of reception theory, Wolfgang Iser and Umberto Eco have helped us to appreciate that texts are not self-interpreting, semantically sealed, containers of meaning.<sup>22</sup> For Eco, texts like those in Scripture are characterized by the invitation for readers "to make the work"

<sup>21</sup>John Wesley, *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection*. For this emphasis in Wesley, see, e.g., Oden, *Scriptural Christianity*, 57-58; and especially Jones, *Scripture*, 114-123.

<sup>22</sup>See, e.g., Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1974); Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, *Advances in Semiotics* (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1979); idem, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

together with the author; they are rendered meaningful in personal and communal performance. Iser observes that texts are inevitably characterized by gaps that must be filled by readers; even if the text guides this “filling” process, different readers will actualize the text’s clues in different ways. For both Eco and Iser, then, texts are capable of a range (though not an infinite number) of possible, valid meanings, depending on who is doing the reading, from what perspectives they read, and what reading protocols they practice. Accordingly, to some significant degree, what it means to engage in a Wesleyan reading of Scripture is that those doing the reading have been nurtured in the Wesleyan tradition of according privilege to some theological categories over others—the pursuit of holiness, for example, and the primacy of grace. From this perspective, reading is less “discovery of meaning” and more text-guided “production” and “performance.” We read with a constant eye to “the Scripture way of salvation,” and we do so in ways oriented toward the ongoing formation of the people of God in holiness. This does not mean that our readings as Wesleyans are complete, or that they constitute the only possible ways of construing texts, but it does indicate how, from diverse communities of reading, we may hear the same pattern of words in new keys. Neither does it sanction every reading as equally valid, but it does indicate in one significant way how diverse readings of the same text might lay claim to legitimacy.

Second, with regard to Wesley’s interest in a “literal sense,” it is important to remember that, for Wesley, this “sense” of Scripture was grounded, above all, in the intent of Scripture’s one author, God. Hence, the “literal sense” must coincide with the general tenor of Scripture. In other words, the meaning of biblical texts might be said to be “plain” when placed within the context of the whole of Scripture’s message—which, as we will underscore momentarily, Wesley understood in especially soteriological terms.

What all of this suggests, third, is that a Wesleyan mode of interpretation cannot be reduced to a particular set of exegetical techniques. There is no Wesleyan contraption into which biblical texts can be dumped, the handle cranked, and a Wesleyan result guaranteed on the other side. What is needed, rather, is involvement in biblical interpretation by persons formed in Wesleyan communities. Or, to put it differently, it is essential that we recover the mutual relationship between Scripture and theology. Faithful appropriation of Scripture requires attention to theology, with the

result that we can hardly speak of biblical illiteracy in the church without at the same time decrying our concomitant theological amnesia. Doctrine serves as our “rule of faith,” guiding our reading of Scripture in authentically Christian ways.

## **2. Recast the Authority of Scripture in Soteriological Terms.**

Were we to listen carefully to preachers and teachers and other theologians of the church, my guess is that what they might say to those of us who are biblical scholars is that, what is needed most, is to hear from biblical studies what we have to offer by way of good news. The concern is at least twofold. There is, first, a crisis of relevance and, second, a crisis of politics.

With regard to the question of relevance, it is simply the case that, for many critical scholars, even acknowledging the search for contemporary significance is already enough to poison the water. As Ernst Briesach put it, the historical project was to move forward “without any practical interest, be it lessons, devotion, entertainment, or propaganda.”<sup>23</sup> It is no surprise, then, that voices bemoaning the irrelevance of modern biblical criticism to the theological task, to ethical discourse, to homiletics, and the like have become so pervasive and increasingly vibrant. If, as Karl Barth would have it, systematic theology “. . . does not ask what the apostles and prophets said but what we must say on the basis of the apostles and prophets,”<sup>24</sup> it is little wonder that theologians have despaired at modern biblical scholarship. We biblical scholars have generally provided little by way of access to “what the apostles and prophets said,” since the modern paradigm of study has portrayed “the strange world of the Bible” as profoundly remote from our own world, rendering as arduous in the extreme the shuttle diplomacy required to negotiate good news for God’s people in this world.

With regard to the question of politics, biblical scholarship has been surprisingly naive regarding the political consequences of its practices. Draped in the colorless clothing of objectivity, in the service of scientific neutrality, it has sat idly by in the face of the oppression of women or of apartheid and other manifestations of racism, to mention only two exam-

<sup>23</sup>Ernst Briesach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 323.

<sup>24</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1: *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, pt. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 16.



ples. Focused on the scientific rendering of the meaning of ancient texts in the ancient world, and at best only secondarily with the application of this divine word in church and world, and then typically in the form of abstract principles, biblical scholarship has funded forms of Christian belief sundered from Christian practice reminiscent of a gnosticism deemed as heretical at earlier times in Christian history.

How might attention to our common history as methodists provide a needed corrective? For Wesley, the “plain sense” of Scripture was construed in relation to the grand story of Scripture. Although this overarching story can be articulated in the form of the story running from Genesis to Revelation, creation to new creation, which places its stamp on every biblical text, more pivotal for Wesley was the soteriological progress of God’s people, coming to faith and moving on to perfection. Thus, for Wesley, the purpose of biblical interpretation is singular, as he writes at the opening of his *Sermons on Several Occasions*:

I want to know one thing, the way to heaven—how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men [sic]. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his Book; for this end, to find the way to heaven.<sup>25</sup>

Wesley’s words may be troublesome to twenty-first-century sensibilities. We might take offense at this apparent reduction of the gift of salvation to life-after-death, as though heaven were the single, narrow locus of salvation: “Pie in the sky, in the sweet bye and bye!” We might be annoyed by the individualism that seems to reside in Wesley’s words, as though Bible reading or otherwise charting the “way to heaven” was something one might do on one’s own, alone with God. It is important to recall, then, the horizons of his larger message and program, with its profoundly social understanding of church and focus on mutual accountability, relational growth in grace, and communal participation and discernment. Moreover, Wesley deploys the phrase “the way to heaven” not to restrict salvation to life in the hereafter, but to speak of the life-journey as a whole, a “way” marked by growth in

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<sup>25</sup>John Wesley, Preface to *Sermons on Several Occasions*, §5.

grace and faithfulness, a journey whose beginning, middle, and end are mapped in relation to God and God's people. We may thus hear in Wesley's words two pivotal emphases: salvation is a "way," a journey, a life-path, and not only or merely a point in time or a destination we seek; and this way of salvation is the theme of Scripture—that is, Scripture's organizing principle and, so, the theological context within which the Bible is to be read.<sup>26</sup>

On this basis, we might insist that Wesley's own view of the Bible's truthfulness would not find its true test in its historicity, nor would his notion of biblical authority rest in the role of Scripture as epistemic base. The focus would be on whether Scripture does, indeed, allow me "to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore." Or, to put it differently, the authority of Scripture is measured by its performance among those who are being saved. To refer to the Bible as authoritative Scripture is thus to declare its role in *shaping a people*, transforming their most basic commitments, their dispositions, their identities. We come to the text *expecting it to tell us something*.<sup>27</sup> If the narrative of Scripture is a unitary story of the world we inhabit, then to be a Christian is in some sense to have our lives shaped in a decisive way by and taken up into this other larger story of God's redemptive project in the world.<sup>28</sup> In this construal, the authority of Scripture is less demand and more invitation to continue and to live out the story of God's ongoing and gracious purpose for his people. The authority of Scripture is an invitation to resist attempts at revising the words of Scripture so as to make them match our reality and instead to make sense of our reality, our lives, within its pages. To embrace the Bible as Scripture is to accept it not as one narrative among others, but to accord it a privilege above all others, and to allow ourselves to be shaped by it ultimately.

**3. Reforge Discourse on "Validity in Interpretation."** I have suggested that, the higher the view of Scripture, the more crucial the issue of interpretation—indeed, the more crucial the twin issues of validity and relevance in interpretation. If Scripture provides the context within which we

<sup>26</sup>For this more specialized definition of "theming," see Gerald Prince, *Narrative as Theme: Studies in French Fiction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1992).

<sup>27</sup>Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.

<sup>28</sup>See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Living within a Text," in *Faith and Narrative* (ed. Keith E. Yandell; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 202-213.

make sense of life before God in this world, then it is pivotal that we have some significant measure of confidence that we are reading Scripture aright. In critical study of Scripture, validity in interpretation has traditionally focused on getting behind the biblical text to the historical context within which that text was formed and/or to the events to which that text refers. The emphasis has been on authorial intent, especially as this might be constructed via grammatico-historical exegesis. More recently, some interpreters have migrated to forms of study for which there are no “facts” and, indeed, no “meanings,” at least in a final sense, but only “perspectives.” Accordingly, texts and interpreters are set free to make meaning quite apart from any interpretive constraints. To raise the question of validity in interpretation, an inescapable issue for communities who turn to the Bible as authoritative Scripture, then, is to stimulate controversy.<sup>29</sup>

Two affirmations must guide us at this point. First, we ought self-consciously to acknowledge that we Wesleyans are not approaching Scripture in a value-free mode, but do so precisely as Wesleyans. Second, we must allow that, even though we come with faith-commitments to Scripture, we do so while submitting even these commitments to Scripture. To put it differently, attention to “the literal sense” of Scripture is for us held in tandem with a commitment to the Bible’s right to speak over against the church. Taken together, these two considerations press upon us that any list of criteria for discerning “validity in interpretation” is incomplete if it does not include theological concerns. Importantly, this means that we cannot presume that exegesis leads to doctrine, pure and simple, but must account for the priority of doctrine in the interpretive task.

To be sure, we will not neglect other criteria. Thus, we might insist that an interpretation can be said to be valid when it (1) accounts for the text in its final form, without depending on a cut-and-paste job that refabricates the text in order that it might fit a prior theory; (2) accounts for the text as a whole and is consistent with the whole of the text, without masking unfortunate aspects of the text that continue to haunt the interpreter; (3) accounts for the cultural embeddedness of language, allowing the text

<sup>29</sup>For a nuanced introduction to two primary positions on the importance of authorial intent, see the juxtaposition of essays in *Between Two Horizons*: Max Turner, “Historical Criticism and Theological Hermeneutics of the New Testament,” 44-70; and Stephen E. Fowl, “The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture,” 71-87. More generally, cf. Richard Freadman and Seumas Miller, *Re-Thinking Theory: A Critique of Contemporary Literary Theory and an Alternative Account* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

to have its meaning fashioned in light of the socio-historical assumptions of its own day; and (4) is consistent with itself and with the methodological approach chosen by the interpreter. But to such considerations we will add others, and particularly that, for Christians, a valid interpretation is one which is coherent with the rule of faith that was itself instrumental in guiding the formation of the canon of Scripture. We would not deny that the texts we find in the Bible might be capable of other meanings, of course, but would insist that particularly Christian readings of the Bible as Scripture are aligned with the classical faith of the church. Nor would we presume that, by “valid” interpretation, we refer to “complete” interpretation, as though our reading resolves the hermeneutical work for all time or all people. Rather, different interpretive protocols as well as readings grounded in different times and places, embedded in different human cultures, will continue to turn the spotlight on different aspects of the biblical text while generating potentially valid readings of Scriptures.

## **Conclusion**

What might Wesleyans contribute to the study of Scripture? I have suggested that what we have to offer, first and foremost, is our theological heritage. For persons weaned on critical biblical studies, this admission may be as surprising as it is stark, given the time-honored, descriptive task allocated to biblical exegesis. The landscape has shifted, however, so as to open space for and indeed to nurture communities of theological interpretation.

Were we to take seriously the perspective I have sketched, we would redouble our commitment to a lively ecclesiology, centered in a robust church oriented toward the theological formation of those who serve Jesus as Lord. We would mitigate the longstanding presumption that biblical studies does and must function as the foundation on which the theological enterprise is built, or the proposal that biblical studies provides the raw materials with which theologians are to work; we would instead come to regard biblical interpretation itself as a theological practice, from beginning to end caught in a feedback loop comprising exegesis of Bible, church, and world; and critical reflection on the church’s practices. We would gravitate toward a more organic (or fluid) relationship between what are often now discrete departments in our seminaries and other institutions of higher learning. We would recognize that biblical interpretation constitutes a set of practices that express our deepest convictions, inescapably manifesting dispositions formed, in our case, with the community of the people called methodists.

# JOHN 14:12-21 AS PARADIGM FOR THE WESLEYAN UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION

by

**Russell Morton**

It has long been acknowledged that Wesleyan theology focuses on the Johannine corpus. Both Adam Clarke<sup>1</sup> and John Wesley<sup>2</sup> cited 1 John 3:7-10 as scriptural evidence for Methodism's teaching on "Christian Perfection." Thirty years ago, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop entitled her analysis

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<sup>1</sup>Clarke is especially adamant about Christian perfection when discussing 1 Jn. 3:9 in his *The Holy Bible: With Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: Abingdon, n.d.), 6:915, "We have the most indubitable evidence that many. . .philosophers had acquired, by mental discipline and cultivation, an entire ascendancy over all their wonted vicious habits. . . . O ye Christian divines! Ye real or pretended Gospel ministers! Will ye allow the influence of the Grace of Christ a sway not even so extensive as that of the philosophy of the heathen [sic] who never heard of the true God?"

<sup>2</sup>"Christian Perfection," in *The Works of John Wesley* (Bicentennial ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 1985) 2:116, "[T]he Apostle resumes this subject [the Christian's freedom from sin] in the third chapter and largely explains his own meaning. 'Little children,' saith he, 'let no man deceive you' (as though I had given any encouragement to those that continue in sin); 'he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that commiteth sin is of the devil. . . .' Here the point, which till then might possibly have admitted of some doubt in weak minds, is purposely settled by the last of the inspired writers, and decided in the clearest manner. In conformity therefore both to the doctrine of St. John, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion: A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin."

of Wesleyan theology *A Theology of Love*,<sup>3</sup> pointing to the influence of the Johannine writings on Wesley's thought. Yet, even in a recent collection of essays discussing the Wesleyan tradition's unique understanding of evangelism and mission, a Johannine perspective on mission was wanting.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, on the popular level, the focal text for evangelism and mission often continues to be Mt 28:19-20, conceptualized as the "Great Commission." One could explore the observation that this Matthean text is not so much a commission as a statement of assurance guaranteeing the church of Jesus' abiding presence in the community.<sup>5</sup> The focus of this study, however, is John 14:12-21. Here, we see that the Johannine Jesus promises the disciples that they will do greater works than he through the agency of the Paraclete, who guarantees that they will not be left orphans.

Following a rationale for using postmodern criteria for exegeting this passage, we will explore the following topics. First discussed here will be the character of the greater works of Jn. 14:12-14. Second, we will explore how the giving of the Paraclete enables Christians to keep Christ's commandments (Jn. 14:14-17). Third, there will be observations on the meaning of not being left orphans in Jn 14:18-21. We will conclude with remarks on the ramifications of these observations for evangelism and outreach in our postmodern world.

### Rationale for Using Postmodern Criteria

At first sight, it may strike the reader as almost contradictory to apply a postmodern paradigm to any passage of the Gospel of John. Postmodernism, for example, is commonly understood as opposing claims of absolute truth, while one of the central themes of the Johannine corpus is "truth." In the synoptic tradition, on the other hand, the term is only found once apiece in Mark (5:33) and Luke (4:25), and in Matthew not at all. In

<sup>3</sup>M. B. Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1972).

<sup>4</sup>J. C. Logan, ed. *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage* (Nashville: Kingwood Press, 1994).

<sup>5</sup>J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 41-42; G. Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 135. The words here denote "not only the help and protection of Jesus in the carrying out of the missionary task, but the abiding presence of Jesus in the congregation."

John, the Word that became flesh is full of truth (1:14), and grace and truth are in Jesus Christ (1:17). One must worship God in spirit and in truth (4:23). Jesus tells his auditors that they will know the truth and the truth will set them free (5:32), and Jesus hears the truth that he hears from God (5:40). Jesus, indeed, is the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), and the Paraclete is none other than the “spirit of truth” (15:26). God’s word is truth (17:17), and Jesus was born to witness to the truth (18:37). Indeed, the only postmodern sounding voice in the Gospel of John is Pilate, who asks Jesus “what is truth” (18:38).<sup>6</sup>

Yet, if John is the gospel where Jesus is most emphatic about his truth claims, there is one feature of these claims that is remarkably amenable to a postmodern hermeneutic. While Jesus is certainly the embodiment of truth, who hears the truth from the Father, and bestows the Spirit of Truth upon the believers, that truth is defined in a striking manner. The truth is not the Torah, not the prophetic word of the Hebrew Bible, nor is it an authoritative interpretation of that word by the religious establishment. It is embodied in the person and character of Jesus himself. In this way, we see John radically redefining truth. The traditional notions of truth are undermined. This procedure can be illuminated through the postmodern tools of deconstruction.

An example of how John “deconstructs” traditional motifs is found in P. N. Anderson’s work on John 6.<sup>7</sup> In particular, Anderson points to John’s use of irony in the interpretation of the manna tradition in Jn. 6:25-66 as a “rhetorical trump” to win his argument.<sup>8</sup> In the context of the manna discourse “the Johannine Jesus actually refers to it as death-producing, in contrast to the Life which comes through him (vss. 49f., 58).”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Space does not permit time to explore the irony of Pilate’s question to Jesus, who embodies truth, “What is truth”? R. Schnackenburg’s statement (*The Gospel According to John* vol. 3 [New York: Crossroad, 1987], 251), “Jesus offers Pilate God’s truth, indeed, he stands before him as the voice of the truth; but Pilate does not hear it, does not understand it,” catches some of the irony, but does not explore its depth or its black humor.

<sup>7</sup>P. N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (WUNT 2<sup>te</sup> Reihe; Tübingen, Mohr, 1996). This is not to say that Anderson claims John is employing a deconstructionist method. Nevertheless, Anderson’s insights lend credence to understanding John through a deconstructionist lens.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 213-219.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 216.

Such a procedure, seen through the eyes of post-modern criticism, demonstrates that Jesus may be understood as deconstructing the tradition. The formerly life giving food is now death producing.

A similar paradigm shift occurs with the concept of truth. In 8:30-36, for example, the Johannine Jesus speaks to those who believe in him, saying that if they “remain in my word, truly you are my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (8:31-32). Jesus’ opponents declare that they are Abraham’s descendents and have never been enslaved. Leaving aside the question of the accuracy of the statement, the Johannine Jesus is pointing to his words, which derive from God (8:30-31). This is the truth that confronts the opponents, who remain in sin (8:34-35). They point with pride to their heritage as Abraham’s children, and, by implication, their adherence to the Mosaic covenant as indicators of being heirs of God’s promise. The Johannine Jesus counters, on the basis of his own greater knowledge as the “I AM” (8:58), pointing out how Abraham rejoiced in Jesus’ appearance (8:56). In short, the Abraham tradition is turned upside down to prove that, despite their claims, Jesus’ opponents are not, in fact, heirs of Abraham.<sup>10</sup> In short, truth claims based upon the ancient heritage of Abraham, Moses, and Torah are undermined and serve a subordinate role as witness to the truth personified in the person and work of Jesus (5:45-47). In this way, using a deconstructionist model, we may see how the claims of the Johannine Jesus may be understood from a post-modern framework, since traditional concepts of truth are deconstructed and infused with new meaning.

### **Character of the “Greater Works” of John 14:12-14**

The context of John 14:12-14 is the first half of Jesus’ farewell discourse to his disciples, which consists of Jn 13:31-17:26. This type of farewell discourse is not uncommon in ancient literature. It is particularly prominent in the last words of important persons in the OT (Gen. 47:29-49:33; Josh. 22-24; 1 Chron. 38-39), in early Judaism (1 Macc. 2:49-69; Test. of Zebulun 10; Jubilees 20-22), as well as in Greco-Roman society.<sup>11</sup> Among the most famous examples from the classical world are

<sup>10</sup>R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (AB 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 364.

<sup>11</sup>R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI* (AB 29a; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 598-601. On the importance of the theme of the final discourse in Greco-Roman society, see Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to*



Socrates' farewells as recorded by Plato, especially in the *Crito* and *Phaedo*. Despite important differences,<sup>12</sup> these accounts bear significant similarities to the Johannine last discourse. In *Phaedo*, for example, Socrates, in words very similar in tone to those of the Johannine Jesus, states, "after I drink the poison, I shall no longer be with you, but shall go away to the joys of the blessed you know of."<sup>13</sup> In this setting, it is not uncommon for the philosopher to leave last words for those who remain. So, the address here is directed to the disciples who will carry on the work of Jesus after his departure.

Yet, Jesus is not simply giving final instructions to his disciples at his impending death. The Johannine Jesus is addressing the uncomprehending disciples (see Jn. 14:5, 8) and the readers, that is, the Johannine community, and ultimately believers of every generation.<sup>14</sup> It is only after the resurrection that the community truly understands the significance of the words of the Johannine Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Thus, his words in the farewell discourse correspond to the narrator's own point of view and are directed not only to Jesus' immediate audience at his last meal, but to all Christians.<sup>16</sup> In this way, these words are reminiscent of the words of the Great Commission of Mt. 28:18-20 in that they are directed to all believers at all times. Just as Jesus' immediate disciples, we receive both his commands and his comfort.

The first of the commandments is that we will continue to do the work of Christ. The comfort is that believers will do even greater works

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*John*, 3:57. For an analysis of how John's departure speech compares with themes from Jewish examples, particularly those of Pseudo-Philo, see E. Bammel, "The Farewell Discourse of the Evangelist John and its Jewish Heritage," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993), 103-116. Bammel notes that John 13-17 marks a transitional phase between Jewish speeches and later examples of the *Gattung* as found in the Gospel of Peter, *Pistis Sophia* and the Apocalypse of Thomas (see Bammel, 115-116).

<sup>12</sup>For example, "Despite 13:33, with its form of address: 'Little children', the relationship between Jesus and his disciples should probably not be seen as that between a father and his children, since the name of 'father' is reserved exclusively for the Father of Jesus himself." (Schnackenburg, 77. See also, *ibid.*, 414, n. 97.

<sup>13</sup>Plato *Phaedo*, 117D, Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>14</sup>See the discussion about the implied reader in John in R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 205-227.

<sup>15</sup>See Jn. 2:22; 12:16. For more on this phenomenon, see J. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie II* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1998).

<sup>16</sup>Culpepper, 38.

than Jesus has accomplished. Throughout the first half of the Gospel of John, in the section which Raymond Brown calls the “Book of Signs,”<sup>17</sup> we see how Jesus’ actions are intended to make his true identity evident. Jesus’ identity is made evident in the works that God does through him. These are actions through which the Father bears witness to Jesus, as seen in Jn. 10:25-26, 32-38. In particular, in Jn. 10:38, Jesus says to his opponents, “but if I work, and if you do not believe me, believe the works, in order that you should know and you do know that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.” Jesus’ appeal to his works, therefore, is an appeal to the fact that his Father is active in his ministry. This activity will be made most apparent in the last and greatest sign narrated in Jn. 11, the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus says that his disciples will do even greater works. Does this mean that Christians are supposed to be working miracles, that they should be healing the blind, that they should be doing mighty deeds that demonstrate the power of God? Or is there something else at play? Certainly, in Acts, Luke narrates numerous miraculous incidents in the life of the early church. Likewise, Paul states in Rom. 15:18-19 that “I do not dare to speak of things Christ has not accomplished through me to the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and work, in power of signs and wonder, in power of the spirit of God.” Thus, Paul certainly saw the Spirit’s acting through him in signs and wonders as part of his commission of being an apostle.

But how can later believers perform even greater works than Christ? Few Christians today would claim to heal a person born blind. Many would be happy to heal the occasional paralytic. Are these the works that Jesus calls upon the disciples to accomplish? Support for this notion may be derived from John 5:17-47. In the discourse, Jesus points to his works as indicating that he has come from the Father, who works even now. In particular, God attests that Jesus is greater than John through his works (5:36). Yet, in 5:24-25, the works are intimately tied to the word of Jesus, who calls to the dead in the time that “comes and is now” and the dead hear him and have life. In short, the sign attests to the word of Jesus who calls the spiritually dead to life.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, looking at Jn. 10:33-38, the reader observes that while Jesus calls on his opponents to believe in him

<sup>17</sup>Brown, *Gospel According to John I-XII*, cxxxviii.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 215; Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 262.

on account of his works, they are still unimpressed, and remain in unbelief. In light of the ineffectiveness of wonder-working as an apologetic service, one may question the efficacious value of believers performing dramatic miracles.<sup>19</sup>

Rather, the greater works Jesus is speaking of are more likely a reference to the evangelistic mission of the Johannine community.<sup>20</sup> Jesus' ultimate work in salvation history is unique and unrepeatable. Yet, how is the lost world to know what God has done on its behalf if Christians fail to proclaim God's love and redemption in Jesus? This idea has already been hinted at in 6:28-29. The crowd, impressed by the miracle of the loaves and fish ask what they can do to work the works of God, with the implication that they will never again experience physical hunger. Jesus, on the other hand, responds that the work of God is to believe in him, who is the source of true life and the true food.<sup>21</sup> In short, the greater works of the Johannine Jesus are similar to what we find in the Synoptic Gospels in the proclamation of the kingdom of God. God's redemption is now available to the whole world, and the greater work is the proclamation of this Good News far beyond the reaches of Palestine, or even of the Roman world.

This greater work is also the secret behind what it means when Jesus states that the disciples will ask God anything in his name and it will be granted (Jn 14:13). Certainly, Jesus cannot be referring to a crass "prosperity gospel" where God will grant believers the most trivial desire of

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<sup>19</sup>Yet, as G. Theissen pointed out in *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), we must be wary of confusing the modern critic's reservation about miracles with a reservation on the part of the NT writers (p. 295). In the NT, and especially in the work of the Johannine Jesus, the miracles or "signs" "point to Jesus' redemptive action" (ibid., 299). Because the opponents do not see God's eschatological work as active in Jesus' signs, they are condemned for their unbelief, since "they are signs that bring to understanding rather than proofs that convince; the response to them is one of faith rather than intellectual acknowledgement" (Brown, 412. See also Theissen, 297 on the "Johannine criticism of miracles").

<sup>20</sup>U. Schnelle, "Die Abschiedreden im Johannevangelium," ZNT 80 (1989), 67. See Wesley's comments on Jn. 14:12. "So one apostle wrought miracles by his shadow (Acts v. 15); another by 'handkerchiefs carried from his body' (Acts xix.12): and all spake with various tongues. But the converting one sinner is a greater work than these" (*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* [London: Epworth Press, 1966], 365).

<sup>21</sup>See Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 106-107.

their hearts. This misunderstanding seems to be what was behind the problems addressed in Jas. 4:2-3, “you desire and do not have. You murder and are jealous and you do not receive. You fight and war and do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss.” It is not such selfish petitioning that is at issue here. Indeed, because believers are in fellowship with God through Jesus they are compelled to ask what God desires. Under these circumstances Christians do not seek divine assistance to own the finest automobiles or to live at ease. Rather, their will is bound up with God’s and their request is that God rule in the hearts of all people. The prayer of such believers is that they continue the work of Jesus to reach those outside the community of faith. Prayer, in short, demonstrates fellowship with the community, where believers keep Jesus’ commandments. “Seen in this light, there can be no misunderstanding about which requests will be heard. The evangelist does not have every possible intention in mind here. He is thinking rather of the tasks and difficulties of proclaiming the gospel.”<sup>22</sup> The result is transformation, made evident in Jn. 14:15-17, where God’s response to prayer is the sending of the Paraclete, the Advocate, that mysterious person or presence of God, who is the Spirit of Truth, the one whose presence distinguishes the followers of Jesus from the “world.”

### **Keeping the Commandments and the Paraclete (Jn. 14:15-17)**

How does a Wesleyan hermeneutic understand the person of the Paraclete of Jn. 14:12-21 in relation to the mission of the church? As a tradition that stresses the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life, it is only appropriate that we examine how the first of John’s five “Paraclete” passages of Jn. 14-16<sup>23</sup> impacts our concept of outreach. In these passages, the work of the Spirit is described. In particular, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (14:17). Without the presence of the Spirit, evangelism is impossible. Thus, it is appropriate to explore the meaning of the work of the “Helper” or “Paraclete,” with special focus upon the first usage found in Jn 14:12-21. In particular, we see that the Paraclete is intimately connected with the life of the community. This life involves doing the work of Christ keeping the commandments of Christ, particularly the commandment of mutual love. The work of the Paraclete,

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<sup>22</sup>Schackenburg, 72.

<sup>23</sup>The others are in 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:7b-11 and 16:13-14.

or the “Spirit the world cannot receive,” also involves providing the community of faith a sense of belonging in that we are not left orphans (14:18). Thus, the Spirit gives believers a sense of being children of the Father. It is through the Spirit we love Jesus, and Jesus then manifests or demonstrates his love to us.

In Jn. 14:15-17 the Johannine Jesus states that “if you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John “never permits love to devolve into a sentiment or an emotion. Its expression is always moral and is revealed in obedience.”<sup>24</sup> In Jn. 13:34-35 the commandment of Jesus is specified as the commandment of love. This point is also emphasized in 1 Jn. 3:11-18. In 1 Jn. 3:14, for example, we know we have passed from death to life if we love our fellow believers. 1 Jn. 3:15 points out that when Christians hate fellow believers and then claim to love God they are lying. On the other hand, the world’s hatred of Christians is confirmation that they have passed from death to life, as they love for one another (see 1 Jn. 3:13-14).

Similar thoughts are found in Jn. 14:15-17. Believers are commanded to keep Jesus’ commandments, summarized in the love commandment of Jn. 13:34-35. In the Synoptic tradition, this same point is made when Jesus summarizes the two Great Commandments, the love of God and love of neighbor in Mk. 12:28-34. The result of such love is that Jesus then asks the Father to send the Paraclete, a name which is translated as everything from Advocate to Comforter. While the latter translation is possible, it is not the best rendering of the term. Rather, the Paraclete’s role within the community is defined in several ways in the five passages. The Paraclete is with the disciples forever (14:16), and is the Spirit of Truth (14:17). In short, the presence of the Paraclete preserves the community from error, just as remaining in the community and exercising love for God and fellow believers are the distinguishing characteristics of possessing the Spirit of Truth in 1 Jn. 4:6-7. On the other hand, those who exit the community do not exercise such love and, therefore, possess the “spirit of error.”

Also, the Spirit is the one who will teach the disciples all things (14:26); will bear witness concerning Jesus (Jn. 15:26-27); will judge or reprove the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment (16:7-8); and will lead the disciples and, by implication, believers of later genera-

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<sup>24</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 461.

tions into all truth (16:13-14). Thus, the Paraclete is the active presence of God in the community.<sup>25</sup> “He teaches with all-embracing authority and yet with strict adherence to Jesus and His message, maintaining, expanding and completing the work of Jesus, leading the disciples into all truth (14:26; 15:26; 16:13f).”<sup>26</sup> This presence of God or Christ is also described in Matthew. In Mt. 1:23 the interpretation of “Emmanuel” as applied to Jesus means “God with us.” In Mt. 18:19-20, the disciples are guaranteed that where two or three are gathered together, Jesus is there among them. In Mt. 28:20, Jesus promises to be with the disciples always, even to the end of the age. In short, as in Jn. 14:15-17, the distinguishing characteristic of the community is the Paraclete’s or Jesus’ presence.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the community is distinguishable from the world because it is in the former where God is active.<sup>28</sup> The only reason that mission can take place (Mt. 28) or the disciples can accomplish the “greater works” (Jn. 14) is because of the unique, powerful divine presence promised by Jesus. In both cases, as part of Jesus’ last will and testament, the community is promised Jesus’ presence. This observation is confirmed in Jn. 14:18-21 where we read Jesus’ promise not to leave his followers “orphans.”

### **“I will not leave you orphans” (Jn. 14:18-21)**

Being left an orphan is one of the most frightening events to be contemplated. The fear of abandonment is primal and a universal constant among all people. The term “orphan” is only found twice in the NT. The other case is in Jas. 1:27, where James states that pure and undefiled religion before God is to visit widows and orphans in their affliction. James is making a common OT demand, protection of orphans and widows as in Ex. 22:21 and Dt. 24:17. Indeed, the concern for the fatherless is a consis-

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<sup>25</sup>R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), “the Spirit is the power of the proclamation of the word in the community.” Nevertheless, Bultmann’s conclusion that the presence of God “is the very word which the community itself utters” is inadequate. Rather, the presence is not merely the presence of the kerygmatic proclamation, but the living, abiding, powerful presence of the resurrected Christ in the life of the community of faith.

<sup>26</sup>J. Behm, *TDNT*, 5:812.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>Brown, *Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 644. Schackenburg, 3:75.

tent theme in the OT, found not only in Exodus and Deuteronomy, but also in the prophets, such as Isa. 1:17; 10:2; Jer. 23:3; Zech 7:10, etc. In view of God's concern for the fatherless, it is natural that Jesus would not leave his disciples orphans.

Yet, while this passage may reflect Jesus' compassion for his disciples, similar to God's love for the fatherless and orphans, we also see another theme. As mentioned above, Jn. 13:31-17:26 consists of Jesus' last discourse. In lives of Greek and Hellenistic philosophers, at their death their pupils are said to be orphaned, as in the case of Socrates' students in Plato's *Crito* and *Phaedo*. His followers, especially Crito, understand his death as depriving them of their spiritual and intellectual father, and leaving them orphans. Crito, for example is quite critical of Socrates' acceptance of his death. The philosopher may be the spiritual and intellectual father of his students, yet . . .

I think you are abandoning your children, too, for when you bring them up and educate them, you are going to desert them and go away, and so far as you are concerned, their fortunes in life will be whatever they happen to meet with, and they will probably meet with such treatment as generally comes to orphans in their destitution.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, Socrates accepts his death. The grief of his followers is again expressed in terms of his followers being left as orphans.

When he had said this, he got up and went into another room to bathe; Crito followed him, but he told us to wait. So we waited, talking over with each other and discussing the discourse we heard, and then speaking of the great misfortune that had befallen us, for we felt that he was like a father to us and that when bereft of him we should pass the rest of our lives as orphans.<sup>30</sup>

With Jesus, on the other hand, we observe a hope missing in the accounts of the death of Socrates.

The believer is persuaded that he or she is no longer separated from the Father because one is convinced that he or she has correctly understood Jesus. Verse 18 expresses what has heretofore been described as the sending of the spirit by the

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<sup>29</sup>Plato *Crito* 49D, Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>30</sup>Plato *Phaedo*, 116A, Loeb Classical Library.

father with the help of another tradition: Jesus will not leave his own destitute; he will come again. This expression . . . is now substantially transformed: what one earlier referred to as the “return of Jesus” now truly takes place in the sending of the spirit.<sup>31</sup>

Jesus looks beyond his death (14:19-20) to show the disciples that shortly they will again see him. And so they do, at his resurrection. It is there, when they see the resurrected Jesus, that he breathes on them, tells them to “receive the Holy Spirit,” and commissions them with the words, “as the Father has sent me, so send I you” (Jn. 20:21-22). The students of philosophers had nothing for which to look forward, only the past reminiscences of their teachers. The disciples of Jesus, on the other hand, in the post-resurrection community look past his death to the resurrection.<sup>32</sup> In a manner not found in the synoptics, the presence of the resurrected Jesus is experienced in community through the presence of the Paraclete, the Advocate.<sup>33</sup> For that reason, individuals are empowered and keep his commandments of love for other believers, and are empowered to do the greater works of universal mission.

### **Ramifications for Constructing a Wesleyan Paradigm for Outreach**

How does the above analysis of John 14:12-21 provide Wesleyans, in light of the acknowledged Johannine focus of their theology, the tools for developing a theory of relational mission? On the one hand, it is a promise of Jesus to his disciples. It is also much more. It is the promise to contemporary members of the Christian community who share in God’s love and the command to express it toward each other. In the community, believers have the assurance of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, who not only is the one whom the world cannot receive, but also convicts the world. In this respect, Jn. 14:12-21 is not very different from Mt. 28:18-20. There, as well, the resurrected Christ directs us past the events of the crucifixion to the reality of fellowship with himself. In Mt. 28:20, as well as Jn. 14:18, we have the assurance of Christ’s presence in the community, which is not orphaned. In both cases, believers are called

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<sup>31</sup>E. Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 126.

<sup>32</sup>See, Barrett, 464.

<sup>33</sup>See Schnackenburg, 3:75-76, 154; Frey, 261-262.



upon to share the good news of the Gospel, to spread this news abroad, and, in so doing, actually accomplish greater works than Jesus himself. Thus, Bultmann was correct when he stated that “the Johannine demand for brotherly love is the legacy bequeathed by the departing Revealer to the intimate circle of ‘his own.’ . . . But this is no closed group. On the contrary, it is the eschatological Congregation whose vocation it is to ‘bear witness’ (15:27). Therefore, the world constantly has the possibility of being drawn into this circle of mutual love.”<sup>34</sup> Here is evidence for God’s working with humans cooperatively in the work of evangelism, in the same way that Wesley affirmed the divine/human cooperation in the work of salvation itself.<sup>35</sup> Yet, as Wesley saw salvation as not an end in itself, but leading to sanctification,<sup>36</sup> so evangelization is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it is the restoration of the image of God through God’s activity in the community.

In short, what we are proposing is that John 14:12-21 may be used to promote a biblical basis for a relational paradigm in evangelism. Under this model, outreach is not motivated externally, as a legalistic form of obedience to a commandment or commission, but arises from the compelling activity of the Holy Spirit working within the Christian and the community.<sup>37</sup> It is a cooperative and communal venture. This paradigm has the advantage of proposing an alternative model for speaking to the postmodern world, where abstract truth claims are questioned, but relationships are emphasized.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Scribners, 1955), 82.

<sup>35</sup>On the “co-operant character of salvation,” see Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingwood Books, 1994), 147-148.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>37</sup>On the importance of preaching the “gospel of grace” as lived out within the context of the community embodying God’s unconditional love, see K. L. Carder, “Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace,” in *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage*, 91.

<sup>38</sup>I would like to thank Dr. Robert Berg of Evangel University, Springfield, MO. for his insightful critique and helpful recommendations to an earlier draft of this paper delivered at the Wesleyan Theological Society/Society of Pentecostal Studies joint meeting, March 21, 2003.

# VISIONS OF SANCTIFICATION: THEMES OF ORTHODOXY IN THE METHODIST, HOLINESS, AND PENTECOSTAL TRADITIONS

by

David Bundy

One of the pressing issues for the Holiness and Pentecostal movements is to establish their identities with regard to the larger Christian world. There have been assertions that these two interconnected religious movements constitute a fourth way of Christianity in parallel with the older Orthodox, (Roman) Catholic, and Protestant traditions. Others have argued that both are thoroughly rooted in Reformation Protestantism and Pietism.<sup>1</sup> Another scholarly tradition has insisted that the Holiness and Pentecostal movements are an expression of American Fundamentalism.<sup>2</sup> Míguez Bonino has suggested that this is the new face of Protestantism.<sup>3</sup> Some have insisted that the traditions are direct descendants of Wesley.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Karla Poewe, "Introduction: the Nature, Globality, and History of Charismatic Christianity," in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. Karla Poewe (Studies in Comparative Religion; Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (New York, London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>José Míguez Bonino, *Rostos del protestantismo latinoamericano* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>Donald Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 5; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1987) and Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Abingdon, 1957).

Most recently the work of Randy Maddox has demonstrated that a number of Eastern Orthodox theological themes pervade Wesleyan theology.<sup>5</sup> Ever since the research of Albert Outler into the influences on Wesley's thought, there has been an interest in both the theological and ecumenical implications of Outler's assertions of the formative nature of Wesley's reading of Orthodox theologians.<sup>6</sup> Close attention has been paid to the issue. The work of Ted Campbell was an important contribution toward identifying ways in which Wesley understood himself to have appropriated materials from the church of "antiquity."<sup>7</sup>

Others, including this author, have insisted that the appropriation by Wesley of the insights of Orthodox writers needs to be understood in light of their mediation through the English Anglican tradition of scholarship on early Christian history and texts.<sup>8</sup> This present essay does not pretend to resolve either the issue of Wesley's use of early Eastern texts or the issue of the ecumenical identity of the Holiness and Pentecostal movements. Instead, the effort is made to present a map of the influence of certain early Eastern Christian texts on these traditions. It will be suggested that the problem of influence is very complex.

It will be demonstrated that the influence of one particular strand of Eastern Christianity can be traced from Clement of Alexandria to Origen

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<sup>5</sup>Randy Maddox, *Responsibility and Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994). Maddox has also written a programmatic essay, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences and Divergences," *Asbury Theological Journal* 45:2 (1990), 29-53.

<sup>6</sup>Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 9, note 26. It was this footnote that led to my initial interest in early Eastern Christianity. See the more developed discussion in Albert C. Outler, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian tradition," in *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition: essays delivered at Drew University in celebration of the commencement of the publication of the Oxford edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Kenneth Rowe (Metuchen:Scarecrow, 1976), and Albert Outler, "John Wesley's Interest in the Early Fathers of the Church," in *The Bulletin published by the committee on archives and history of the United Church of Canada in collaboration with Victoria University* 29 (1980-1982), 5-17.

<sup>7</sup>Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1991). Campbell's approach contrasts with the discounting of those influences by Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (2 ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1992).

<sup>8</sup>Four essays were published in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 36 (1991).

to Pseudo-Macarius to Madame Guyon and Wesley and from both of them to the Holiness theologians Thomas Cogswell Upham, Phoebe Palmer, and from them to formative theologians of Pentecostalism, including William Seymour, Minnie Abrams, and Thomas Ball Barratt. It is not argued that this is always a simple straight-line transmission or a complete appropriation of the earlier texts. It is argued that through this network, there is, because of contact with Pseudo-Macarius, a continuity of themes and that these were definitive for the development of the concept of sanctification/entire sanctification/theosis within the Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions.

### **Methodological Issues**

Several caveats need to be offered in advance. First, the matter of influence of thought is difficult to identify and describe. Any individual, even on their most self-aware day, will recognize a variety of influences ranging from the banal to the profound at crucial junctures of the intellectual and spiritual life. Even in retrospect, the influences are difficult to identify. Secondly, much of the contemporary discussion of “Orthodoxy” in Methodism would appear to assume that these themes were absent in Western Christian thought, an assumption which is clearly untenable, but beyond the scope of this essay to contest. Thirdly, some of the “influences” identified may well be more accurately described as parallel if not simultaneous developments as people of diverse experiences read the biblical texts with philosophical and experiential lenses which allow them to understand, even if intuitively, the middle Platonic intellectual structures of the canonical texts.

Fourthly, there is the problem posed by the appearance of a particular word or phrase that may lead to the too easy conclusion of influence. Fifthly, when influence is ascertained, the discussions often make broad assumptions about the implications for the recipient theological tradition. For better or worse, there is no requirement that the philosophical structures, theology and spirituality of a particular group support each other with total congruence. Sixthly, to say that a writer is influenced by a text does not assume any need for that individual to understand it as it would have been understood, for example, in a fourth-century context. All appropriation of ideas is conditioned at least as much by the recipient’s reading of a text in his/her context as by the original context of the text, if that can be known.

That being said, one can identify particular channels by which aspects of the spirituality of Orthodoxy found its way into the traditions being discussed. This essay does not assume those discussed here to be the only avenues by which this transmission occurred, but merely that these are identifiable and documentable. Let us begin with John Wesley, the eighteenth-century theologian whose work projected into subsequent discussion the concept variously denominated sanctification, entire sanctification, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," or theosis.

### **Wesley and Sanctification: The Appropriation of an Orthodox Theme from Several Sources**

The subject of Wesley's uses of Orthodoxy owes its present popularity to the assertions of Albert Outler that Wesley drank deeply at the well of Orthodox theology, an assertion which has been significantly nuanced by subsequent research. Wesley urged his preachers in his *Address to the Clergy* (1756) to read early Christian writers including "St. Chrysostom, Basile, Jerome, Augustine, and, above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephraim Syrus."<sup>9</sup> In a letter to a critic, Conyers Middleton, he cited as supportive of his position "Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian . . . (as well as) . . . Macarius and Ephraim Syrus."<sup>10</sup> Throughout his works there are references to early Christian writers, an index of which has been provided by Ted Campbell.<sup>11</sup> These reflect a wide range of reading: Augustine and Origen are the most frequently cited writers. Also cited are Athanasius, Athenagoras, Basil, Chrysostom, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Pseudo-Dionysius, Ephrem of Syria, and Tertullian among others. The corpus is well rounded and demonstrates an awareness of the larger early Christian tradition, as would be expected given Wesley's Reformation and Pietist "primitivism."

The "primitive church" was clearly written large in Wesley's mind. However, many of the references to early Christian writers are in lists of names sometimes, it would appear, provided as much to impress the

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<sup>9</sup>John Wesley, "An Address to the Clergy," as in *Works* (Jackson ed.), 10, 484. Most of us first encountered this quotation in Outler, *John Wesley*, 9, note 26.

<sup>10</sup>John Wesley, "Reply to Conyers Middleton," in *Letters* (Jackson ed.), 2, 387-388.

<sup>11</sup>Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 125-134.

reader as to inform! The weight of significance of the writers for Wesley cannot be weighed by the number of references alone. For example, Pseudo-Macarius is represented by only one quotation and one naming in a list of names. This is despite the fact that Pseudo-Macarius, as we shall see below, played a significant role for Wesley. However, we will begin with the Alexandrian Christian tradition.

**Clement of Alexandria.** In 1739, John and Charles Wesley published a seven stanza poem entitled “On Clemens Alexandrinus’ Description of a Perfect Christian.”<sup>12</sup> This text reflects an awareness of Clement’s *Stromata* (numbers four and seven). To overcome the world, one is to develop the virtue of impassibility, with resultant resistance to temptation, made possible by God’s sustaining grace, which allows an entrance into a state of “peace” wherein,

’Tis in that peace we see and act  
By instincts from above;  
With finer taste of wisdom fraught,  
And mystic powers of love.<sup>13</sup>

While there are no direct quotations of Clement of Alexandria in the text (probably because of the different genre of the texts), the developmental vision of “Christian Perfection” or “Christian gnosis” is clearly parallel to that of the second century sage.

Another instance of claimed dependence on Clement of Alexandria is found in an entry to Wesley’s *Journal*, dated 5 March 1767. There, Wesley includes a copy of a letter, “To the Editor of *Lloyd’s Evening Post*.”<sup>14</sup> In this letter he defends himself against charges that in his tract, *The Character of a Methodist*,<sup>15</sup> he claims sinless perfection is possible for humans. He observed:

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<sup>12</sup>This hymn/poem was first printed in John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: William Strahan, 1739), 37-38, and reprinted by G. Osborn, ed., *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1868), 1, 34-35. The authorship of this text has been contested on the basis of a suggestion by Osborn.

<sup>13</sup>Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 38; Osborn, *Poetical Works*, 1, 35.

<sup>14</sup>Wesley, *Journal*, 5 March 1767 in *Works* (Jackson ed.) 3, 272-274.

<sup>15</sup>Wesley, “The Character of a Methodist,” in *Works* (Jackson ed.), 8, 339-347; also, “The Character of a Methodist,” in *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies (*The Works of John Wesley*, 9; Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 30-42.

Five or six and thirty years ago, I much admired the character of a perfect Christian drawn up by Clemens Alexandrinus. Five or six and twenty years ago, a thought came to my mind, of drawing such a character myself, only in a more scriptural manner, and mostly in the very words of Scripture.<sup>16</sup>

There are no direct literary relationships between the text of Clement of Alexandria and that of Wesley, but there is a significant continuity of themes. It has been argued in another context that there are similarities. These include: (1) doctrinal flexibility, that is that formulations of doctrine are secondary to the knowledge of God; (2) the character of “true gnosis” or “Christian perfection as grounded in the love of God, and the result of development in the Christian life toward God”; (3) insistence that conformity to the will of God is an essential part of the Christian life; (4) the assertion that active (not introspective) contemplation of God is to be continuous for the Christian; (5) the assertion that the Christian must be single minded in the desire for godliness and that the virtues of Christian living force out the ungodly values; (6) the presentation of prayer as constant, not limited to formal liturgical contexts, unhindered by social or material contexts, a tool for overcoming the passions, and instrumental in achieving union with the Divine; (7) anticipation of immortality influenced by the godliness of the life lived on earth; (8) the placement of “love of neighbour” at the center of the Christian life; (9) godly moral consistency in all of life; and, (10) the necessity of obedience to God’s commandments.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Wesley, *Journal*, 5 March 1767, in *Works* (Jackson ed.), 3, 272-274.

<sup>17</sup>David Bundy, “Christian Virtue: John Wesley and the Alexandrian Tradition,” in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26 (1991), 144-149. On Clement, see K. Schmöle, “Gnosis und Metanoia: Die anthropologische Sicht der Busse bei Klemens von Alexandrien,” *Trier theologische Zeitschrift* 82 (1974), 304-312, Klaus Schözl, *Läuterung nach dem Tode und pneumatische Auferstehung bei Klemens von Alexandrien* (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie, 38; Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), W. Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus* (Leipzig: Akademie Verlag, 1952), S. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), André Méhat, *Étude sur les ‘Stromates’ de Clément d’Alexandrie* (Patristica Sorbonensia, 7; Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1966), and Annewies van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and his Use of Philo in the Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 3; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988).

With such an impressive list of parallels, the *Character of a Methodist* would appear to be a clear-cut case for the appropriation of an early Eastern Christian writer. However, the reality is not so simple. In the seventeenth century, Anthony Horneck published *The Happy Ascetick: or, The Best Exercise*.<sup>18</sup> Horneck knew intimately the writings of the early Christians. His library included the texts of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Pseudo-Macarius, as well as many other early Christian texts also read and recommended by Wesley.<sup>19</sup> He argued that every Christian should be a “happy ascetic” on the models proposed by early Christian spirituality. His analysis of the Christian life follows even more closely the language and thought of Clement of Alexandria than does Wesley. It would appear that Horneck understood the theological and philosophical structures of Alexandrian Christianity better than Wesley. One could argue, based on the text, that Wesley follows Horneck more closely than he does Clement. Wesley certainly knew the work of Horneck. He included a marginally edited reprint of Horneck’s text in the *Christian Library*.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Wesley’s appreciation and appropriation of Clement of Alexandria’s work may well have been conditioned by the earlier English theologian; if so, Wesley is as much in continuity with trends in certain sectors of English theology and spirituality as he is with Clement, Origen, and Pseudo-Macarius.

**Pseudo-Macarius.** One comment of Wesley about Pseudo-Macarius is frequently cited: “I read Macarius and sang.”<sup>21</sup> This quotation is apparently spurious, although in his private journal for 30 July 1736, Wesley states that he “began Macarius” and he “sang,” with the strong implication

<sup>18</sup>Anthony Horneck, *The HappyAscetick: or, The Best Exercise* (London: Henry Mortlock, 1669).

<sup>19</sup>*Bibliotheca Hornecciana; or, A Catalogue of Valuable and Choice Books in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch, both Ancient and Modern, in all sorts of learning. Being the Library of the Reverend Anthony Horneck. . . .* (Estate Sale Catalogue, 1697). Thanks to Randy Maddox for this reference.

<sup>20</sup>*A Christian Library*, ed. John Wesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; London, 1830), 1, 16, 290-432.

<sup>21</sup>Kallistos Ware, “Preface” to Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, tr. George A. Maloney (Classics of Western Spirituality; New York: Paulist, 1989), xi. I have not yet found the phrase as cited by Ware and others in Wesley.



that the reading and singing were connected!<sup>22</sup> This is strong affirmation of the value of these texts to Wesley despite the fact that Pseudo-Macarius is only infrequently cited by Wesley.<sup>23</sup> More significantly, Wesley provided “extracts” of the “Fifty Spiritual Homilies,” in the first volume of the fifty-volume collection called the *Christian Library* for the edification and education of the Methodist clergy. This inclusion was high praise indeed. The only pre-reformation writers included in this massive compilation were certain of the so-called “Apostolic Fathers”<sup>24</sup> and Pseudo-Macarius. Wesley, like other scholars of his day, thought that Pseudo-Macarius put him in contact with Macarius the Egyptian, the legendary monastic of the fourth century.<sup>25</sup> It is now clear that the “Fifty Spiritual Homilies” are from the context of Syria and probably represent the radical spirituality of the Messalians or “Those who Pray” (also referred to as Euchites) who were condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431. The “Fifty Spiritual Homilies” were spared condemnation and destruction by transmitting them under the name of a respected saint, that of Macarius of Egypt. Other identities for the author have been proposed, but none of the proposals have been buttressed by convincing evidence. The recent research that suggests that the “Homilies” influenced the work of the Capadocian writers, especially Gregory of Nyssa, is probably correct.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup>John Wesley, *Journal* 30 July—1 August 1736, in *Journal and Diaries I: 1735-1738*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*; 18 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 405-406.

<sup>23</sup>Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 132, noted only two references, although he does not include the one noted above, note 16.

<sup>24</sup>The writings in *A Christian Library*, ed. John Wesley (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: T. Cordeux 1819), 1, 8-68, included “Epistle to the Corinthians” attributed to Clement of Rome, “Epistle to the Philippians” attributed to Polycarp of Smyrna, seven letters of Ignatius of Antioch, and the classical texts of the “Martyrdoms” of Ignatius and Polycarp.

<sup>25</sup>John Wesley, “Of Macarius,” in *A Christian Library*, ed. John Wesley (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: T. Cordeux, 1819), 1, 69-71. This introduction is a carefully written introduction to what was known in Wesley’s period about Pseudo-Macarius and is a distinct improvement on the introduction to the earlier English publication of the Homilies discussed below.

<sup>26</sup>For an excellent summary of the complex issues relating to the transmission and literary relationships of the Pseudo-Macarian texts, see the introduction to the recent French translation by Vincent Desprez, in Pseudo-Macaire, *Oeuvres spirituelles, I. Homélie propres à la Collection III. Introduction, traduction et notes (avec le texte grec)* par Vincent Desprez (Sources chrétiennes 275; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980).

Several studies of the use of Pseudo-Macarius by Wesley have been published,<sup>27</sup> but all have overlooked the problems posed by the editorial work of Wesley. Wesley, as was usually his habit, took over the work of another, with or without giving the credit we would now deem appropriate. The “Fifty Spiritual Homilies” were first translated into English by an anonymous “Presbyter of the Church of England” and published in 1721 with the subtitle/advertisement: “full of very profitable instruction concerning that *Perfection*, which is *Expected* from *Christians*, and which is their *Duty to Endeavor after*.”<sup>28</sup> It was from this volume that Wesley provided readers of the *Christian Library* with “An Extract from the Homilies of Macarius.” Wesley, despite the assertions of Ernst Benz that Wesley provided a “literal word for word translation” of Pseudo-Macarius,<sup>29</sup> depended completely on the work of his predecessor, even incorporating proposed emendations of the earlier scholar into the text of the homilies. However, Wesley, also typically, did not reprint the entire work, but rather selected portions of twenty of the fifty homilies for his readers (see Appendix). What was omitted is nearly as interesting as what was included; we begin with the latter.

The “Fifty Spiritual Homilies” present a vision of God and of the Christian life. The goal of the Christian is “Christian perfection” and the life of the Christian is to be a movement, a struggle, toward the goal of unity with God. It is the grace of God that enables persons to reorient

<sup>27</sup>Thomas E. Brigden, “Wesley and the Homilies of Macarius,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 8 (March 1911), 6-7; G. S. Wakefield, “La littérature du Désert chez John Wesley,” *Irenikon* 51 (1978), 155-70, David D. Ford, “Saint Makarios of Egypt and John Wesley: Variations on the Theme of Sanctification,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 33 (1988), 285-312 (this essay is an anti-Holiness and anti-Pentecostal apologetic), Howard A. Snyder, “John Wesley and Macarius the Egyptian,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 45 (1990), 55-60. See especially, Ernst Benz, *Die protestantische Thebais: Zur Nachwirkung Makarios des Ägypters im Protestantismus der 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts in Europa und Amerika* (Wiesbaden: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1963).

<sup>28</sup>*Primitive Morality: or, The Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian* (London: Printed for W. Taylor by W. and J. Innys and J. Osborn, 1721). Italics in original.

<sup>29</sup>Ernst Benz, *Die protestantische Thebais*, 121, “eine wortwörtliche Übersetzung” a conclusion accepted by David Ford, “St. Makarios and John Wesley,” 288, note 8.

their priorities and begin to struggle through spiritual warfare that continues at least to the end of the life on earth. That life is to be characterized by prayer. Prayer is a tool for achieving contemplation of God. The ascetic life is promoted; every activity and passion of life is part of that struggle for victory over the ungodly influences in life. As one struggles toward "perfection," sin is removed from the heart by the grace given through the Holy Spirit and one is enabled to conform increasingly to the will of God in the model of Christ. Importantly, even after one has won significant victories in spiritual warfare, there is the possibility of succumbing to temptation and backsliding into conformity with the will of the un-God, Satan.

However, the Pseudo-Macarian system of spirituality is relentlessly optimistic. It is assumed, following the thought of Philo, Clement, and Origen, that all who accept the grace of God, who conform their wills to the will of God and work toward union with God can achieve that end.<sup>30</sup> This three-stage program was perhaps formative for Wesley: (1) initial grace (Wesley would call it prevenient grace); (2) spiritual warfare; and, (3) Christian perfection. This developmental soteriology permeates the text provided by Wesley in *A Christian Library*. Certainly also in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1767) Wesley emphasized both the goal of "Christian Perfection" and the journey which the Christian must make. The *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* is Wesley's presentation of the evolution of his thinking on the subject up to the morning it was sent to press. It is clearly implied that at some later date, perhaps the next day, under the influence of Scripture, some text, the witness of another Christian or his own reflection, his position on the subject and his place in the journey of "Christian Perfection" could change. Wesley, however, was much less optimistic about human nature than Pseudo-Macarius or Gregory of Nyssa. Therefore, in order to make the "Fifty Spiritual Homilies" conform to his understanding of the path to Christian Perfection, he edited them heavily.

Wesley edited or "extracted" twenty Homilies from the "Fifty Spiritual Homilies." From the Pseudo-Macarian text, he quite systematically removed references to ideas that he found problematic. The most carefully and systematically censored were the appropriations by Pseudo-

<sup>30</sup>*Primitive Morality: or, The Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian*. . . .

Macarius of Platonic ideas of the origin and destiny of the soul. Most of the erotic/sexual language (generally biblical allusions) was removed.<sup>31</sup> Most of the references to the efficacious nature of human decision (free will) for initial conversion and consequent improvement of spirituality were omitted. Note, however, that Wesley was quite inconsistent as an editor and so some items escaped his editorial pen.

Other deletions included: (1) language which might have suggested ability to achieve perfection in this lifetime (including references to “deification” or “theosis”); (2) references to cosmology and creation, particularly as these included reference to the soul, but also more generally; (3) the suggestion that the Holy Spirit removes corruption and moves us on toward perfection WHEN we ask; (4) the statement that the soul can “be held by the Godhead” (unity with God); (5) the correspondences between the experience of the Christian soul and the sacrificial language from the Hebrew Scriptures; (6) many references to the initial alienation of the soul from God as regards the extent of its identification with the “kingdom of darkness” and the completeness of the suffering of the soul which causes the entire body to suffer; (7) most discussions of the incarnation; (8) and the most radical or graphic discussions of “spiritual warfare;” and, (9) encouragement of Christians to “surrender themselves’ completely to God and to trust God for ‘Christian Perfection.’ ”<sup>32</sup>

The majority of the Pseudo-Macarian Homilies were not included in Wesley’s volume (see Appendix). Homily three argues for simple sincere living “to struggle and fight with their inward thoughts.” Homily six speculates about “thrones” and “crowns” and Israel. Homily seven “concerns the goodness of Christ towards” humans. Homily eleven insists that “the power of the Holy Spirit in the Heart of Men [sic] is as fire.” Homily

<sup>31</sup>One of the problems of studying Wesley is that he was often inconsistent and also quite willing to change his mind. The “extracts” of the texts reflect both tendencies. Examples of his editorial deletions regarding sexuality include Homily 10 from which words like “insatiable is the heavenly desire,” “insatiable love for God,” and variants were removed. From Homily 20 were excised: “father’s naked body,” “issue of blood,” “flux of her blood,” “wounds of vile affections,” “woman with the bloody flux,” and “secret corruptions.” From Homily 25 were edited out words including “desire,” “lust,” “carnal passions and lusts,” “wounded with divine love,” “smitten with spiritual love,” “burning of the bowels,” “deceitful lusts,” and “carnal affections.”

<sup>32</sup>This list is not complete, but a summary of a more detailed analysis of Wesley’s editorial method.

twelve discusses the “state of Adam before he transgressed the commandment of God.” Homily thirteen is concerned about “what fruit God requires of Christians.” Homily fourteen describes spiritual warfare in quite dualistic language as does Homilies twenty-one and twenty-two. Homilies thirty to forty-two would appear to have commonalities with Wesleyan themes, but may have been excluded because of the cosmology, anthropology and especially the radical anti-establishment piety of the Pseudo-Macarian texts. Perhaps Wesley was worried about the implications for Methodism of a spirituality that is individualistic and in which individuals have direct access to God and growth in spirituality quite independent of the trappings (especially sacraments and clergy) of the institutional church. This tendency, also apparent in some Pietist writers, would be developed in North America during the nineteenth century with influence both from Wesley (in spite of himself) and from the French Mystics, Fénelon and Madame Jeanne-Marie de la Motte-Guyon.

**Thomas à Kempis.** Thomas à Kempis represents another complication for anyone seeking to isolate Orthodox themes in Wesleyan writings. Thomas demonstrates that the transmission of Eastern Christian spirituality into Wesley’s thought and to his spiritual descendants through Wesley will probably remain less than clear. John Wesley was an avid and critical reader of a large number of French, Dutch, and Spanish authors whose works were circulating in England and who also drank at the wells of early Eastern Christian writers such as the Cappadocians, Pseudo-Macarius, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>33</sup> Among the writers that Wesley used and recommended, who also used the Pseudo-Macarian tradition, was Thomas à Kempis. Thomas à Kempis was an heir of the *Devotio Moderna* in the Netherlands. As has already been clearly demonstrated, this movement self-consciously rooted itself in the radical spirituality of the “Fathers of the Desert.”<sup>34</sup> Thomas’s volume, *The Imitation of Christ*, is one of the classics of Christian spirituality. Wesley reports in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* that the reading of Thomas à Kempis was

<sup>33</sup>For a detailed examination of this influence on Wesley, see Jean Orcibel, “Les spirituels français et espagnols chez John Wesley et ses contemporaines,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 139 (1951), 50-109.

<sup>34</sup>For a discussion with extensive bibliography, see Enrico Norelli, “La littérature du Désert dans le renouveau catholique au début de l’époque moderne,” *Irenikon* 51 (1978), 5-45.

an important step on his spiritual journey. In Thomas, Wesley found an expression of Christian spirituality, formed by the tradition of Pseudo-Macarius, which was intense and highly personal as well as individualistic. The approach mirrored his approach to personal spirituality and provided a precedent for the individualistic spirituality that he preached.

Given Wesley's propensity for making available to his clergy texts that he found personally helpful for spiritual development, one should not be surprised that among Wesley's publications is *An Extract of the Christian's Pattern; or, A Treatise on the Imitation of Christ . . . by Thomas à Kempis*.<sup>35</sup> It is uncertain when Wesley read Pseudo-Macarius for the first time, but it is certain that the Pietist writers, Pseudo-Macarius, the French and Spanish Mystics, and Thomas à Kempis all reinforced within Wesley and his heirs a predisposition toward a tradition of Eastern Orthodox spirituality. It is thus essential to consider the processes of mediation of the texts and spiritualities within the Protestant and Catholic spiritual writers essential to Wesley, the Holiness Movement, and Pentecostalism as one examines the transmission of ideas.

### **Orthodox Themes and the Beginnings of the Holiness Movement in America**

It can be argued that the beginnings of Methodism in America included a transplanting from England of the more radical Christian spirituality and evangelism promoted by Wesley and, especially, the francophone Swiss theologian, John Fletcher.<sup>36</sup> The call to the life of holiness was clearly part of most early Methodist preaching and theological reflection.<sup>37</sup> It has been demonstrated that the interest in "sanctification" or

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<sup>35</sup>John Wesley, *An Extract of the Christian's Pattern; or, a Treatise on the Imitation of Christ . . . by Thomas à Kempis* (London: T. Cordeux, n.d.). This extract is more widely known than the unabridged *The Christian's Pattern; or, a Treatise of the Imitation of Christ. Translated from the Latin of Thomas à Kempis. Compared with the original and corrected throughout* ed. John Wesley (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1835). For a description of the Wesley versions, see Walter Arthur Copinger, *On the English Versions of the "Imitatio Christi"* (Bibliographiana 3; Manchester: n.p., 1900), 71-74.

<sup>36</sup>The role of Fletcher in the American (and British) context(s) is quite complex. For an initial analysis, see Donald W. Dayton, "The doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit: its emergence and significance," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (1978), 114-126, and the alternative proposed by Timothy L. Smith, "How John Fletcher became the Theologian of American Perfectionism, 1770-1776," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15 (1980), 88-97, followed by the response of Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 35-60. Little attention has been

“theosis” resulted in a steady stream of essays and books. There is not space here to discuss the evolution in understanding of “sanctification” in the United States during the period of the early republic.<sup>38</sup> Numerous writers made major contributions, but because of limited space, two are selected for brief discussion. Their work represents, it would appear, a clear shift in thought from the understanding of Wesleyan theology articulated in North America by the founding itinerant Methodist theologians. The theologians most responsible for the shift in Wesleyan thought are Thomas Cogswell Upham and Phoebe Palmer. It is suggested here that that shift is attributable to both the influence of Fénelon and Madame Guyon as well as a re-reading of Wesley in light of Fletcher.

**Madame Guyon and Archbishop Fénelon.** First a word is necessary about Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon (13 April 1648-1649—March 1717) and François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (6 Aug. 1651-1657—Jan. 1715).<sup>39</sup> Educated in an Ursuline convent, Guyon, after the death of her father and during the bad marriage characterized by

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given to the religious/intellectual formation of Fletcher before his contact with the Wesley's; most assume a *tabula rasa* arrived at Wesley's door. See however the suggestive essay of W. E. Knickerbocker, “Doctrinal sources and guidelines in early Methodism: Fletcher of Madeley as a case study,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14 (1976), 186-202.

<sup>37</sup> This period was examined in a lecture, “Methodist theology in the early American republic,” for the Wesleyan Theological Society, November 1997, in which it was argued that the themes of Orthodox spirituality were transmitted to the Americans, but that what was missing was the intellectual framework and textual basis from which Wesley, Fletcher, and Adam Clarke worked. This led to a distinctive identification of “Methodism” and American culture, with a consequent loss of interest in reflection on both theology and the personal and social holiness of Wesley and Macarius that was characteristic of earlier Methodism. This led to an approach to solving social and ethical problems that depended more on ecclesiological and American cultural values than upon reflection on the theology and values of the Christian tradition.

<sup>38</sup> Allen Coppedge, “Entire Sanctification in Early American Methodism, 1812-1835,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (1978), 51-64.

<sup>39</sup> Both are controversial figures and objective treatments based on a reading of Guyon and Fénelon in light of the texts and extensive archival material are rare. The best on Guyon are the article of Louis Cognet, “Guyon (Jean-Marie Bouvier de la Motte),” *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 6 (1967), 1306-1336, and two items by Marie-Louise Gondol: *L'Acte mystique. Témoignage spirituel de Madame Guyon (1648-1717)*, Thèse de doctorat, Faculté de Théologie de Lyon, juin 1995, Lyon 1985; and, *Madam Guyon (1648-1717). Un nouveau visage* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989). Many items in the collected works of Fénelon are important for this discussion: *Oeuvres complètes de Fénelon, archevêque de Cambrai* (Paris: J. Leroux et Jouby, 1848-52), and, the *Correspondance de Fénelon* (Genève, Paris: Droz, 1987-).

abuse by the mother-in-law and the lingering fatal illness of her husband, turned to the mystical Christian traditions of spirituality for comfort and guidance. The result of her reflection was an intensely personal spirituality centred on prayer and an understanding of the Christian life as a journey of development during which difficulties are provided to test and strengthen the spirituality of the believer. She expected, as did Pseudo-Macarius, that by surrender of the self to God, one could arrive at unity with God.<sup>40</sup> Her document of total surrender to God, her “act of consecration” to God, was translated and published by Upham. It says in part:

I give myself to Him, unworthy though I am to be His spouse. I ask of Him, in this marriage of spirit with spirit, that I may be of the same mind with him—meek, pure, nothing to myself, and united in God’s will. And, pledged as I am to be His, I accept as part of my marriage portion, the temptations and sorrows, the crosses and the contempt which fell to Him.<sup>41</sup>

Guyon spoke frequently of dying to self,<sup>42</sup> of the “great desire for the most intimate communion with God,”<sup>43</sup> the difficulty of maintaining that communion,<sup>44</sup> the role of the grace of God in continuing one’s conformity to God’s will,<sup>45</sup> the necessity of virtue becoming the normal approach to living,<sup>46</sup> and the necessity and character of the inward assur-

<sup>40</sup>Cognet, “Guyon,” *passim*.

<sup>41</sup>Upham, *Life, Religious Opinions and Experiences of Madame Guyon*, 95. The citations are limited to the work edited by Upham because it is in this form that they circulated in the English speaking religious world and in which they were probably read by Palmer. Citations from her other published works could be gathered to support the same points, but this work was chosen because of its function in North American theology as an introduction to and warrant for Guyon. Many Guyon texts were published in English translation during the nineteenth century in the United States. The primary publishers of these texts were W. C. Palmer and his children. See especially Madame Guyon, *The mystical sense of the sacred scriptures with explanations and reflections regarding the interior life* trans. T. W. Duncan (Philadelphia: Words of Faith n.d.), where the entire system of thought is laid out clearly, albeit in less than systematic form.

<sup>42</sup>Upham, *Life, Religious Opinions and Experiences of Madame Guyon*, 57, 59, 98.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 83, 196-7, 284, *et passim*.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 90, 106-108.



ance of God's grace and salvation.<sup>47</sup> With regard to the "fixed state" of spirituality, she wrote:

By speaking of a fixed state, I do not mean one which can never decline or fall, that being only in heaven. I call it fixed and permanent, in comparison with the states which have preceded it, which, being in the mixed life, and without an entire and exclusive devotedness to God, are full of vicissitudes and variations. Such a soul, one which is wholly the Lord's, may be troubled; but sufferings affect only the outside, without disturbing the centre. Neither men nor devils, though they discharge all their fury against it, can permanently harm a soul free from selfishness, and in union with the Divine will.<sup>48</sup>

Guyon's understanding of sin is consistent with the perspective of her Eastern Christian spiritual mentors. Sin is not the result of biological transmission, but is the nonconformity of the individual to the will of God ("self love")<sup>49</sup> and the tarnishing of the image of God in that person. Regarding the "image of God," she insisted:

. . . the image of God is graven so deeply in man that he can never lose it, although sin may cover it, and infinitely disfigure and sully it; . . . all that is wrought in the soul is to discover and renew this image; and its restoration is no sooner achieved than man is replaced in his state of innocence.<sup>50</sup>

Guyon's approach to the Christian life was based on a reading of early Christian literature that was deep and broad. Her determined opponent Bossuet recognized her dependence on Clement of Alexandria and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>51</sup> Unlike many writers, Guyon wrote about the sources of her spirituality in a remarkable three-volume apologetic.<sup>52</sup> Among her favourite sources were Clement of Alexandria,

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 129-133, *et passim*.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 169-170, 178-9, *et passim*.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 198.

<sup>49</sup>Guyon, *The Mystical Sense of the Sacred Scriptures*, 50, *et passim*.

<sup>50</sup>Guyon, *The Mystical Sense of the Sacred Scriptures*, 35.

<sup>51</sup>Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, "Tradition des nouveaux mystiques," in *Oeuvres complètes de Bossuet* (Paris: Berche et Tralin, 1885) 5, 169-216; *idem*, "Quietismus redivivus," in *Oeuvres complètes de Bossuet*, 5, 423-50.

Pseudo-Macarius, John Cassian, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and Thomas à Kempis! Her intense spirituality attracted the attention, support and eventually participation of the influential Archbishop Fénelon.<sup>53</sup> Fénelon had also experienced personal and political difficulties and found Guyon's analysis convincing. Their spirituality spread quickly across Europe, primarily among the upper classes and the clergy.

In France it was lamented by Guyon's critics that her book on prayer and spiritual formation was in the pocket of every person in the Court. This success aroused jealousy and fear. Guyon and Fénelon were exiled from Paris because of accusations that they were against the Church (the non-essential nature of church in their paradigm of spirituality, as in Pseudo-Macarius, was recognized) and the King. The so called "Quietist" tradition has often been accused of containing no social ethic, but it was primarily the social criticism in the work of Guyon, Fénelon, and others that brought down upon them the wrath of the French political and ecclesiastical establishment.<sup>54</sup> Guyon was initially declared a heretic and traitor on false testimony, imprisoned for five years in the Bastille, exiled and

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<sup>52</sup>Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon, *Les justifications de la doctrine de Madame Jeanne-Marie de la Motte Guyon, écrites par elle-même* (Cologne: Chez Jean de la Pierre, 1720); first edition in France, with a slightly different title page, Paris 1790. The first edition of her works was published by an exiled French Protestant, Pierre Poiret, at Cologne.

<sup>53</sup>On Fénelon, see Louis Cognet, "Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 5 (1954), 151-170. On Fénelon's debt to the early Alexandrian tradition, see Alain Le Boulleuc, "L'édition des Stromates en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et la controverse entre Fénelon et Bossuet," dans *Les Pères de l'Église au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Acts du Colloque de Lyon, 2-5 octobre 1991* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1993). François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, *Christian Perfection* ed. Charles F. Whiston; trans. Mildred Whitney Stillman (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947).

<sup>54</sup>See the still unsurpassed analysis of Lionel Rothkrug, *Opposition to Louis XIV: the Political and Social Origins of the French Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 234-298. This analysis has been followed by Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: from Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1996), 56-58. One wonders how things would be different had Adam Smith been influenced by those who Rothkrug called the "Christian Agrarians" rather than their opponent, Pierre Nicole. On this influence, see Vernard Foley, *The Social Physics of Adam Smith* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1976), 201-208. See also the work of E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Classes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

then allowed to live under the constant surveillance of house arrest at Blois. Many of her books were first published in Cologne. Both authors were read, appreciated, recommended and criticized by Wesley. Randy Maddox has pointed out that the volume on spirituality that Wesley read with Sophie in Georgia during their ill-fated relationship was the work of John Heylyn (1684-1759). It contains writings from both Fénelon and Guyon. He later assigned it to his assistants, placed it in the libraries for the assistants established at Briston, London, and Newcastle. Heylyn's anthology was reprinted in the *Christian Library*.<sup>55</sup>

**Thomas Cogswell Upham (30 Jan. 1799—2 April 1872).** One could argue that Phoebe Palmer should be considered before her contemporary Thomas Upham, but it would appear that the argument can be made that, although Upham experienced "entire sanctification" at a prayer meeting led by Phoebe Palmer and her sister Sarah Lankford, that which distinguished the spirituality/theology of Palmer and Upham from that of Wesley, Fletcher, Merritt, and Bangs (and other American Methodist preachers/teachers) was the encounter with, use and promotion of the themes of Eastern Christian spirituality transmitted through the work of Guyon and Fénelon to Upham, and from Upham to Palmer.<sup>56</sup>

Born in New Hampshire, educated at Dartmouth College and Andover Theological Seminary, Upham became professor at Bowdoin College, Maine, in 1825. He taught there the rest of his life. There he established himself as one of the foremost American philosophers and moral theologians as well as a major contributor, together with his wife, to American spirituality. He had what most of the advocates of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition have lacked: a classical education and ability to

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<sup>55</sup>John Heylyn, ed., *Devotional Tracts Concerning the Presence of God, and other Religious Subjects* (London: Joseph Downing, 1724). Maddox to Bundy, Letter, 24 March 2003. A forthcoming analysis of Wesley's reading and sources will provide additional detail on Wesley's ownership, use, and recommendation of these and other authors.

<sup>56</sup>Upham has been rarely studied. The only monographic treatment is the problematic work of Darius L. Salter, *Spirit and Intellect: Thomas Upham's Holiness Theology* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 7; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1986). See also D. Bundy, "Upham, Thomas Cogswell," in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* 2 (1996), 1131, and idem, "Thomas Cogswell Upham and the Establishment of a Tradition of Ethical Reflection," in *Encounter*, 59 (1998), 23-40. Note that no one has established an accurate and reasonably complete bibliography of Upham.

read competently languages other than English.

It is unclear when he first read the autobiography of Madame Guyon, but this reading, the death of a child, and his wife's religious experience of Wesleyan sanctification under the tutelage of Sarah Lankford and Phoebe Palmer transformed his religious experience.<sup>57</sup> In this experience he found John Wesley a spiritual guide and mentor, along with the other primary Wesleyan theologians, both British and American. The choices of texts to translate into English appear to have been influenced by his reading of Wesley. All of the texts of French and Spanish mystics translated by him are mentioned by Wesley. It could also be argued that Upham's reading of these texts is at least partially conditioned by his understanding of Wesley and Wesley's doctrine of sanctification as taught by Merritt and Palmer.

The parallels between Upham's personal experience and those of Madame Guyon and Palmer are striking. It was a crisis provoked by deaths in the families that led Guyon, Upham, and Phoebe Palmer to reflection on personal holiness. Upham published widely in the areas of spirituality, including a biography of Madame Guyon and an introduction to the "religious opinions" of Fénelon.<sup>58</sup> In his preface to the biography, he wrote, "I had read the life and writings of Madame Guyon with inter-

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<sup>57</sup>The autobiography of Madame Guyon was available in English in an American printing at least as early as 1804 as *The Exemplary Life of the Pious Lady Guion*, translated from her own account by Thomas Digby Brooke (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruikshank, 1804).

<sup>58</sup>Thomas C. Upham, *Life, Religious Opinions and Experiences of Madame de la Mothe [sic] Guyon, including an account of the personal history and religious opinions of Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambray* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1846). This text has been reprinted at least fifty-two times, and as recently as 1962 in a British edition/revision. The edition cited below is that revised by "an English clergyman" published/reprinted, London 1961. It should be noted that Upham de-emphasizes the elements of traditional Catholic spirituality in Guyon and is suspicious of some of the spiritual/physical exercises and deprivations which Guyon adapted to enhance her spirituality. Phebe Lord Upham also published *Letters of Madame Guyon, being selections from her religious thought and experience, translated and rearranged from her private correspondence; including her correspondence with Fénelon* (Boston: H. Hoyt, 1838). A second edition was published in New York by W. C. Palmer in 1870. Upham also wrote a biography of another French mystic who influenced Wesley, *Life of Madame Catharine Adorna, including some leading facts and traits in her religious experience; together with explanations and remarks tending to illustrate the doctrine of holiness* (Boston: Waite & Pierce, 1845). This latter volume went through at least six printings.

est, and I think with profit . . . her history and opinions are too valuable to be lost . . . in the hope of contributing something to the cause of truth and of vital religion, I have undertaken the present work.”<sup>59</sup>

In the biography, Upham demonstrated a careful historical technique as he brought together much of what could be known from published materials about Guyon. Her spirituality is accurately represented, if one allows for a certain amount of de-Catholicizing of her story,<sup>60</sup> with extensive quotations of key passages from both Guyon and Fénelon. The perspective is remarkably similar to that of Pseudo-Macarius outlined above. There is a greater insistence upon the spiritually therapeutic aspects of suffering. A similar insistence is placed on the notion that, through the grace of God and the working of the Holy Spirit, sanctification is given to those who surrender themselves to God. The “state” is clearly available in the present for those who ask and are willing to accept the consequences. The religious perspective is intensely personal. Union with God is not dependent upon the sanction of the church, but upon the life habits of prayer and the Christ-conformed quality of the life of the individual supplicant with all life, thought, and action focused on the final unification with God (theosis). Essential to the entire system are the concepts of: (1) the effectiveness of the human will (through the grace of God); and (2) the importance of subduing the passions of the human person so that the entire mind, soul, and body can be subject to and conform to the will of God.

It is this perspective that was presented in Upham’s own writings about spirituality. These were extensive, both in book form and in numerous articles published in the popular religious press, including Palmer’s *Guide to Holiness*. In addition, his personal experience became paradigmatic for the expectations of religious transformation in the influential “Tuesday Meetings” of Phoebe Palmer. His book entitled *The Life of Faith* is divided into three sections. The first discusses the nature of faith, personal consecration and “assurance of faith.” The second section discusses the “power of the effects of faith in the regulation of man’s inward nature.” The third part investigates the “relation of faith to . . . divine guidance, [and the] operation of the Holy Ghost in the soul.” In this vol-

<sup>59</sup>Upham, *Life, Religious Opinions and Experiences of Madame Guyon*, vii.

<sup>60</sup>It is important to note that, although Upham removes some of the comments and spiritual practices from the story that would have been foreign to his generally Protestant readers, there is no anti-Catholic urgency in the resultant biography.

ume he argues that the goal of ascetic, self-controlled Christian living is “the stage of divine union.” This description of the conditions, methods and nature of union with God could perhaps have been written by Pseudo-Macarius. The appropriation of middle Platonic thought for articulating a Christian vision of the Christian striving to return to union with God is presented in all its clarity without the hesitations of Wesley.<sup>61</sup>

The same Eastern Christian themes can be seen in Upham’s *Treatise on Divine Union*.<sup>62</sup> In this volume he analyzed carefully the origins, grounds and goals of the relationship between God and humans, as well as the practices that may result in the improvement of that relationship. The journey or goal of all human spirituality, he affirms, is the reestablishment of the perfect union with God that was broken when humans, through their free will,<sup>63</sup> decided not to conform to the will of God. Every aspect of life has a bearing on spirituality. It is through prayer and total “abandonment” of ourselves for God that we move toward the goal.<sup>64</sup> In his *Life of Madame Catharine Adorna*, Upham summarized his understanding:

Divine union is to be regarded as a state of the soul different from that of mere sanctification both because it is subsequent to it in time and sustains the relation of effect; and also because its existence always implies two or more persons or beings, who are subjects of it.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Thomas C. Upham, *The Life of Faith in Three Parts, embracing some of the scriptural principles or doctrines of faith, the power or effects of faith in the regulation of man’s inward nature, and the relation of faith to divine guidance* (Boston: Waite & Pierce, 1845, reprinted New York: Garland, 1984).

<sup>62</sup>Thomas C. Upham, *A Treatise on Divine Union, designed to point out some of the intimate relations between God and man in the higher forms of religious experience*, (Boston: George C. Rand & Avery, 1856).

<sup>63</sup>Freedom of the will is essential to the traditions appropriated by Upham and Palmer. See the philosophical essay on the issue by Thomas C. Upham, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on the Will; forming the third volume of a system of mental philosophy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841).

<sup>64</sup>A similar constellation of issues framed Thomas C. Upham, *Principles of the Interior and Hidden Life; designed particularly for the consideration of those who are seeking assurance of faith and perfect love*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843). This volume was most recently published in an abridged version as part of the “Abridged Holiness Classics” by the Beacon Hill Press of the Church of the Nazarene in 1947 and again in 1961. See also his *Interior Divine Guidance* with a preface by Hannah Whitall Smith (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishing Association, 1905).

**Phoebe Palmer (18 Dec. 1807—2 Nov. 1874).** The influence of the Palmer family on American religious history and the formative nature of the writing and editorial work of Phoebe Palmer have been frequently remarked.<sup>66</sup> What has not been carefully examined are the sources of Phoebe Palmer's thought. It has generally been argued, since the work of Paul Fleisch, that she was the direct heir of Wesley and Fletcher and that theological shifts made by her provided the basis for Holiness and Pentecostal theology. Much the same thesis has been argued by Smith and Dayton.<sup>67</sup> Certainly Palmer was the heir of Wesley and Fletcher, but she was also mentored by both Timothy Merritt and Thomas Upham. From Merritt she received the structures of Methodist spirituality which insisted upon both personal and social holiness and which gave structures for encouraging the development of that spirituality.<sup>68</sup> It was Merritt who led the sister of Phoebe Palmer, Sarah Lankford, into the experience of "sanctification" in 1835. However, the "altar theology" which she popularized throughout North America and Europe came to her from Pseudo-Macarius via Madame Guyon, Fénelon, and essentially Thomas Upham. It is clear that the ideas were already present in the Methodist tradition. What she was doing was tapping into a tradition of spirituality that had been known and used (therefore legitimized) by Wesley and Fletcher, but which she received via sources that did not remove the spiritual optimism or mute the goal of achieving union with God at the earliest possible

<sup>65</sup>Thomas C. Upham, *Life of Madame Catharine Adorna*, 236.

<sup>66</sup>On Palmer, see: Harold Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Works* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellan, 1987); Charles White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) and Thomas Oden, ed. and introd. *Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings* (Classics of Western Spirituality; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1988).

<sup>67</sup>Paul Fleisch, *Die moderne Gemeinschaftsbewegung in Deutschland, Band 3: Die Geschichte der deutschen Gemeinschaftsbewegung bis zum Auftreten des Zungenredens (1875-1907)* (Leipzig: H. G. Wallman, 1912, reprinted New York: Garland, 1985); Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*; Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*.

<sup>68</sup>See Timothy Merritt, *The Christian's Manual: A Treatise on Christian Perfection* (New York: Published by T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840). This book went through 32,000 copies in the second printing and appeared in at least 33 printings, as late as 1871. He founded (1839) the periodical, *Guide to Holiness* that was sold to Phoebe Palmer in 1845. See D. Bundy, "Merritt, Timothy," in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* 2, 766-767.

moment. Pseudo-Macarius, Guyon, and Fénelon had argued that the individual should wait upon God, lay oneself on the altar of God, surrendering totally to the will of God and expect that God, through God's grace, would perfect the person into a restored image of God and then union with God.

Palmer's contribution, beyond popularizing a theme, was to provide a non-academic American Holiness language and an adaptation of Wesley's liturgical innovations for "Chapel" and "Class" (Tuesday Meetings) participation for the experiences of the divine surrounding the struggle for sanctification. She developed "holiness altar invitations" for "entire consecration," "believing meetings" in which persons were exhorted and given the opportunity to act, and the "altar testimony" during which persons were expected to testify to holiness immediately after receiving the experience. These concepts were present in her sources, but she gave them a form and practice, which again were adaptations congruent with American revivalist techniques.

The result was the development, within Methodism and the Holiness Movement, of the concept of holiness (Christian perfection, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, sanctification) as an expected reality within the life of the believer. The expectation was without the hesitations of Wesley about human perfectibility and without the personal humility of the Pseudo-Macarian text. As in Guyon and Fénelon, this piety was socially activist as well as focused on the individual's relationship with God. That relationship was paramount, but it was expected that the individual should live an active life of Christian mission. Palmer herself would speak out against slavery and other social ills (albeit not in the Tuesday Holiness Meetings), and she became an itinerant missionary in England.<sup>69</sup> Her involvement there was crucial to the founding of the Salvation Army and her account of her work became an important and widely circulated missionary narrative.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup>After this trip, Palmer's language regarding spirituality makes a major shift toward what has been described as "Pentecostal language." Unfortunately, no one has, to my knowledge, taken up the insightful suggestion by Charles Edward White regarding the importance of her reading of and relationship with the British Wesleyan Holiness advocate, William Arthur, who published *Tongues of Fire; or The True Power of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856). See Charles Edward White, "Phoebe Palmer and the Development of Pentecostal Pneumatology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (1988), 198-212, specifically page 200.



This understanding of a link between holiness and mission became very important for the self-understanding of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition during the last third of the nineteenth century. The linkage of missional and social reform energies created by the radical pre-Civil War Holiness spirituality was alien to the new post-Civil War reality. The Wesleyan/Holiness social vision of an egalitarian, multi-racial society was rejected by the larger public and then by the “mainline” churches, including the Methodist Episcopal Church. This traditional linkage, no longer functional in the context of American society, was diverted to foreign mission.<sup>71</sup> It is also true that, as the tradition was continued by people without the intellectual formation of Wesley, Guyon, Fénelon, and Upham, the sources were forgotten, as was the nature of the relationship between praxis and the eschatological goal of union with God.<sup>72</sup> Concern with spirituality gave way to a militant legalism when the emphasis was placed on the means rather than the optimistic goal of union with God sustained by the equally optimistic vision that such a transformation was possible for all who would accept God’s grace and conform to the will of God.

### The Continuity of Orthodox Themes in Early Pentecostal Spirituality

Among the transitional figures of the Holiness movement important for the earliest development of Pentecostalism were William Seymour, Minnie Abrams, and Thomas Ball Barratt. It can be argued that these theologians played major roles in defining what it meant to be a Pentecostal

<sup>70</sup>Phoebe Palmer, *Four Years in the Old World; comprising the travels, incidents, and evangelistic labors of Dr. and Mrs. Palmer in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales* (New York: Foster and Palmer, 1867). This seven-hundred page tome sold at least 200,000 copies.

<sup>71</sup>On the social context of these shifts, see D. Bundy, “Blaming the Victim: The Wesleyan/Holiness Movement in American culture,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32 (1997), 161-178. On the continuities and discontinuities of the spirituality within the tradition, see D. Bundy, “Wesleyan Perspectives on the Holy Spirit,” *Asbury Seminarian* 30 (1975), 31-41.

<sup>72</sup>Exceptions to this generalization can be observed in the “Radical Holiness” tradition. Three examples of the use of Guyon are: S. W., “Madame Guyon,” *Christian Workman* 1, 3 (Jan. 1893), 7, Anon. “From Madame Guyon,” *God’s Revivalist* 10, 6 (June 1896), 5, and T. K. Doty, E. M. Bounds, Madame Guyon, E. E. Shelhamer, et al., *Prevailing Prayer and its Results* ed E. E. Shelhamer (Atlanta: Repairer, n.d.), 93-96.

Christian in the formative years of the new tradition. The focus here is on the documentable use and/or continuity with the Wesleyan and Pseudo-Macarian themes of spirituality as they were mediated to the Pentecostals.

**William Seymour (1870-1922).** It is to *The Apostolic Faith*, the periodical published at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles from 1906-1908, to which one must turn for data which was, at the beginning of Pentecostalism, considered authoritative for the new tradition throughout much of the world.<sup>73</sup> This was not, even in the early period, the only Pentecostal voice. However, the Azusa Street Mission, its personnel and its publications, had paradigmatic status for the early years of the movement's history and its influence far outlived its publication period. Many of the contributions to *The Apostolic Faith* were anonymous. Some were signed by William J. Seymour and provide an entrée into the thought of this formative Pentecostal theologian.<sup>74</sup> While it is highly probable, on the basis of style and content, that some of the anonymous contributions are from his pen (especially the statements of faith) or precise transcriptions of his sermons, the uncertainty of provenance makes them less useful for our analysis.

Seymour believed all spirituality was dependent upon the free will decisions and actions of the individuals within the context of Christian

<sup>73</sup>The entire surviving corpus of *The Apostolic Faith* has been made available in: *Like as of Fire: a reprint of the old Azusa Street Papers* collected by Fred T. Corum (Wilmington, MA: n.p., 1981). An index was prepared by Wayne Warner and can be obtained from the Assemblies of God Archives, Springfield, MO. These have been reprinted as *The Azusa Street Papers* (Foley, AZ: Together in Harvest Publications, 1997).

<sup>74</sup>Despite the significance of William J. Seymour, the African American leader of early Pentecostalism in Los Angeles, he has not received the scholarly attention he deserves. Perhaps the best treatment is that of Dale T. Irwin, "'Drawing all together into one bond of love': the ecumenical vision of William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street revival," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 6 (1995), 23-53. The forthcoming work of C. M. Robeck will address much more completely the role of Seymour in Los Angeles and within the larger context of Pentecostalism. The unpublished dissertation of Douglas J. Nelson ["For Such a Time as This: the Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival", Ph.D. Diss., University of Birmingham, England, 1981] collected significant data, but the uncritical and hagiographical nature of the work has detracted from its usefulness. See the article of H. V. Synan, "Seymour, William Joseph," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 778-781. Articles signed by Seymour in *The Apostolic Faith* [=AF].

community and that the eventual corporate entity had to be in submission to God, not to be identified with either human ideas or human constructions of power or virtue.<sup>75</sup> After the individual's act of consecration to God resulting in justification, sanctification was to be sought to deal with original sin and, then, laying oneself on the altar, the individual became ready for "the baptism of the Holy Ghost."<sup>76</sup> This was normative biblical spirituality, as Seymour understood it. It was this individual experiential and doctrinal matrix which provided a basis for the transformation of individuals and thereby of the church, with a concomitant renewal of energy and power for the tasks of the church (to care for the sick, aid the poor, and pursue peace).<sup>77</sup> Such could fulfill the promise of "the latter rain" of God's Spirit upon all humanity which would transform all into "co-worker[s] with the Holy Ghost."<sup>78</sup> The multiple-stage spirituality seen in the Alexandrian Christian tradition of Origen (praktiké, theōrétikos, gnosis) and that one finds also in Pseudo-Macarius, Madame Guyon, Fénelon, Upham, and Palmer, but less clearly in Wesley, is clearly present in the work of Seymour (justification, sanctification, baptism in the Holy Spirit) and in the understanding of Abrams and Barratt.

**Minnie Abrams (1858-1912).**<sup>79</sup> Minnie Abrams went to India as a missionary with the Methodist Episcopal Church Missionary Society after growing up in a Holiness household and having studied at a Holiness college. After a few years of service in a Methodist context, she "went independent" and associated herself with the Mukti Mission of Pandita Ramabai. The Mukti Mission was a mission for women run by women. During the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, it was a major center of Holiness revivalism. In 1906, Abrams published in

<sup>75</sup>W. J. Seymour, "The Holy Spirit: Bishop of the Church," *AF* 2,9 (June-Sept. 1907), 3.

<sup>76</sup>W. J. Seymour, "The Way into the Holiest," *The Apostolic Faith* 1,2 (Oct. 1906), 4; *idem*, "Receive Ye the Holy Ghost," *AF* 1,5 (Jan. 1907), 2.

<sup>77</sup>W. J. Seymour, "Sanctified on the Cross," *AF* 2,13 (May 1908), 2; *idem*, "The Baptism of the Holy Ghost," *AF* 2,13 (May 1908), 3.

<sup>78</sup>W. J. Seymour, "The Holy Ghost and the Bride," *AF* 2,13 (May 1908), 4.

<sup>79</sup>"Entered into Rest," *Latter Rain Evangelist* 5 (January 1913), 14-15; Ella L. Abrams, "In Loving Memory," *Latter Rain Evangelist* 5 (June 1913), 20-21; "Minnie F. Abrams, of India," *Missionary Review of the World* (February 1913), 156. See also Gary B. McGee, "Abrams, Minnie F.," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 7.

a revised form an essay initially published as a series in the Methodist periodical, *Indian Witness*. This work, entitled *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*,<sup>80</sup> would influence theological developments in Chile (it led Willis and May Louise Hoover, founders of Pentecostalism in Chile, into the Pentecostal movement)<sup>81</sup> and Norway (where it was used by T. B. Barratt who visited Mukti in 1908).<sup>82</sup>

In this text numerous Orthodox themes of the Pseudo-Macarian tradition are found. Abrams describes the goal of life as “union with God.”<sup>83</sup> She understands the Christian life as “spiritual warfare” which is best waged in prayer<sup>84</sup> and ascetic lifestyle. The result of this spiritual discipline was apathy toward temptation.<sup>85</sup> The concomitant surrender of self and the conformity of the will to God on the model of Christ slowly push evil out from the individual soul.<sup>86</sup> Only through the grace of God’s Holy Spirit living through the individual can the individual be successful in and maintain this personal renewal. The individual who experiences this infusion of the Holy Spirit can fall away through lack of conformity to God’s will.

The journey to “union” is developmental: salvation, sanctification/baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire, spiritual struggle, and eventually union with God. The development happens as a result of the prayer and faith of the supplicant; it can only be maintained through being made per-

<sup>80</sup>Minnie F. Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*. Matt. 3:11 (2 ed., Kedagon: Mukti Mission Press, 1906). This was published in a revised edition (by the editor) at Framingham, MA, in 1913 after being published in that revised edition in *Word and Work* 34 (April 1912), 137-158.

<sup>81</sup>Willis C. Hoover, “The Wonderful Works of God in Chile,” *Latter Rain Evangelist* 3 (April 1911), 19.

<sup>82</sup>Thomas Ball Barratt, “Indien,” *Byposten* 4, 23 (Lørdag, 2 november 1907), 96, discusses the volume by Abrams and looks forward to its publication in Denmark. I have not yet located a copy of the Danish text. Only one letter, obviously part of a more extensive correspondence between the two, was published first in T. B. Barratt, “I Indien,” *Byposten* 5, 10 (Lørdag 16 mai 1908), 38; again, T. B. Barratt, *When the Fire Fell, and an Outline of my Life* (Oslo: Alfons Hansen & Sønner, 1927), 160-161 [the visit to Mukti is discussed 165-7; and, finally in his memoirs, *Själviografi* ed. Solveig Barratt Lange, trans. S. Gullberg (Stockholm: Förlaget Filadelfia, 1942), 214.

<sup>83</sup>Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*, 31, 48-49.

<sup>84</sup>Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*, 6-7, 9.

<sup>85</sup>Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*, 8.

<sup>86</sup>Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*, 40-42, *et passim*.

fect through conformity to Christ's death and resurrection. Assurance is given to the supplicant that they have "sought and received the abiding presence of the fire of the Holy Ghost, an abiding presence, giving marvelous power for service, and [when they continued] to prevail in prayer, this impression was greatly magnified."<sup>87</sup> As in Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Macarius, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria, one is to struggle through prayer and witness to lead others toward God. Among Abrams' sources is Madame Guyon,<sup>88</sup> cited from the biography by Thomas Upham<sup>89</sup> discussed above! There are frequent parallels to the work of Phoebe Palmer and William Arthur.

**Thomas Ball Barratt (1862-1940).** Thomas Ball Barratt<sup>90</sup> is perhaps the most globally influential of all of the early Pentecostal theologians. Throughout Europe he had connections with the founding of Pentecostalism in most countries, either directly or as model. His insistence on a congregational, entrepreneurial, self-governing, self-propagating, self-financing, self-theologizing ecclesiology as urged and demonstrated by William Taylor<sup>91</sup> has proved extremely resilient and persuasive in the Pentecostal world. Much of the so-called "Third World" Pentecostalism owes its ecclesiology and much of its spirituality to Barratt's influence.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>87</sup>Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*, 9.

<sup>88</sup>Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire*, 84.

<sup>89</sup>Thomas Upham, *Life, Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame Guyon*, 37.

<sup>90</sup>On Barratt, see David Bundy, "Thomas Ball Barratt: From Methodist to Pentecostal," *EPTA Bulletin* 13 (1994), 19-49.

<sup>91</sup>There were numerous parallels between both the experiences of Barratt and William Taylor with the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society and the conclusions with regard to ministry and mission drawn from those experiences. Certainly Barratt was influenced from an early period in his approach to ministry and then in his mission theory by his reading of and about William Taylor. Among Barratt's papers at the University of Oslo is a biography of Taylor written by the early Swedish Wesleyan/Holiness evangelist, G. A. Gustafson, *En Apostlagestalt på Missionsfältet eller bilder om Biskop William Taylors lif och verksamhet* (Falun: Författarens Förlag, 1898). On Taylor, see David Bundy, "Bishop William Taylor and Methodist Mission: a study in nineteenth century social history. Part I: From Campmeeting Convert to International Evangelist," *Methodist History* 27 (1989), 197-210; *idem*, "Bishop William Taylor and Methodist Mission: a Study in Nineteenth Century Social History. Part II: Social Structures in Collision," *Methodist History* 28 (1989), 3-21; and, *idem*, "William Taylor (1821-1902): Entrepreneurial Maverick for the Indigenous Church" in *Mission Legacies; Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement* ed. G. H. Anderson, *et al* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 461-468.

During the 1890s Barratt contributed numerous essays on “Christian Perfection” to *Kristelig tidende*, the official Norwegian Methodist Episcopal periodical. These articles demonstrate the concerns of Palmer and Upham and reflect their theological vocabulary, a not unexpected phenomenon since he certainly knew of their work in both monographic form and through his reading of *The Guide to Holiness*.<sup>93</sup> The other primary foci of his writings during the pre-Pentecostal period were the nature and organization of mission and congregational life.

At the point of his experience of the Pentecostal “baptism in the Holy Spirit” in New York in 1906, he wrote a theological essay, still unpublished, in which he affirmed the Wesleyan/Holiness theological tradition as providing the groundwork of the Pentecostal experience of Christian spirituality. In this essay one finds again evidence of the importance of the Pseudo-Macarian, Wesleyan, and Guyon themes of spirituality as mediated through the Americans. Significantly the work makes reference to William Taylor and the Taylor missionaries who, Barratt argues, probably understood very well the developmental spirituality advocated by the new Pentecostal Movement and now understood to include the experience of glossolalia.<sup>94</sup> Probably because of the insistence on the adequacy of the spirituality of the Taylor holiness and mission tradition, and other minor doctrinal differences from the Azusa Street/Seymour consensus, Seymour neither mentioned or published the text sent to him by Barratt.

<sup>92</sup>See the case studies, David Bundy, “Pentecostal Missions to Brazil: the case of the Norwegian G. L. Pettersen,” *Norsk tidsskrift for misjon* 47 (1993), 171-179, and *idem*, “Swedish Pentecostal Missions: the case of Axel Andersson in Mexico,” *To the Ends of the Earth* (Guadalajara: SPS, 1993), 1-17, and “Las misiones pentecostales suecas: el caso de Axel Andersson en Mexico,” *Prononcias sobre el tema: hasta los fines de la tierra* (Guadalajara: SPS, 1993), 1-12, *idem*, “Swedish Pentecostal mission theory and practice to 1930: foundational values in discussion,” *Mission Studies* 14 (1997), 147-174, and *idem*, “Unintended Consequences: the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society and the beginnings of Pentecostalism in Norway and Chile,” *Missiology* 27 (1999), 211-229.

<sup>93</sup>See, for example the serialized essay: T. B. Barratt, “Kristelig fuldkommenhed,” *Kristelig tidende* 18, 33 (6 Dec. 1899), 266; 18,35 (30 Aug. 1889), 275, and 18, 37 (13 Sept. 1899), 266.

<sup>94</sup>This text has been discussed in David Bundy, “An early Pentecostal Theological Treatise: Thomas Ball Barratt on Pentecostalism and Glossolalia,” in *Drinking from our Own Wells: Defining a Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality* (Springfield, MO: SPS, 1992), 2, Y, 1-35.

Another contact with the tradition under discussion was more direct. In 1908, Barratt translated into Norwegian and published a short essay "from Fénelon" in *Byposten*.<sup>95</sup> The text was borrowed from another Pentecostal periodical published by the Christian Workers Union at Framingham, Massachusetts, *Triumphs of Faith*. The fascicle of *Triumphs of Faith* containing the English original has not yet been found, but the material appears to have been assembled from the Fénelon extracts published by Upham in his biography of Madame Guyon. This identification is still tentative, but the same language and ideas (some of it word for word) can be found in the Upham text.<sup>96</sup> All of the classical Pseudo-Macarian, Upham, and Palmer themes are remarkably and concisely summarized. Particular insistence is placed on the importance of personal prayer and the willingness to surrender oneself completely to God so that one can be filled with godliness and God. The language and themes are consistent with the spiritual writing of Barratt as far back as the late 1870s published in *Kristelig Tidende*.

These themes would be reiterated in the booklets written during the first two years as a Pentecostal theologian that were collected for publication in English in 1909.<sup>97</sup> Most of these essays are preoccupied with understanding the nature of the experience of "glossolalia" partly because it was this liturgical innovation that so scandalized early critics of the tradition in Norway, Germany, England, and India. However, one of the essays makes clear the influence of this development tradition that is traced in this essay and which is evident in the Fénelon piece. That essay is entitled "To Seekers after 'The Promise of the Father.'" <sup>98</sup> Here there is the insistence on the role of the human will in spirituality, the importance of asceticism ("purification") in preparation for living in "perfect submission to the will of God," the understanding of Christian life as a "jour-

<sup>95</sup>"Hvile i Gud," *Byposten* 5,7 (lørdag, 4 april 1908), 22.

<sup>96</sup>Upham, *Life, Religious Opinions and Experiences of Madame Guyon*, 389-416.

<sup>97</sup>Thomas Ball Barratt, *In the Days of the Latter Rain* (London: Simkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1909).

<sup>98</sup>Barratt, *In the Days of the Latter*, 189-217. Many of the hundreds of articles, tracts and books published by Barratt as well as contributions to Scandinavian Pentecostal periodicals develop similar themes. These examples have been selected because they are more generally accessible. The others will be discussed in another context.

ney,” the three-stage development culminating in “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” the role of the grace given through the Holy Spirit which enables the individual to be victorious in spiritual warfare, and the solemn realization that most Christians do not live at a maximal level of spirituality. The goals of this life are twofold: (1) power for Christian living and mission; and (2) being “in Him, lost in Him and His love.”<sup>99</sup> These themes were developed in more detail, with more attention to the need for the “journey” and for continuous prayer, in a collection of sermons published in 1932.<sup>100</sup>

### **Upham’s Autobiography of Madame Guyon in Early Pentecostal Periodicals**

In support of the above arguments are the numerous citations of Upham’s translations, primarily of the *Autobiography of Madame Guyon* and the accompanying fragments of Fénelon in early Pentecostal periodicals around the world and in the new international Holiness periodicals (many of which became Pentecostal) founded in the 1880s. These have been identified in publications from Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Russia, Sweden, Norway, Croatia, China, India, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, France, Germany, Finland and Switzerland, as well as in the U.S.A. and elsewhere.

### **Conclusion**

The “history of ideas” is sometimes a dangerous scholarly enterprise and there is no desire here to minimize the differences between the various writers and appropriations of writers. In each instance the mediating context is essential to the outworking of the ideas. While this essay makes no pretence of completely resolving the use of early Eastern texts by Wesley or finally establishing the ecumenical identity of the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, it can affirm unequivocally that these traditions stand in one line of Christian rationalization that can be characterized as Pseudo-Macarian. Indeed, at each stage of the transmission of ideas, it has been demonstrated that there were direct or indirect and documented

<sup>99</sup>Barratt, *In the Days of the Latter*, 213.

<sup>100</sup>Thomas Ball Barratt, *Et ord til alle—noe for vår tid: prekener* (Oslo: Korsets Seier Forlag, 1932). Several of these were translated into Swedish: Thomas Ball Barratt, *Jet tror på den Helige Ande* trans. Arthur Sundstedt (Stockholm: Förlaget Filadelfia, 1951).



appreciative readings and appropriations of the Pseudo-Macarian corpus.

It has also been demonstrated that there is a continuity of concerns, language, and theological themes traceable from this one branch of the Eastern Christian tradition to modern religious phenomena. The transmission of one strand of Eastern Christianity can be traced from Clement of Alexandria to Origen to Pseudo-Macarius to Wesley and Madame Guyon and from both of them to the Holiness theologians Thomas Cogswell Upham, Phoebe Palmer, and from them to formative theologians of Pentecostalism, including William Seymour, Minnie Abrams, and Thomas Ball Barratt. It is not argued that this is always a simple straight-line transmission or a complete appropriation of the earlier texts. It is argued that through this network there is, because of contact with Pseudo-Macarius, a continuity of themes and that these were definitive for the development of the concept of sanctification/entire sanctification/theosis within the Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions.

## APPENDIX

### THE HOMILIES OF MACARIUS IN THE VERSION OF WESLEY

#### **Pseudo-Macarius**

#### **Macarius @ Wesley**

|                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Homily 1 (pps. 92-107)        | Wesley/Macarius 1 (pps. 72-77)   |
| Homily 2 (pps. 107-112)       | Wesley/Macarius 2 (pps. 78-80)   |
| Homily 3 (pps. 113-117)       |                                  |
| Homily 4 (pps. 117-140)       | Wesley/Macarius 3 (pps. 80-84)   |
| Homily 5 (pps. 141-151)       | Wesley/Macarius 4 (pps. 84-87)   |
| Homily 6 (pps. 152-157)       |                                  |
| Homily 7 (pps. 157-161)       |                                  |
| Homily 8 (pps. 162-166)       | Wesley/Macarius 5 (pps. 87-89)   |
| Homily 9 (pps. 167-175)       |                                  |
| Homily 10 (pps. 175-179)      | Wesley/Macarius 6 (pps. 89-92)   |
| Homilies 11-14 (pps. 180-213) |                                  |
| Homily 15 (pps. 213-252)      | Wesley/Macarius 7 (pps. 92-94)   |
| Homily 16 (pps. 252-263)      | Wesley/Macarius 8 (pps. 94-95)   |
| Homily 17 (pps. 263-275)      | Wesley/Macarius 9 (pps. 95-97)   |
| Homily 18 (pps. 275-283)      | Wesley/Macarius 10 (pps. 98-101) |

|                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Homily 19 (pps. 284-292)      | Wesley/Macarius 11 (pps. 102-105) |
| Homily 20 (pps. 292-297)      | Wesley/Macarius 12 (pps. 105-108) |
| Homilies 21-24 (pps. 298-311) |                                   |
| Homily 25 (pps. 311-319)      | Wesley/Macarius 13 (pps. 108-109) |
| Homily 26 (pps. 320-339)      | Wesley/Macarius 14 (pps. 110-111) |
| Homily 27 (pps. 340-359)      | Wesley/Macarius 15 (pps. 112-114) |
| Homily 28 (pps. 359-364)      | Wesley/Macarius 16 (pps. 115-116) |
| Homily 29 (pps. 364-371)      | Wesley/Macarius 17 (pps. 116-118) |
| Homilies 30-42 (pps. 371-428) |                                   |
| Homily 43 (pps. 428-436)      | Wesley/Macarius 18 (pps. 118-121) |
| Homily 44 (pps. 436-443)      | Wesley/Macarius 19 (pps. 121-124) |
| Homily 45 (pps. 444-450)      | Wesley/Macarius 20 (pps. 124-125) |
| Homily 46 (pps. 451-456)      |                                   |
| Homily 47 (pps. 456-468)      | Wesley/Macarius 21 (pps. 126-129) |
| Homily 48 (pps. 468-472)      |                                   |
| Homily 49 (pps. 473-477)      | Wesley/Macarius 22 (pps. 129-131) |
| Homily 50 (pps. 477-482)      |                                   |

# FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH: THE NEGLECTED ROLE OF CRISIS IN WESLEYAN AND PENTECOSTAL DISCIPLESHIP

by

**Cheryl Bridges Johns**

Arm me with thy whole armour, Lord!  
Support my weakness with thy might;  
Gird on my thigh thy conqu'ring sword,  
And shield me in the threatening fight:  
From faith to faith, from grace to grace,  
So in thy strength shall I go on;  
Till heaven and earth flee from thy face,  
And glory end what grace begun.<sup>1</sup>

Those of us who are Wesleyan and/or Pentecostal have a common heritage of a vision of the Christian life as a journey from grace to grace. Unlike many of our Protestant sisters and brothers who understand salvation as a one time judicial event, we understand salvation as an entry into the mysterious and grace-filled journey “with God and in God.”<sup>2</sup> Wesleyans and Pentecostals tend to speak of the “*via salutis*” rather than the “*ordo salutis*.” This way of salvation is often described as being fueled by

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Wesley, Hymn #188 (1739) from “Believers Rejoicing,” *Works*, vol. 7, 317-318.

<sup>2</sup>Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, JPT Supplement Series: 1), 1993, 76.

the ongoing dialectic of crisis and development. Salvation is initiated by crisis. Furthermore, the Christian journey is marked by crisis moments that deepen one's life in Christ. Development takes place between the moments of crisis and grounds these moments into the every day journey of faith.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century both Wesleyans and Pentecostals were known as the "experiential" wing of the Christian world. In an age that valued reasoned-faith we were criticized for emotive-crisis-filled worship. In an era of evolutionary progress, we stressed backslidings and growth in "fits and starts."<sup>4</sup> For us, crisis events were good because, as Steven Land points out, they were "times when God did something decisive which made possible a personal or corporate development that, before that time, was not possible."<sup>5</sup> For Pentecostals especially, the world was open to the intervention of God. Daily life was characterized by divine visitations and surprises of the Spirit.

As time progressed, North American Wesleyans and Pentecostals became less comfortable with crisis. There are several reasons for this shift. In short, both the Wesleyan and Pentecostal movements accommodated to the dominant culture (especially the dominant Evangelical culture) and crisis became a negative and shame-filled aspect of our religious life.<sup>6</sup> When crisis comes to church, the liturgy is messed up. Lament char-

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<sup>3</sup>Mildred Bangs Wynkoop notes that Wesleyanism has made the terms *crisis* and *experience* more important ("in a sort of parochial way") than other theologies have. For Wynkoop these terms "derive their specific Wesleyan meaning from the need to show the relationship of God's grace to human nature, preserving the essential integrity of both." Furthermore, "so long as crisis and process are considered means to an end, no insurmountable problems are encountered. It is when crisis and process become ends in themselves that serious clashes begin between theological constructs and human nature." See her "Wesleyan Theology and Christian Development," *The Asbury Seminarian*, vol. 31 (April, 1976), 36-41.

<sup>4</sup>I am using terminology by Sandra Higgins Matthaei, who describes the deepening journey of faith as developing in "fits and starts." See her *Making Disciples: Faith Formation in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 61.

<sup>5</sup>Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 117.

<sup>6</sup>Simon Chan observes that Evangelicals tend to see the Christian life as "one big, indistinct blob. One is expected to grow, but what is the expected pattern of development remains at best a hazy notion." He describes the common Evangelical pattern of Christian growth as something like this: "conversion, followed by three months of follow-up and discipling where one is taught the basic techniques of 'quiet time' and witnessing. Then one is expected to serve the Lord faithfully to the end of one's life." See his *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, JPT series, 26), 88.

acterizes worship. Testimonies reveal struggle with that embarrassing character “the devil.” When crisis comes to church people ask for prayer and often tarry at the altars searching for a divine intervention of grace.

### **The Rise of the Developmental Paradigm**

As the messy and sometimes disturbing journey from grace to grace gave way, another vision of the Christian life rose to take its place. It was an understanding of the Christian life as a steady developmental journey, one in which the human subject makes its way in the world in a patterned process of maturation. The developmental paradigm in Christian discipleship held sway during the last half of the twentieth century.

The Evangelical preoccupation with developmental psychology took root in seminaries and colleges, providing powerful myths as to how persons develop into mature Christians. To a large degree, Wesleyan and Pentecostal religious educators followed the Evangelical tendency to “simply baptize one of the current theories of developmental psychology and use it for structuring their own spiritual life.”<sup>7</sup> As a result, “crisis” came to be understood within the parameters of natural human development that sees growth as an ongoing dialectic of equilibrium and disequilibria. This development is “an ascending journey that moves, ebbing and flowing, upward to complexity—adequacy, in short—to maturing responses to life and experience.”<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the best known of Wesleyan developmentalists is Donald Joy who developed a particular interest in the moral development theory of Lawrence Kohlberg. Joy took the Christian image of pilgrimage and related it to the structuralist-developmental paradigm of growth. The result of this marriage is an understanding of the way of salvation as progressing upward through stages of ever increasing complexity and equilibrium.

In an attempt to dialogue with Joy and the work of Katherine Stonehouse, Mildren Bangs Wynkoop posed the following question: “What are you doing with your Wesleyan commitment. . . . Are you letting your attractive new trends lead you out of the narrow way? Are you substituting developmental theories for the “two-ness” of Wesleyan theology?”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 88.

<sup>8</sup>Donald Joy, *Moral Development Foundations: Judeo-Christian Alternatives to Piaget/Kohlberg* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 19.

<sup>9</sup>Wynkoop, “Wesleyan Theology and Christian Development,” 37.

After asking these probing questions, Wynkoop went on to note that the intersection of developmentalism with Wesleyan theology was appropriate under the condition that there could be maintained a view of a dynamic relationship between God and humanity. If this dynamic and relational understanding gave way the result would be a mistaken interpretation of what is normative in human development, and as a consequence, educational procedures that are confusing and inadequate would emerge.<sup>10</sup>

It appears that through the years, the dynamic relationship between God and humanity, with God as the subject as well as the object, has given way to a focus on the human side of faith. In the developmental paradigm all grace became prevenient grace. The most extreme case of this rise of the human subject can be seen in the work of James Fowler. Fowler's research in the area of "faith development" has Wesleyan theology as one of its foundational streams of influence (albeit a later addition). For Fowler, the Wesleyan tradition, with its emphasis on the life of faith, synergy of divine grace, and human will and prevenient grace, provides rich material for intersection with the structuralist-developmental paradigm of development.<sup>11</sup> Fowler's faith development paradigm is a powerful gestalt that is attractive in its vision of the human subject making its way forward in life, ever progressing to greater degrees of complexity and dialectical thought.

Pentecostals do not fare well on Fowler's structuralist paradigm. In his schema of faith, those of us of the "Pentecostalist" faith are viewed as being characteristic of a lower form of religious faith (mythic literal).<sup>12</sup> For Fowler, Pentecostals are somewhat like the hobbits of Middle Earth: prone to naiveté, parochialism, and a literal interpretation of symbols and in love with stories. Yet we have something *precious* (pun intended)! The higher, dialectically engaged Christians (like Fowler) can benefit from our gifts of affiliation—belonging and narrative.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Lecture notes taken at James Fowler's lecture at the 1987 meeting of the National Association of Professors of Christian Education, Danvers, MA. See also his *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Human Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

For the most part, Pentecostals have not reflected critically upon the structural development paradigm. At least the Wesleyans have given some thought as to how their vision of the Christian journey is informed by the social sciences. We Pentecostals have been content to utilize discipleship materials from the major Evangelical publishing companies that are filled with “baptized developmental theories.” We give these materials a “second and third blessing” of additional lessons on Acts 2 and the gifts of the Spirit and call the curriculum “Pentecostal.”

The results of the heavy influence of developmental psychology upon Wesleyan and Pentecostal discipleship have been many. On the positive side, the developmentalists helped us to see that the crisis-development dialectic is deeply embedded within the natural structures of organic life. Viewing “the human side” of faith has provided helpful tools towards a better understanding of the developmental tasks throughout the life cycle. We can predict (with some accuracy) these ongoing crisis moments and provide structures of discipleship that are appropriate.

On the negative side, the marriage of developmental psychology with Christian discipleship created an over-emphasis on the human subject. The stress on the human side of faith (be it in the areas of discipleship, theology or biblical studies) made the knowing subject the center of the world. As a result, all of reality became objectified, including God. Persons do not exist in a relationship with a God who is an acting agent in the world; rather, they come to center their lives on what Fowler describes as “shared centers of value and power.” Ironically, the attempt to objectify the world has resulted in a radical subjectivism, one in which the human knower cannot be certain of any objective knowledge outside of the self.

### **Re-Grounding in Worship and the Christian Practices**

As the twentieth century came to a close, there was a growing awareness of the sterility of the developmental paradigm for Christian formation and discipleship. A search began for answers to the “practical atheism” that infected church life. Probing questions such as those found in Edward Farley’s insightful book *The Fragility of Knowledge* were being asked, Does our life together in the church, including our ways of talking, behaving, organizing ourselves, and relating to one another—much less our history, doctrine, and Scripture—refer to anything other than ourselves? Does all this point to God? Is it of God? Or is it some-

thing that has no grounding beyond our own thinking and doing?"<sup>13</sup> Craig Dykstra has summed up well the late twentieth century angst:

People are beginning to ask questions about God again, and they yearn for coherent, thoughtful guidance as well as fresh access to the deep veins of wisdom that at least some of them suspect are still there to be mined from historic Christian traditions. We know we live in dangerous times. And we know the dangers are not only "out there" but also "in here," within ourselves. We sense, even if only vaguely, that the forces with which we have to contend are not minor and manageable but "principalities and powers." The hunger each of us senses is a hunger to understand what that contending is about, what it consists of, and what it means for our lives.<sup>14</sup>

As the twenty-first century dawned, Christian educators and others concerned about contemporary Christianity's lack of ability to face "dangerous times" began to look to the past in order to mine those "deep veins of wisdom." Found within them was the understanding of the Christian life as a journey of practiced discipline (the classical Christian pilgrimage). As a journey, the Christian way is fraught with the possibilities of conforming to this world. As pilgrims, Christians are in need of means whereby we can "move against the grain of our do-it-yourself culture and our powerful need to be in control of our existence."<sup>15</sup> In her groundbreaking work on the Christian practices, Margaret Miles points out that practices such as fasting, prayer, service to the sick, devotional reading, and ordered worship serve to "deconstruct the socialization and conditioning inscribed on the body (and mind and heart) by the 'world' (and) produce a new organizing center or 'self.'"<sup>16</sup>

Dykstra's interest and work in the Christian practices stresses their formative and transformative power. For Dykstra, "the process of coming to faith and growing in the life of faith is fundamentally a process of par-

<sup>13</sup>Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 88.

<sup>14</sup>Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>15</sup>M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 16.

<sup>16</sup>Margaret Miles, *Practicing Christianity: Critical Perspectives for an Embodied Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 90.



ticipation.”<sup>17</sup> As we participate more broadly and deeply in communities that “know God’s love, acknowledge it, express it and live their lives in light of it, we come to recognize and live in the Spirit.”<sup>18</sup>

In the Wesleyan tradition, Robert Mulholland attempts to recover the journey metaphor. He understands holistic spirituality as a “pilgrimage of deepening responsiveness to God’s control of our life and being.”<sup>19</sup> Utilizing the stages of “the classical Christian journey,” awakening, purification, illumination and union, he seeks to counter what he calls a “one sided spirituality” which only nurtures the areas of one’s personal preference. “Left to ourselves in the development of our spiritual practices,” notes Mulholland, “we will generally gravitate to those spiritual activities that nurture our preferred pattern of being and doing.”<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most comprehensive work regarding faith formation in the Wesleyan tradition is that of Sandra Higgins Matthaei. Her research attempts to ground discipleship in the Wesleyan vision of holiness of heart and life. Matthaei points out that, in the Wesleyan tradition, faith formation and transformation are “both acts of God’s grace and an invitation for human response. Faith formation is necessary preparation for transformation, although even a church’s most thorough plan of formation cannot guarantee transformation.”<sup>21</sup>

Drawing on Wesley’s understanding that “salvation involves transforming religious experience and a progression of growth in relation to God,” Matthaei contends that communion is both the means and ends of the Way of Salvation.<sup>22</sup> Upon this assumption she proposes a vision of faith formation in three phases: invitation to communion, deepening communion, and full communion. Growth in faith “begins with an invitation to communion through the Creator-God’s prevenient grace.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, “repentance and pardon through the justifying grace of Jesus Christ initiates a deepening communion with the Three-One God through the

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<sup>17</sup>Dykstra, 40.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Robert Mulholland Jr., 12.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>21</sup>Sandra Higgins Matthaei, 24.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 61. Matthaei’s concerns echo back to those of Wynkoop, namely that the foundation for discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition be established in the dynamic relationship between God and humanity.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

perfecting work of the Holy Spirit, until full communion with God is reached in glory.”<sup>24</sup> Under each of the stages of faith formation Matthaei provides a list of “formative practices” that serve to deepen communion. In addition, she lists “practices and disciplines” that serve as means of grace in each stage.

The current moves toward a vision of Christian formation and discipleship that is communal, centered in worship and grounded in the Christian practices, indicate a radical departure from the developmental paradigm. All of the persons I have listed above are seeking to move back to the realm of the mysterious transformative power of worship and the disciplined life. They seem to be seeking to place people “where we can receive a sense of the presence of God . . . places where “a habitation of the Spirit is able to occur.”<sup>25</sup> Religious educators are in search of mystery, a mystery that is shaped through the manners of communal life. As Dykstra points out, “beneath the level of norms, roles, institutional structures, rituals, stories, and symbols lies the level of our fundamental communal intentions toward one another and the world. . .how we live in our roles and rituals and by means of which we apprehend the mystery of existence. Deeper still abide the everlasting arms of God.”<sup>26</sup>

### **A Call to the Heart of Things**

If mystery, as Dykstra and others point out, lies at the heart of things, why are religious educators, preachers and theologians content to “dance on the edge?”<sup>27</sup> By this I mean that, in spite of our making it clear that formational practices and worship position us for ongoing transformation, religious educators are reluctant to talk about the “logic of transformation.” We can discuss phases in the Christian journey, noting how these phases (or stages) progress forward with the impetus of transforming moments. Yet, we fall silent in regard to the nature of those transforming events. We can even relate the Christian journey to the classical Christian pilgrimage; yet rarely speak of the dynamics involved in the “dark night of the soul,” those crisis moments that are a very real part of this

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>25</sup>Dykstra, 63,64.

<sup>26</sup>Dykstra, xi.

<sup>27</sup>I am using the imagery of Eugene Lowry. See his *The Sermon: Dancing on the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

journey. It appears that, as a whole, the field of religious education is content to mind the manners but not attend to the mystery.

In moving the discussion forward, I want to dialogue with the one religious educator who has dared to explore the realm of transformation. The work of James Loder attempts to uncover “the logic of the Spirit” in initiating and sustaining crisis events toward the transformation of persons into the image of Christ. In his research several streams converge, including Reformed theology, the existential thought of Kierkegaard, Freudian psychology, developmental structuralism, and Charismatic experience. While many Wesleyans and Pentecostals may find one or more of these streams disturbing (Fowler dismisses Loder’s work as “a profound psychoanalytic account of a very Presbyterian account of original sin”<sup>28</sup>), there are many aspects of his research that are intriguing and even brilliant.

Loder was not afraid to go where others feared to tread. He plunged into the realm of what he termed “convictional knowing,” those overpowering, life-changing moments that radically alter our ways of being in the world. Convictional experiences have a logic that Loder sees unfolding in a five-fold sequence: conflict, interlude for scanning, insight and release of mundane ecstasy, interpretation, and verification.<sup>29</sup> These steps govern all knowing events, but when carried into the dimension of “the Holy” they have the capacity to transform the human subject from knower to one who is truly known. Loder notes that when this event occurs there is “the intimacy of the self with its Source.”<sup>30</sup> This intimacy is constituted by the breakdown of the eternal distance between the human and God, the establishment of the internal dialogue, the illumination of Christ, the shared joy of Christ, and the thrust into the people and culture of Christ.<sup>31</sup>

For Loder the heart of human conflict is existential guilt and a heightened dichotomy between life/death. The human ego’s defensiveness has to be slain in order for the “alien righteousness” of Christ to be

<sup>28</sup>James E. Loder and James W. Fowler, “Conversations on Fowler’s Stages of Faith and Loder’s The Transforming Moment,” *Religious Education*, vol 77, No. 2 (March-April 1982), 133-148.

<sup>29</sup>James Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 2-4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 122.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

known.<sup>32</sup> Loder's emphases on the radical *discontinuity* between the human ego and the righteousness of Christ, the passive role of the ego in the transforming event, and the ongoing *discontinuity* between the human knower and God need to be modified in order to provide adequate description for a Wesleyan and/or Pentecostal vision of the role of crisis in the Christian life. What follows is a very cursory attempt to relate Loder's five steps of transforming knowing to a more Wesleyan vision of transformation.

At the core of the initial conflict I would place the brokenness of creation and of humankind that results in a distortion of reality and misguided affections. Where Loder places the human ego at the center of this conflict I would place the affections.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, a Trinitarian understanding of "the Holy" allows for a richer and more communal nature of the logic of the Spirit than does the Reformation emphasis on the Christ event. Allowing for these modifications, the five stages or steps of transformational knowing would look something like the following.

The *conflict* occurs in the rupture of the dissonance between that which is and that which should be. It reveals our limited capacity to heal our world and to heal ourselves. This is a movement of revelation of human brokenness and our inability to fix things. The initial conflict challenges the core of our affections and our ability to trust in the sufficiency of the grace of God.

The conflict initiates the *scanning process*. This period is a time of seeking solutions. It is an active time, one during which there is the possibility of attending to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Scanning may involve the disciplines of prayer and fasting, participating in the community of faith and attending to the Scriptures. While the person scans for solutions, she or he is also being scanned. The Holy Spirit comes along side and attends to the pilgrim as they journey into the conflict (what Loder calls the Void).<sup>34</sup> The Creator Spirit broods over the chaos of

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<sup>32</sup>See Loder's discussions regarding Luther's view of the Spirit and its role in transformation. *The Transforming Moment*, 114-116.

<sup>33</sup>Here I am utilizing Land's understanding of the affections as an integration of the mind, will, and emotions. See his *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 131-161.

<sup>34</sup>Loder uses the Emmaus Road experience of the disciples as illustration of "Christ's disguised presence" during the scanning process. *The Transforming Moment*, 97-120.

human brokenness and there may even be the hint of something new about to be birthed.

What is most difficult during this period is the need to wait, to tarry awhile in the conflict. There is the ever-present temptation for premature closure. Yet, if we wait for the “fullness of time” to arrive, we find ourselves growing in grace. The synergy of convicting grace and sanctifying grace teaches our hearts to fear and relieves our fears. It is grace that pushes us deeper still into the arms of God.

The next stage, *interruptive insight by transforming Presence*, reveals the intention and presence of God. It heals the rupture that has occurred in our known world and gives meaning to that which before had been chaos. It is a creative moment in time in which there is a birth of the imagination.

The birth of newness brings about *release and mundane ecstasy*. We are pushed deeper still into the dance of God. The beauty of holiness is revealed and our hearts are realigned toward the object of our affections. This movement is characterized by testimony and worship.

Finally, as we move forward in time we experience the *verification* of God’s transforming power. We look backward and see afresh the hand of God. At the same time we anticipate the future with greater assurance and deeper love for God and others.

It should be noted that every congregation is a rich ecology of persons who are at various stages of transformation. Some enter the church doors fresh into the conflict. Perhaps it is the conflict that drove them there. Others are scanning for solutions to their problems. Still others are in the “Eureka!” stage. They have come with a testimony of overcoming the crisis. The liturgy should contain opportunities for persons at each of these stages to be addressed. In particular, time should be given for the crisis being experienced by parishioners to be named in order that it might be overcome.

### **The Next Christianity: Redeeming Crisis**

As Dykstra has noted, “we live in dangerous times.” However, it seems that the Christian discipleship programs constructed during the twentieth century are unable to address a world beset by crisis. Those of us who do discipleship within the context of North America have little experience attending to major crisis. How do we construct liturgy that is able to “lure anarchy into the sacred circle” in order to tame it? If we are

to be more adequately prepared to do so, perhaps we should turn to those who live in the world that Philip Jenkins calls “the next Christendom.”<sup>35</sup> Our sisters and brothers in the Two-Thirds world have experience in redeeming crisis.

Researchers such as Harvey Cox,<sup>36</sup> Richard Shaull,<sup>37</sup> and Philip Jenkins<sup>38</sup> point to the massive transitions that are underway in Christianity within the two-thirds world. While Pentecostalism is at the forefront of these changes, it should be noted that all forms of Christianity are being transformed in the two-thirds world. Christians living in a context of chaos and suffering are re-inventing the faith. Richard Shaull in his study on Brazilian Pentecostalism spoke of the reality he found there:

Vast numbers of people, under the impact of the global economy of the market, are facing ever-greater impoverishment and marginalization. At the same time, the most basic structures needed for sustaining human life are eroding more and more, and increasing numbers of women and men are experiencing personal brokenness and social disintegration. In this situation, their central concern is focused on their often desperate struggle for daily survival and the search for the resources necessary for the reconstruction of their lives, individually, in the family, and in the community.<sup>39</sup>

The form of Christianity that is thriving in this context of chaos and despair is one which, as Jenkins notes, has moved “toward the ancient world view expressed in the New Testament: a vision of Jesus as the embodiment of divine power, who overcomes the evil forces that inflict calamity and sickness upon the human race.”<sup>40</sup> This world is much like the one described in the gospel of Mark, demon-infested and populated by

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<sup>35</sup>Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2002).

<sup>36</sup>Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

<sup>37</sup>Richard Shaull, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>38</sup>Jenkins, *The Coming Christendom*. See also his “The Next Christianity,” *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 2002, 53-68.

<sup>39</sup>Shaull, p. x.

<sup>40</sup>Jenkins, “The Next Christianity,” 54.

desperate people who turn to Jesus as their only hope for healing and salvation.

It is among those who see “religion as their only hope”<sup>41</sup> that Christianity is re-inventing itself. One of the key areas being re-invented is the belief in the world of the supernatural. For many of the today’s Christians it is “demonic” forces that create chaos in the world, causing sickness, oppression and poverty. The only way to combat these forces is through the power of the Holy Spirit. According to Shaull, this vision of the world creates a different paradigm of salvation than the one that has dominated the Western, post-Reformation world. Whereas the Reformation stressed the human problem as resting with original sin (evil is largely internalized), the two-thirds- world Christian sees the human dilemma as being held captive by demonic forces that are agents of chaos and destruction (external evil). Within the Reformation paradigm the solution to the human problem is God’s gift of salvation and justification made available through the expiatory work of Christ on the cross. Within the other Christian world, the solution is the presence and power of the resurrected Christ and of the Holy Spirit as the source of life and hope. This solution provides the power to make it through each day and guarantees victory over demonic forces. Notes Shaull: “The Holy Spirit is present with power in the midst of all that makes people cry and scream, love and hate, and feel hunger and abandonment.”<sup>42</sup>

I want to modify Shaull’s assessment of the emerging paradigm of salvation to include the issue of original sin. However, I do think that the way of salvation that is being experienced among the marginalized recognizes the external, fallen world as a lived reality. There is recognition of the brokenness of all creation. To be delivered from evil is more than being released from the burden of guilt. It is to be rescued from the powers that dominate the world order. These powers tend to dominate the “world within us” as well as the world without.

The models of discipleship that are emerging in the two-thirds world are built around the transformative power of communities of the Spirit. Speaking of these communities, David Martin observes that they have the power to enable persons to “reinvent themselves in an atmosphere of fraternal support.”<sup>43</sup> He notes:

<sup>41</sup>Shaull, x.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>43</sup>David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

Pentecostalism in particular . . . provides a new cell taking over from scarred and broken tissue. Above all it renews the innermost cell of the family and protects the woman from the ravages of male desertion and violence. A new faith is able to implant new disciplines, re-order priorities, counter corruption and destructive machismo, and reverse the indifferent and injurious hierarchies of the outside world.<sup>44</sup>

Such communities Cox describes as “little outposts of the Kingdom . . . hundreds of thousands of congregations” that exist in the midst of poverty and violence.<sup>45</sup> It is these communities’ ability to construct new cells out of the very fabric of broken existence, their ability to “lure anarchy into the sacred circle and tame it,”<sup>46</sup> that speaks to our own discipleship. By incorporating chaos and pain into the life and liturgy, two-thirds world churches provide the possibility of ongoing transformation and formation in the midst of suffering.

Shaull says these communities allow for the “reconstruction of life in the power of the Spirit.” It is not that “individual selves” are being transformed, rather it is *life itself that is being liturgically reconstructed*: “Family relationships are transformed; alcoholics and those on drugs break their addiction; broken bodies and disturbed minds are healed; and those who had no worth and no place in society discover their worth before God and feel empowered.”<sup>47</sup>

It is doubtful that discipleship of the first world is able to liturgically reconstruct life. For the most part, we have not been faced with this awesome task. All around us are structures of social support. In our world, church serves as only one means whereby people find help and fulfillment. Yet, as Jenkins points out, there are those outside of our context who find that “to be a member of an active Christian church today might well bring more tangible benefits than being a citizen of Nigeria or Peru.”<sup>48</sup>

We may not have to face the disintegration of social structures, the ravages of war and disease. Yet our dis-ease after September 11<sup>th</sup> and our current dis-ease over the war in Iraq indicate that we were not prepared to

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 284.

<sup>45</sup>Cox, 320.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>47</sup>Shaull, 162.

<sup>48</sup>Jenkins, *The Coming Christendom*, 76.



handle crisis. The Sunday following September 11, many of us scrambled to find appropriate hymns to express our lament. Somehow “praise and worship” music was not enough!

Jenkins makes it clear that the “coming Christendom” is a force too large to be ignored. Those of us who are Pentecostal, who should be the bridge builders between Christianity in the first world and that found in the two-thirds world are ill prepared to do so. We North American Pentecostals are more like the rest of North American Christianity than our counter-parts in the Southern hemisphere. We are uncomfortable with the supernaturalism and the wild mystery we find there. Moreover, we are uncomfortable with the chaos and crisis that are part of the daily lives of these Christians.

In spite of the differences between “worlds,” we can learn from the “next Christianity.” Within this context are powerful models of discipleship that beg our attention. Detailed discussion of them is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I do want to list some factors that we should consider incorporating into our attempts at Christian formation.

First, we should quit trying to be so “metaphysically correct” according to the Enlightenment. Let’s once again speak of the realm of the Spirit. Let’s work on defining how this world is experienced. It would help us to begin to view the world as “Spirit-world,” a worldview that sees the deep relationality of all things held together by the Holy Spirit. Such a worldview would cause us to reject the traditional dichotomies between the spiritual and material and to view the natural world as potentially a vehicle for a visitation of the supernatural (both good and bad).

Second, we would be enriched by a retrieval of an apocalyptic vision that understands all things as moving toward the *Parousia*, while in turn knowing that the future is breaking upon the present. In such a context worship becomes instrumental for not only providing us a way in the world but also occasions for a way into eternity. Furthermore, daily life is the opportunity for the in-breaking of the future. This fusion of historical and eschatological time becomes a rich context for discipleship and worship. We can begin to provide opportunities whereby people “find themselves in another world, an open world in which the gates of their prison have been unlocked.”<sup>49</sup>

Third, in order to be better prepared to address chaos and crisis, let us work on creating liturgies that can lure anarchy into the sacred circle

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<sup>49</sup>Shaull, 153.

and tame it. This frightening prospect calls for more incorporation of structured opportunities for the naming of crisis. These opportunities give people power to, in the words of Paulo Freire, “name their world in order to have power over that world.” Naming objectifies the chaos and calls it forward in order to be tamed. Testimonies serve as powerful means of identifying the crises that are occurring within the lives of a congregation. They serve to mesh the realities of life with the ongoing story of the faith community. Participants learn to “de-code reality” in order to analyze it for further action and reflection. Testimonies also offer alternative realities—realities of the Spirit that serve to offer hope and encouragement to others who may be in crisis.

The Eucharist serves as a rite that enacts the primal crisis found in the story of salvation. As participants, by the power of the Spirit participate in the crisis of the passion and death of Christ, they experience transformation of their own passion. They receive strength for the journey ahead and are renewed in vision, looking forward to the day when all shall sit together at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Eucharist also calls us to remember the great cloud of witnesses who surround us. Their testimony of overcoming tribulation serves to encourage those who are on the perilous journey of faith. Among persecuted Christians in particular, the Eucharist serves as a means of both strength and hope.

Special services that focus on healing and deliverance are important means whereby we can incorporate crisis into our liturgical life. Such services are designed for the purpose of providing for a radical in breaking of “the light that streams from the end.”<sup>50</sup> There is no need for the presence of special “healing evangelists” in order to have these services. Rather, the local body of believers, with its many gifts, serves as the natural context for occasions of healing and deliverance.

All night prayer vigils serve as powerful means whereby people can both attend to the holy and wrestle with crisis. In his interview with a Brazilian peasant woman, Dona Juliana, Shaull discovered the importance

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<sup>50</sup>I am using the language of the Russian existentialist Nicholas Berdyaev. Berdyaev spoke of “existential time” that provides an emergence into the eternal, thereby freeing persons from the slavery of historical and cosmic time. This time is a “point” that can be drawn vertically, allowing for the “light from the future” to stream into the present. See his *Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944). I am indebted to Dimitar Luchev for acquainting me with the work of Berdyaev.

of such events in her life. She observed: "We also have many vigils, a beautiful experience. We go to church in the evening, stay there until 11:00, and then people from several churches gather and begin the vigil in the church, or on the beach, or maybe at the foot of a mountain. We spend the whole night singing, praying, seeking the Holy Spirit. We take food and eat together, until 4:00 a.m. when it's over." She continues, "The world is evil in the time before the return of Jesus. No love, people killing each other, or on drugs . . . the believer, especially the lay worker, is in constant confrontation with the devil. The devil is very powerful, but we have the power to bind and expel these demons."<sup>51</sup> In addition to prayer vigils, periods of corporate fasting provide opportunities for greater discernment and power in facing the chaos of life. Notes Dona Juliana: "There's much emphasis on fasting. Lay workers fast three times a week from midnight to noon of the next day."<sup>52</sup>

Finally, in order to better incorporate crisis into our discipleship, we could look at the renewal of the Wesleyan concept of penitent bands. Persons whose lives are characterized by the chaos of addictions or whose lives are so broken from life experiences need intensive, focused discipleship. They will not get this in Sunday school classes or even in the regular small groups that a local church may provide. Persons living in chaos are often overwhelmed. Life has them by the throat and they are unable to step outside of the crisis. A small band of people who help attend to the crisis may be a lifeline to healing.

The suggestions listed above are intended to open the discussion as to how we in North America can be better prepared to deal with crisis. We are good at development, the in-between times. We know how to mind the manners. We are not so good in those moments when the known world is ruptured in such a way that the human is no longer the subject but the object. Our sisters and brothers in the two-thirds world know what such experiences are like and they are more than able to help us face an uncertain future, one in which terrorism, war, AIDS, and chemical and biological weapons may await us all.

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<sup>51</sup>Shaull, 176.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

# **TYPES OF WESLEYAN PHILOSOPHY: THE GENERAL LANDSCAPE AND MY OWN RESEARCH AGENDA**

by

**Thomas J. Oord**

The Presidential Address of the Wesleyan Philosophical Society,  
Lexington, Kentucky, March 2003

“How well do philosophy and religion agree  
in a man [*sic*] of sound understanding!”

—John Wesley (*Journal*, Tuesday, July 3, 1753)

The bulk of this paper entails my descriptions of four elements in a typology. I describe types of Wesleyan philosophy in terms of interests that those in the Wesleyan Philosophical Society might pursue. When discussing the final element, I briefly sketch the direction I personally would like to pursue in my own Wesleyan philosophical scholarship. Part of my rationale for this essays amounts to an apologetic for the Wesleyan Philosophical Society. And part of the reason I offer this essay is to encourage those with philosophical inclinations seriously to consider becoming active in this fledgling society of Wesleyan scholars.

## **1. Wesleyans Doing Philosophy**

The first type of philosophers who belong in the Wesleyan Philosophical Society might be called “Wesleyans Doing Philosophy.” This type is the most inclusive, because it includes all Wesleyans who endeavor to examine an idea philosophically. Those in universities and colleges, graduate and undergraduate students, nonprofessionals and

Christian leaders—all Wesleyans who value the philosophical enterprise—are invited to join the Wesleyan Philosophical Society. Welcome are Wesleyans who characterize themselves as analytic, continental, feminist, pragmatist, process, Thomist, etc., and those whose interest lay chiefly in aesthetics, Eastern philosophy, epistemology, ethics, logic, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, political philosophy, etc.

Many contemporary traditions have stressed the philosophical importance of one's community, identity, and social location. Prominent voices in feminist philosophy have suggested this, and Wittgenstein's category of the "forms of life" commends something similar. The "Wesleyans Doing Philosophy" type might be understood to acknowledge that one's location and history often, if not inevitably, affects one's identity and aims. The broad Wesleyan community will likely shape, at least to some degree, the form, ideas, or issues of philosophy that a Wesleyan philosopher pursues. Of course, *how* being a Wesleyan shapes one's philosophy may be difficult to detect. Hindsight often provides a clearer view.

### **Examiners of Wesley's Philosophical Thought**

The second type of philosophers who belong in the Wesleyan Philosophical Society are "Examiners of Wesley's Own Philosophical Thought." While John Wesley is not known for writing philosophy, many scholars and laity did not know the great degree to which Wesley read philosophy and attempted to formulate his own thought in reaction to the philosophers of his day. Barry Bryant's paper at last year's WPS conference and Laura Bartel's paper this year, among others, explore the influence that philosophy had on Wesley.

Not only did Wesley study philosophy at Oxford and not only did he become regarded as a formidable logician while a graduate fellow there, but he also often defended the importance of philosophy throughout his life. When mentors like Peter Böhler said, "My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away," Wesley disagreed. In fact, he read widely in philosophy and recommended that his preachers and others with whom he corresponded read philosophy as well.

Among the philosophers Wesley is known to have read are notables such as Aristotle, Augustine, Francis Bacon, George Berkeley, Boethius, Robert Boyle, Joseph Butler, Cicero, Samuel Clarke, Rene Descartes, Johnathan Edwards, Erasmus, David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, Gottfried Leibnitz, John Locke, Malebranche, Cotton Mather, Isaac Newton, Pascal, Plato, Thomas Reid, and Voltaire.

I have begun a list of philosophy books that Wesley mentions having read or that he recommended. Upon realizing that the list was growing huge, I came to my senses and ask Randy Maddox for help. Fortunately, Randy is in the process of constructing a record of all the books, philosophical and nonphilosophical, that Wesley mentions having read. He culled out a list for me of about 80 philosophers whose works Wesley mentions.<sup>1</sup>

The titles of Wesley's own philosophical essays reveal his interests: "A Compendium of Logic," "Of the Gradual Improvement of Natural Philosophy," "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered," "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge," "Remarks upon Mr. Locke's 'Essay on Human Understanding,'" "An Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," "Thoughts upon Necessity," and "Thoughts upon Taste." Most of Wesley's constructive philosophical writings were in the arena we think of today as philosophy of science and what in his day was referred to as "Natural Philosophy." In many ways, Wesley worked to integrate truths and theories in the science-and-religion interface.

The importance of philosophy for Wesley is evident in his essay "Address to Clergy." In this piece, he instructs his ministers to examine themselves by asking a set of questions. I find the fifth line of questioning particularly interesting, and I offer it here in full, despite its length. Wesley instructs ministers to ask themselves:

Am I a tolerable master of the sciences? Have I gone through the very gate of them, logic? If not, I am not likely to go much farther, when I stumble at the threshold. Do I understand it so as to be ever the better for it? to have it always ready for use; so as to apply every rule of it, when occasion is, almost as naturally as I turn my hand? Do I understand it at all? Are not even the moods and figures above my comprehension? Do not I poorly endeavour to cover my ignorance, by affecting to laugh at their barbarous names? Can I even reduce an indirect mood to a direct; a hypothetical to a categorical syllogism? Rather, have not my stupid indolence and laziness made me very ready to believe what the little wits and pretty gentlemen affirm, "that logic is good for nothing?" It is good for this at least, (wherever it is understood,) to make people talk less; by showing them both what is, and what is not, to the point; and how extremely hard it is to prove anything. Do I understand metaphysics; if not the depths of the Schoolmen, the subtleties of Scotus or Aquinas, yet the first rudiments, the general

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<sup>1</sup>Randy Maddox, "Wesley on Natural Philosophy" and "Wesley on Philosophy" (unpublished bibliography, in progress).

principles, of that useful science? Have I conquered so much of it, as to clear my apprehension and range my ideas under proper heads; so much as enables me to read with ease and pleasure, as well as profit, Dr. Henry More's *Works*, Malebranche's "Search after Truth," and Dr. Clarke's "Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God?" Do I understand natural philosophy? If I have not gone deep therein, have I digested the general grounds of it? Have I mastered Gravesande, Keill, Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia*, with his "Theory of Light and Colours"? In order thereto, have I laid in some stock of mathematical knowledge? Am I master of the mathematical A B C of Euclid's *Elements*? If I have not gone thus far, if I am such a novice still, what have I been about ever since I came from school?

That last line strikes me as especially provocative. Wesley is saying to his preachers, "Don't stop thinking philosophically or reading philosophy books at graduation!"

Of course, Wesley sometimes said pejorative things about philosophers. He, like us, thought some philosophies more beneficial than others. My favorite derogatory words are his comments on David Hume. He called Hume "the most insolent despiser of truth and virtue that ever appeared in the world" and "an avowed enemy to God and man, and to all that is sacred and valuable upon earth" (*Journal*, May 5, 1772).

When Wesley speaks of philosophers or philosophy in a negative way, he generally distinguishes the kind of philosophers about which he speaks. He speaks of "senseless," "brute," "heathen," "miserable," and just plain "bad" philosophy or philosophers. The most common disparaging adjective he uses to label philosophers with whom he disagreed is "minute." He had read George Berkeley's work *Alciphron or the Minute Philosopher*, in which Berkeley railed against deists. Berkeley designates these deists "minute philosophers" because of their inability to take a large view of things. Wesley seems also to have despised those who never step back and see the big picture. In his mind, Hume was one of these despised "minute" philosophers.

In sum, the Wesleyan Philosophical Society welcomes those who want to examine closely Wesley's own philosophical thought and its influences.

### 3. Adherents of Consonant Philosophical Traditions

The third type of philosophers who belong in the Wesleyan Philosophical Society are those who might see themselves as "Adherents of Philosophical Traditions Consonant with Wesleyan Thought." Of course,

at the heart of this type lay questions about the exact nature of what is Wesleyan. Certainly these questions are up for debate. Nevertheless, a fair number of individuals have claimed that some philosophical traditions are especially consonant with what they believe are basic Wesleyan themes. By way of illustration, I briefly mention five such traditions.

First, some have regarded the general tradition of empiricism, exemplified by John Locke among others, as consonant with Wesleyan thought.<sup>2</sup> Wesley himself adhered to the basic empiricist dictum, “nothing is in the mind that is not first in the senses.”<sup>3</sup> Adherents of the empiricist philosophical tradition should feel comfortable exploring the themes of empiricism in the Wesleyan Philosophy Society.

Second, some Wesleyans have noticed basic similarities between Wesley’s thought and the common sense style of argumentation developed by Thomas Reid and the Scottish Commonsense Realists. James E. Hamilton, for instance, has argued that “there was in Wesley and other early Methodists a commonsense approach to theological matters which bore an affinity to Reid’s philosophical method.”<sup>4</sup> Hamilton traces common sense philosophy’s extensive influence upon Methodist scholars to underscore his point.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Some who have explored deeply the connections between Locke’s and Wesley’s epistemologies include Richard E. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984), Frederick Dreyer, “Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley,” *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 12-30, Clifford J. Hindley, “The Philosophy of Enthusiasm: A Study in the Origins of ‘Experimental Theology,’” *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 182 (1957): 99-109, 199-210; Rex D. Matthews, “‘Reason and Religion Joined’: A Study in the Theology of John Wesley” (Th.D. diss., Harvard University, 1986), Yoshio Noro, “Wesley’s Theological Epistemology,” *Iliff Review* 28 (1971): 59-76, Mitsuo Shimizu, “Epistemology in the Thought of John Wesley” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Drew University, 1980), Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, & Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990); Laurence W. Wood, “Wesley’s Epistemology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975): 48-59. It is generally agreed that Wesley was profoundly influenced by Lockean empiricism through Peter Browne’s *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Knowledge* (London: William Innys, 1728).

<sup>3</sup>Wesley mentions this in his sermons “On the Discoveries of Faith” (Works 4:49), “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith” (Works: 4:51), and *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (Works 11:56).

<sup>4</sup>James E. Hamilton, “Epistemology and Theology in American Methodism” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975), 72.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, all. See also Hamilton’s “Academic Orthodoxy and the Arminianizing of American Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 9 (1974), and Leland H. Scott, “Methodist Theology in America in the Nineteenth Century,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale, 1954.



Third, the contemporary tradition of pragmatism is consonant, in many ways, with the appeals that Wesley made to the relationship between a proposition's usefulness and its truth. Wesley's appeal to experience as a test for truth, along with his inclination for what he called "practical divinity," might provide fruitful ground for explorations into pragmatism's relationship with Wesleyan thought. Mark Mann points out some similarities in his essay "Postmodernity and Pragmatic Wesleyanism: Peirce, Wesley, and the Demise of Epistemic Foundationalism," which can be found on the Wesleyan Philosophical Society website.<sup>6</sup>

A fourth philosophical tradition believed to be consonant with Wesleyan thought, and one that appears to be making a comeback, is the personalist tradition. Boston University's version of personalist philosophy has been particularly associated with Wesleyan thought.<sup>7</sup> Borden Parker Bowne, the instigator of this personalist school, profoundly influenced the work of Wesleyan-oriented scholars in the first half of the twentieth century. Bowne provided Wesleyans, says Thomas A. Langford, with "a generative philosophical foundation for theological construction."<sup>8</sup> This made Bowne's philosophy "the seminal source of the most generally influential school of theology produced by American Methodism."<sup>9</sup>

The fifth tradition, some of whose themes are consonant with Wesleyan thought, is the process philosophical trajectory. A few of these themes are explored in the recent book that Bryan Stone and I co-edited.<sup>10</sup> Other than the essays in our book, John Cobb's book *Grace and Responsibility*

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<sup>6</sup>See, for instance, Mark H. Greer Mann, "Postmodernity and Pragmatic Wesleyanism: Peirce, Wesley, and the Demise of Epistemic Foundationalism," paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society (1999) and published on the Wesleyan Philosophical Society website (<http://david.snu.edu/~brint.fs/wpsjnl/Mann01.htm>).

<sup>7</sup>See my discussion of Boston Personalism's relationship with Wesleyan theology in "Wesleyan Theology, Boston Personalism, and Process Thought," in *Thy Name and Thy Nature is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue*, Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, eds. (Nashville: Kingswood, 2001), Appendix; and "Boston Personalism's Affinities and Disparities with Wesleyan Theology and Process Philosophy," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 37:2 (Fall 2002): 114-129.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas A. Langford, *Wesleyan Theology: A Sourcebook* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1984), 149.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 175.

<sup>10</sup>Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, eds., *Thy Name and Thy Nature is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue* (Nashville: Kingswood, 2001).

(on Wesley's theology), and a few theological articles appreciative of the Wesleyan/Process consonance, not much has been done to explore possible correlations. In fact, the only explicitly philosophical essays comparing process thought to Wesleyanism to be published may be an essay by John Culp titled, "A Wesleyan Contribution to Contemporary Epistemological Discussions,"<sup>11</sup> and my own work that shows David Griffin's postmodern process philosophy as consonant with themes in Wesleyan thought.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Constructors Developing Wesleyan Concerns

Mention of my own work brings me to the fourth type of philosophers who belong in the Wesleyan Philosophical Society. This type consists of "Constructors of Philosophies that Develop Wesleyan Concerns." Those who wish to do constructive philosophy take steps beyond identifying ways in which Wesleyan thought and various philosophical traditions are consonant. They wish to take Wesleyan-orienting concerns and propose novel philosophical hypotheses that expand such concerns. Let me cite a few possibilities for this enterprise in constructive philosophy.

A philosopher might examine Wesley's notion of spiritual sensation as a perceptive capacity and then build an epistemology that incorporates Wesley's concerns and yet transcends his spiritual sensation category. Or, one might take themes in Wesley's notion of social existence and construct an ethics that assimilates key Wesleyan insights while adding concerns and insights from contemporary ethical discourse. Or, one might take Wesley's concerns about freedom and its limits and proffer a new theory of causal libertarianism. The possibilities for constructive philosophical work that develops Wesleyan concerns seem immense.

As one whose work fits this fourth type, I should note that my own recent inclinations pertain to developing a metaphysics of prevenient grace. I will sketch out my thoughts on a metaphysics of prevenient grace in the final paragraphs.

By "metaphysics" I mean a comprehensive proposal for how things work that is empirically oriented, provisional, intentionally inclusive,

<sup>11</sup>See *Thy Name and Thy Nature is Love*, ch. 10.

<sup>12</sup>See Thomas Jay Oord, "A Postmodern Wesleyan Philosophy and David Ray Griffin's Postmodern Vision," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. 35:1 (April/May, 2000); and "Prevenient Grace and Nonsensory Perception of God in a Postmodern Wesleyan Philosophy," in *Between Nature and Grace: Mapping the Interface of Wesleyan Theology and Psychology* (San Diego, Calif.: Point Loma Press, 2000).

speculative, and aspiring toward greatest plausibility. As I see it, an adequate metaphysics attains factual adequacy, logical consistency, rational coherence, and explanatory power. By “prevenient grace” I mean God’s loving action prior to every creaturely event. I see God as an interactive person whose pantemporal life consists of successive moments of experience. While God’s nature is unchangingly eternal, God’s experiential life changes in give-and-take relations with nondivine others.

The keys to my thoughts on a metaphysics of prevenient grace surround God’s creative activity as one necessarily related to creatures. As one who is essentially relational, God has always been interacting with some world or another (which entails an explicit denial of *creatio ex nihilo*).<sup>13</sup> This necessary relationship between God and the world entails that divine relatedness is an aspect of the divine essence. Just as God did not decide various features of God’s “Godness” (e.g., God did not volun-

<sup>13</sup>The vision of an essentially relational God that I propose corresponds well with the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and with various Christian voices of the early church. Regarding Genesis, Jon D. Levenson leads a growing number of scholars who openly acknowledge that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is not present therein. “We must face the implication of the affirmation that God, as the creator of the world, confronts forces that oppose divine creation,” he suggests. “To say that creation is directed against *something* should be taken as a denial of the venerable doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*” (Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994; New York: Harper & Row, 1987], xix). Early Christian theologians and philosophers, including Philo, Justin, Athenagoras, Hermogenes, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen of Alexandria found no good reason to affirm the creation-out-of-nothing hypothesis. Philo, for instance, postulated “a pre-existent matter alongside God” (Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of “Creation out of Nothing” in Early Thought* (trans. A. S. Worrall [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994], xiii). My proposed vision of an essentially relational deity finds much in common with these early church scholars and with the Christian canon. For other work arguing the inadequacy of *creatio ex nihilo*, see Sjoerd L. Bonting, *Chaos Theology: A Revised Creation Theology* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2002), James Edward Hutchingson, *Pandemoneum Tremendum: Chaos and Mystery in the Life of God* (Pilgrim, 2000), David Ray Griffin, “Creation out of Chaos and The Problem of Evil,” in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Stephen T. Davis, ed., (Atlanta: John Knox, 1999), Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (Routledge, 2003), and Michael E. Lodahl “Creation out of Nothing? Or is Next to Nothing Enough?” in *Thy Nature and Name is Love*, 217-238. Amos Yong offers an intriguing look into creation possibilities in his essay, “Possibility and Actuality: The Doctrine of Creation and Its Implications for Divine Omniscience,” *Wesleyan Philosophical Society Online Journal* [<http://david.snu.edu/~brint.fs/wpsjnl/v1n1.htm>] 1.1 (2001).

tarily decide to exist), an essentially relational deity does not voluntarily decide to be relational. To say it another way, it is a property of the divine essence that God relates to all existing creatures, all of the time.

The essentially- and omni-relational God that I envision acts first to instigate each moment of creaturely life. This action provides non-divines with essential aspects of their event-constituted being. In this sense, all non-divine entities are, in the words of Friedrich Schleiermacher, “utterly dependent” upon God. Among those aspects that God provides to creatures is power for free response, which becomes a necessary dimension of a creature’s ontology. God’s prevenient action also sets the basis for the epistemic dimension of creaturely existence—awareness of truth, beauty, and goodness through perception. And God’s prevenient actions provide creatures with a range of possibilities for moral action, which is the heart of creaturely ethical endeavors.

God’s essential relatedness and omnipresence entails that God cannot withdraw or fail to offer the multi-dimensional gift of existence that creatures require in their moment-by-moment life decisions. This metaphysical claim affords me a basis for overcoming obstacles ostensibly insurmountable for other metaphysical schemes. For instance, it provides solutions to questions in theodicy (God cannot prevent evils committed by free creatures), religious epistemology (God’s communication is never unilateral and thus never absolutely crystal-clear), evolutionary providence (God works cooperatively within the created order to urge creatures toward greater complexity), as well as questions in other domains.

## Conclusion

A variety of philosophers, philosophies, and philosophical enterprises are welcome in the Wesleyan Philosophical Society. John Wesley and the Wesleyan tradition grant philosophers a rich resource for what I believe can be exciting and useful philosophical work. Perhaps those involved will both embody in themselves and observe in others the sentiment of these words by Wesley: “How well do philosophy and religion agree in a man [*sic*] of sound understanding!”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>John Wesley, *Journal* (Tuesday, July 3, 1753).

# JOHN WESLEY AND DR. GEORGE CHEYNE ON THE SPIRITUAL SENSES

by

Laura Bartels

In *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, John Wesley first explained what he meant by the spiritual senses. He did so by drawing an analogy between physical senses which give one information about the natural world and spiritual senses which give one information about the spiritual world. Wesley wrote:

It is necessary that you have the hearing ear and the seeing eye, emphatically so called; that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood, to be “the evidence of things not seen” as your bodily senses are of visible things, to be the avenues to the invisible world, to discern spiritual objects, and to furnish you with ideas of what the outward “eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard.”<sup>1</sup>

Just as the fleshy eye and ear perceive physical sensations so too the spiritual senses perceive God, the invisible world, and spiritual objects. Only after these sensory impressions have been gathered by the spiritual senses can the mind then form ideas pertaining to the spiritual realm.

Wesley’s solution to the question of how it is that Christians can have an inwardly perceived religious experience of God is grounded in philosophy. There are numerous examples in his writings where Wesley

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<sup>1</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, Gerald Cragg, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 56-57, par. 32.

disavowed all philosophical speculations into the manner in which God works, but in the description of a believer's perception of God through the spiritual senses Wesley scholars have pointed out his heavy reliance on the philosophy of his time.

### Recent Focus on Philosophical Sources

In the 1980's and 1990's there was a resurgence in scholarship on John Wesley and the spiritual senses. Most of the scholars who researched this topic focused their investigations on the philosophical sources for John Wesley's religious epistemology. His writings on the spiritual senses were used as evidence of his empirical approach to epistemology. In these arguments, the spiritual senses are presented as an eclectic, innovative blending of different traditions. The arguments usually start with a discussion of the pervasive influence of John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*. Next, Wesley's familiarity with this work is attested to and comparisons are made between Locke's epistemology and Wesley's. Then Peter Browne's *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding* is introduced, followed by an examination of Wesley's appreciation for this Christian interpretation of Locke's *Essay*.

However, scholars run into a bind at this point in their arguments because neither Locke nor Browne makes any mention of anything like Wesley's spiritual senses. The usual solution to this dilemma is to introduce some third source, which some scholars contend Wesley creatively wedded to Locke and Browne's philosophy. In Mitsuo Shimizu's case this third source is the Neo-Platonic tradition exemplified by John Norris and Nicolas Malebranche.<sup>2</sup> Richard Heitzenrater identifies the Anglican *Book of Homilies* as the most likely source.<sup>3</sup> Frederick Dreyer does not have a third source, but four possible influences from which Wesley could have been drawing—the Quakers, Moravians, Puritans, or simply from Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Richard Brantley and Isabel Rivers attribute the difference between

<sup>2</sup>Mitsuo Shimizu, "Epistemology in the Thought of John Wesley" (Ph. D. diss., Drew University, 1980).

<sup>3</sup>Richard P. Heitzenrater, "God With Us: Grace and the Spiritual Senses in John Wesley's Theology," in *Grace Upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Langford*, eds. Robert K. Johnson, L. Gregory Jones, and Jonathan R. Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 87-109.

<sup>4</sup>Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *The American Historical Review* 88 (February 1983), 12-30.

Wesley, Locke, and Browne to Wesley's employment of Scriptural imagery.<sup>5</sup>

Rex Matthews' argument differs in one respect from those already mentioned. Matthews makes the case for the Oxford Aristotelian logical tradition, not Locke or Browne, as the primary discipline informing Wesley's epistemology.<sup>6</sup> Matthews argues that Wesley merged themes from Henry Scougal's book, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, with his definition of reason in order to come up with the concept of the spiritual senses.<sup>7</sup> Both Rex Matthews and Frederick Dreyer contend that Wesley's wedding of the notion of the "spiritual senses" of faith to an empirical approach to epistemology is without precedent.<sup>8</sup> This paper will conclude that there is an earlier precedent for this type of religious epistemology in a work that predates by twenty-eight years Wesley's description of the spiritual senses in *An Earnest Appeal*.

### The Precedent of Dr. George Cheyne

The work in question was written by Dr. George Cheyne who is best known as a successful physician in Bath, England, during the early eighteenth century. Cheyne's clientele was of the genteel class and his medical advice focused on the ailments most frequently suffered by that segment of British society, gout and hysteria. In treating these conditions Cheyne routinely prescribed a simple diet, regular exercise, and the liberal consumption of mineral water. John Wesley knew George Cheyne and was familiar with his works, both the physician's medical treatises and his natural philosophy. The earliest citation by Wesley of one of Cheyne's books was in a letter to his mother Susanna dated November 1, 1724. Wesley mentioned reading Cheyne's *Essay of Health and Long Life* and recom-

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<sup>5</sup>Richard Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984); and Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, vol. 1, *Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>6</sup>Rex D. Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1986), 259.

<sup>7</sup>Rex D. Matthews, "'With the Eyes of Faith': Spiritual Experience and the Knowledge of God in the Theology of John Wesley," in *Wesleyan Theology Today: A Bicentennial Theological Consultation*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985), 409.

<sup>8</sup>Matthews, 308; and Dreyer, 26.

mended the physician's moderate diet to his mother.<sup>9</sup> In 1742 Wesley read Cheyne's *The Natural Method of Curing Diseases* and again found reason to praise the Doctor's medical advice.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Cheyne is extensively quoted in Wesley's *Primitive Physick* and Wesley in several other publications mentioned the recommendations the doctor had personally given him regarding his diet.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding his work in natural philosophy Cheyne wrote, "I thought [it] might be of Use to other young Gentlemen, who, while they were learning the Elements of natural Philosophy, might have thereby the Principles of natural Religion insensibly instilled into them. And accordingly it has been and is still used for that Purpose at both Universities."<sup>12</sup> According to Anita Guerrini, Cheyne's natural philosophy was recommended reading at Cambridge by 1730 and was used by at least one tutor at Oxford.<sup>13</sup> Wesley made note of reading Cheyne's natural philosophy in his Oxford Diary from April 30 through May 6, 1729.<sup>14</sup> Wesley also incorporated Cheyne's description of fluids into his own natural philosophy, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation* (3:62-4).

Cheyne's first work in natural philosophy, *Philosophical Principles of Natural Religion*, published in 1705, tried to demonstrate God's providential activity in the world through a mathematical analysis of cosmology and animal physiology. Essentially, he argued that the amazing complexity of creation could only have come about by the design of a wise Creator. Unfortunately for the doctor, his *Philosophical Principles* was ignored by the scientific community and he eventually gave up on his

<sup>9</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, 1 November 1724 letter to Susanna Wesley, vol. 25, Frank Baker, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 151.

<sup>10</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, 12 March 1742 journal entry, vol. 19, W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 256, 257.

<sup>11</sup>See *The Works of John Wesley*, "A Letter to the Bishop of London," vol. 11, Cragg, ed., 345; and "An Extract from Dr. Cadogan's Dissertation on the Gout, and all Chronic Diseases," vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 266.

<sup>12</sup>George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (London: George Strahan, 1724), viii.

<sup>13</sup>Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 89.

<sup>14</sup>My thanks goes to Dr. Randy Maddox for this citation from Wesley's Diary.



dream of becoming one of Isaac Newton's protégées. He underwent a physical and spiritual crisis in 1705 following the failure of his work on natural philosophy. During that time he questioned the soundness of basing one's faith in God on the argument from nature's design and sought a surer grounding for Christianity. One of his mentors, George Garden, introduced Cheyne to the mystical writings of Madam Guyon and Antoinette Bourignon. Cheyne derived inspiration from these writers as well as from Jacob Boehme.<sup>15</sup> Even after his crisis passed, he continued to study the mystics and he recommended them to others.<sup>16</sup>

Cheyne revised his natural philosophy in 1715 and retitled it *Philosophical Principles of Religion, Natural and Revealed*. He included a new section that reflected his interest in mysticism. According to David Shuttleton, the writings of Baron Wolf von Metternich was the source for the revisions Cheyne made to his natural philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Metternich's treatise, *Fides et Ratio*, was in part a refutation of John Locke's philosophy, arguing that faith was a better guide to religious truth than was reason.<sup>18</sup>

Cheyne's *Philosophical Principles* also contains a rebuttal to John Locke. The argument begins with the statement, "The *rational Soul* is not that Faculty in compounded intelligent Beings, which in the Order of Nature, and the *Analogy* of Things, is appropriated for the spiritual world; (including the supreme Infinite at its Head.)"<sup>19</sup> Cheyne's claim that rationality cannot give one knowledge of spiritual objects rested on four suppositions.

<sup>15</sup>Guerrini, 12.

<sup>16</sup>David E. Shuttleton, "Methodism and Dr. George Cheyne's 'More Enlightening Principles,'" in *Medicine in the Enlightenment*, Roy Porter, ed. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 317.

<sup>17</sup>Shuttleton, 331, n.4.

<sup>18</sup>Stephen Hobhouse, "*Fides et Ratio*: The Book Which Introduced Jacob Boehme to William Law," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (October 1936): 354; and Stephen Hobhouse, *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1948), 381. The English translation of this text was entitled, *Faith and reason compared : shewing that Divine faith and natural reason proceed from two different and distinct principles in man. Against the notions and errors of the modern rationalists / written originally in Latin by a person of quality; in answer to certain theses (drawn from Mr. Locke's principles) concerning faith and reason . . .* (London: Printed for B. Cowse, 1713).

<sup>19</sup>George Cheyne, *Philosophical Principles of Religion, Part II* (London: Printed for G. Strahan, 1733), 107.

First, he defined the rational soul as a faculty that allows one to reason. This faculty operates by comparing perceptions or ideas to other perceptions or ideas. For Cheyne, perceptions are built out of impressions received through the physical senses and ideas arise from the memory or the imagination.<sup>20</sup> Cheyne further argued that the senses are only capable of receiving impressions from the material world while the memory and imagination are only mental images of absent physical objects. Therefore, since the reasoning faculty can only take in and process sensory information and images related to the material world, it is bereft of the necessary mental impressions needed to form perceptions or ideas of the spiritual world.<sup>21</sup>

The second supposition suggests why the physical senses cannot perceive the spiritual world. Cheyne thought each physical sense had been specially fitted to receive a particular kind of impression from the material world. There was no example, he argued, of one faculty receiving impressions of more than one distinct thing. By “distinct” he seems to have been referring to things like smells, sounds, light, tastes, temperatures, things that can only be perceived by one of the senses. Such distinct things were widely different from one another in Cheyne’s view and nothing was more different for him than the body and its opposite, the spirit. By analogy, this meant, to use one of his examples, that if the eye cannot both “hear and see,” then this implies that the eye can see the material world but not its opposite, the spiritual world.<sup>22</sup>

Another indication that the physical senses are obviously incapable of perceiving spiritual objects is the number of educated men who denied the existence of such objects. Such men were excellent examples of the employment of the reasoning faculty in “its greatest Strength and Vigour.”<sup>23</sup> Cheyne did not name these “philosophical and learned Men” in this section of his argument, but in a later section he refuted the philosophy of Spinoza, Locke, and Hobbes which indicates that he was familiar with the writings of at least these three men. The fact that these men, with all their reasoning ability, could not reason their way to God was further proof for Cheyne that this faculty was not designed to form ideas of the spiritual world.

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<sup>20</sup>Cheyne, 107.

<sup>21</sup>Cheyne, 108.

<sup>22</sup>Cheyne, 108.

<sup>23</sup>Cheyne, 109.

The last supposition cites the Aristotelian maxim “nothing can be in the Understanding, that was not first in the Senses.” Based on this maxim Cheyne argued:

Everybody allows that Spiritual Beings, as such, can never be conveyed through the bodily Senses, to the Understanding: And therefore we must either be intirely [sic] deprived of Faculties, for communicating with Spiritual Beings (that is, we must be deprived of the only Means of our supreme Felicity, and for attaining the End, for which alone we were created; to wit, communicating with the Supreme and absolute infinite Spirit.) Or else we must be endowed with Faculties distinct from the rational Soul for that purpose. . . .<sup>24</sup>

In Cheyne’s opinion, humanity was not bereft of the means for knowing the spiritual. He called the distinct faculties that allow one to perceive spiritual objects “the divine senses.” Just as the rational Soul perceives the material world through the bodily senses, so too the human Spirit perceives the spiritual world through the divine senses.<sup>25</sup>

Cheyne went on to criticize Locke’s failure to mention any kind of higher faculty like the divine senses in the latter’s description of human understanding. He complained that Locke’s argument failed to take into account human nature in its regenerated state when the divine senses are restored. Locke’s description of human faculties was considered “lame and imperfect” because it only discussed the rational faculties, faculties which Cheyne described as “buried and oppressed by the Load of present Corruption and Sensuality.”<sup>26</sup> Such faculties could never give one a sense of the spiritual world. By attempting to reason about spiritual matters, Cheyne complained that Locke and his followers were reducing Christianity to “meer heathenish Morals, or human Philosophy.”<sup>27</sup>

### Comparing Cheyne and Wesley

In this description of human reason as limited and corrupted and human nature as capable of regeneration, we hear echoes of familiar Wes-

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<sup>24</sup>Cheyne, 109-110. Rex Matthews identifies the maxim as Aristotelian in his dissertation, pp. 265-266.

<sup>25</sup>Cheyne, 110-111.

<sup>26</sup>Cheyne, 113-114.

<sup>27</sup>Cheyne, 114.

leyan themes. By comparing Cheyne's argument to the one Wesley made in *An Earnest Appeal*, the similarities between the two men are even more apparent.

Like Cheyne, Wesley's argument begins by describing the faculty of reasoning. First, he argued, sound reasoning is based on sound judgments. Before one can hold a sound religious judgment one first has to have sound ideas to base that judgment on. Since, Wesley wrote, there were no innate ideas, he concluded that one had to first receive impressions through one's senses which the mind would then form into ideas. The physical senses, Wesley maintained, were of no assistance in gathering impressions about God or the spiritual world. Therefore, any judgments about religion solely formed from ideas based on the physical senses were unreasonable because the basis for those judgments was faulty.<sup>28</sup> Again, like Cheyne, Wesley also argued that the faculty of human reason was inadequate for the perception of spiritual objects. He stated:

What then will your reason do here? How will it pass from things natural to spiritual? From the things that are seen to those that are not seen? From the visible to the invisible world? What a gulf is here! By what art will reason get over the immense chasm?<sup>29</sup>

In a chain of reasoning similar to Cheyne's, Wesley supported his claim that human reason alone is unable to perceive spiritual objects. In *An Earnest Appeal* Wesley cited the physical senses' inability to provide human understanding with impressions of spiritual objects (par. 32), described the physical senses as specially fitted for distinct kinds of external sensations (par. 34), and alluded to the Aristotelian maxim that our ideas are not innate but must be formed out of sensory perception (par. 32). To make up for the shortcomings of the physical senses in matters of religion, Wesley argued that one needed spiritual senses which could detect God and the invisible, spiritual world. His use of the phrase "spiritual senses" rather than Cheyne's term "divine senses" marks one of the differences between their arguments. Another difference in terminology would be Cheyne's description of the divine senses being regenerated and Wesley's declaration that the spiritual senses are the gift of God, a part of the new creation. Wesley's point is similar to Cheyne's, but again not a

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<sup>28</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, 55, 56, pars. 30-32.

<sup>29</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, 57, par. 35.

direct quote of Cheyne. Also unlike Cheyne, Wesley's argument does not contain any direct refutation of John Locke's philosophy.

The major difference between Wesley and Cheyne is the former's equation of the spiritual senses with faith. Wesley began *An Earnest Appeal* by defining his understanding of true Christianity. As opposed to a rigid, formal religion, Wesley preached a religion of love, peace, and joy which could be experienced in the soul. He admitted he had sought to find this kind of religion on his own but had failed. He came to realize that this religion was a gift from God and he wanted others to learn from his own misguided attempts, avoid the mistaken path he had followed, and discover the religion of love through faith.<sup>30</sup>

Wesley's definition of faith is based on Hebrews 11:1 which he interpreted using the language of the spiritual senses:

Faith is . . . the demonstrative evidence of things unseen, the supernatural evidence of things invisible, not perceivable by the eyes of flesh, or by any of our natural senses or faculties. Faith is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God and the things of God. It is with regard to the spiritual world what sense is with regard to the natural. It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God.<sup>31</sup>

The term "spiritual senses" does not appear in this section of Wesley's argument, but the equation of faith with the spiritual senses is clear. Faith, according to this definition, is the inward sense of God and the spiritual world, a sense that does not come through natural faculties. In this treatise, the spiritual senses and faith are one and the same for Wesley.

Cheyne does not make any mention of faith in his description of the divine senses and this alone makes me hesitant to identify him as the primary source for Wesley's spiritual senses. All that can be said with any certainty is that Cheyne's work predates Wesley's, that Wesley was familiar with Cheyne's ideas, and that Wesley's argument for spiritual senses bares a striking similarity to Cheyne's argument for divine senses. Matthews' characterization of Wesley's spiritual senses as a "rigorously empiricistic epistemology which insists that there is nothing in the understanding which was not first perceived by some of the senses" could also be said of George Cheyne's religious epistemology.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, 45, 46, pars. 2-5.

<sup>31</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 11, 46, par. 6.

<sup>32</sup>Matthews, 308.

There is also an earlier precedent for Wesley's equation of faith with the spiritual senses, one that Cheyne read but for which I can find no mention in Wesley's works. As discussed earlier, Baron Wolf von Metternich's *Fides et Ratio* was influential in Cheyne's revision of his *Philosophical Principles*. In this work Metternich also defined faith according to Hebrews 11:1, he quoted the Aristotelian maxim that there is nothing in the understanding that was not first in the senses, and he argued that there must be divine senses that help one discern God and spiritual senses that help one perceive spiritual objects. In addition, the Baron's work is a long extended refutation of John Locke's definitions of faith and reason, definitions which the Baron, like Cheyne, found lacking because they do not include any acknowledgment of humanity's ability to sense God and the spiritual world.<sup>33</sup>

More research will have to be done in order to determine whether Wesley was familiar with the Baron's work or if there is an indirect influence from the Baron on Wesley through a third party. We know that William Law read the Baron's book, so this is one possible connection between Wesley and Metternich. The possibility that there may be an anti-Lockean rather than Lockean source for Wesley's concept of the spiritual senses warrants further investigation.

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<sup>33</sup>Wolf von Metternich, *Faith and Reason Compared* (London: Printed for Ben. Cowse at the Rose and Crown in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1713), 20-21, 35, 40, 96, 99.

# **THE CORISCANA ENTHUSIASTS: A PRE-PENTECOSTAL MILLENNIAL SECT**

by

**Barry W. Hamilton**

Most Holiness-Pentecostal historians interpret their tradition as a convergence of radical doctrines nourished in the Holiness/Higher Life movements of the late nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> While the Topeka and Azusa Street Revivals mark the birth of Pentecostalism, several earlier outbursts of “fanaticism” signaled sporadic “false labor” in holiness revival meetings. One episode that deserves closer study emanated from revivals in Texas and widely discredited the terms “holiness” and “sanctification.” Labeled the “Corsicana Enthusiasts” by its opponents, this sect blended radical doctrines into an explosive mixture that foreshadowed the eruption of Pentecostalism in the next century.

## **Beginnings in Central Texas**

Named for the community in which their radicalism became most notorious, the Corsicana Enthusiasts exerted most of their influence in Hill, Ellis, Freestone, and Navarro counties in central Texas. Originating in holiness revival meetings, the sect attracted widespread attention through its activities in Corsicana, the county seat of Navarro County. A

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<sup>1</sup>For example, see Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 143. “The Pentecostal movement was first and foremost a product of the spiritual milieu of America’s holiness movement.”

small town surrounded by blackland prairie, Corsicana would become one of the world's greatest petroleum centers only after 1894.<sup>2</sup> While agriculture suffered severe drought and economic depression in the next decade, nothing in extant resources supports a "deprivation theory" to account for the religious manifestations that shocked the countryside at the close of the 1870s.<sup>3</sup> Only one thing stands out as a factor for the appearance of the Corsicana Enthusiasts, namely, central Texas became the scene of some of the earliest holiness revival meetings in Texas.

When the earliest holiness evangelists came to Texas in the late 1870s, revival congregations often regarded the doctrine of entire sanctification as novel. However, some Methodists received the message as the renewal of primitive Wesleyanism and rejoiced in the abundant harvests of holiness revivals.<sup>4</sup> The newness of the message doubtless exposed its adherents to misunderstanding, especially in church contexts outside the Wesleyan tradition. The public perception of the "holiness people" rested largely on oral communication and newspaper accounts. Since the holiness message initially entered Texas through scarcely a half-dozen evangelists who worked within a restricted geographical range, public opinion was correspondingly limited. Small numbers disproportionately influenced the movement's destiny, and uproar over scarcely a hundred radicals widely discredited the very words "holiness" and "sanctification."

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<sup>2</sup>For an overview of Corsicana's contributions to the petroleum industry, as well as a detailed description of the region, see Annie Carpenter Love, *History of Navarro County*. Dallas, TX: Southwest Press, 1933. Although dated, this resource drew extensively from the memories of living pioneers.

<sup>3</sup>As Lambert states, "One makes generalizations about socioeconomic causes of revivals at his or her own peril." See Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 126.

<sup>4</sup>"The pastor of the Milford Circuit in the Northwest Texas Conference reported through the *Texas Christian Advocate* in 1878 that the protracted meetings on his charge had been especially fruitful because of the holiness emphasis. At the meetings, he said, 'many have professed entire sanctification. . . . I think that the grand results of those meetings are attributable in part to the interest awakened on the subject of entire sanctification.'" *Texas Christian Advocate* (September 21, 1878), n.p. Cited in Walter N. Vernon, Robert W. Sledge, Robert C. Monk, and Norman W. Spellmann, *The Methodist Excitement in Texas: A History* (Dallas, TX: Bridwell Library/SMU, 1984), 203. Some leaders of the Corsicana Enthusiasts resided near Milford (William Groves and Richard Groves), and they (as well as other sect members) may have first encountered the holiness message in the Milford revival.



Among the earliest published notices were church periodical accounts that gave the Corsicana Enthusiasts their enduring name.<sup>5</sup> Methodist correspondents who favored the holiness movement sharply contrasted the “fanatics” with revivals that sought to restore primitive Wesleyanism. Since the public learned the term “sanctification” at the radicals’ behest, Methodists strove to distinguish their own heritage from the innovations. An article in the *Texas Christian Advocate* entitled “The Corsicana Enthusiasts” disavowed any connection between the fanatics and a camp meeting conducted by the Texas State Holiness Association, whose constitution consisted of John Wesley’s *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and the New Testament. It read:

They had no possible connection with what was called the “holiness campmeeting,” which was held by Rev. Dr. Brush, of the M. E. Church, North. They are “Second Adventists,” and called themselves in the organization formed February 7, 1879, when they formally disclaimed all connection with any existing church, “The Temple of the Coming Lord.” Personally, they bore irreproachable Christian characters.<sup>6</sup>

Calling the fanatics “Adventists” whose deception consisted of setting the date for the return of Christ, Methodists emphasized the orderly nature of their own meetings as well as their salvation-oriented agenda.

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<sup>5</sup>Extant secular newspaper accounts remain undiscovered, possibly at the Center for American History, University of Texas (Austin, TX). Archives have preserved area newspapers only in partial sets; many have been destroyed by fire and natural disasters.

<sup>6</sup>*Texas Christian Advocate* (22 November 1879), 2. Methodists have made a long-standing identification of the holiness revival held by the northern Methodist ‘Dr. Brush’ with the origin of the Corsicana Enthusiasts. Historians can only speculate whether a significant number of these holiness advocates soon identified themselves with the ‘enthusiasts,’ but this seems likely, based on Methodist assumptions and the efforts of holiness ministers like this correspondent, as well as early holiness advocate Rev. George McCulloch, to disavow any association. As late as 1984 Methodist historians were still identifying the two groups. “Certainly the doctrine of perfection carried the danger of excess. One example of this was the development of a holiness colony at Corsicana in 1879. It appeared to have emerged out of a campmeeting conducted by Rev. William Brush, a Methodist Episcopal preacher . . . and found its headquarters in a building formerly occupied by an M.E. congregation. Its experimentation with common life, glossolalia, and faith healing made it notorious in the area, though the individuals were of ‘irreproachable Christian character.’” See Vernon et. al., *The Methodist Excitement in Texas*, 204. Vernon is citing the *Texas Christian Advocate* for 29 November 1879.

Aware of public distaste for radicalism, church leaders affirmed revivalism as the evangelistic medium of choice while distancing their members from its “misuse.” Because Methodism identified closely with American culture, its leaders disavowed countercultural teachings such as premillennialism.

Like the Millerites of 1846, these Corsicana fanatics ventured to fix the exact day of Christ’s second coming, and of their translation. But He failed to come, and left them to their chagrin. They still look for extraordinary providential events to prepare the way for the coming Savior.<sup>7</sup>

### Disruptive Teaching and Practice

The Corsicana Enthusiasts thus brought holiness and premillennialism together to form a millennial sect that closely resembled Pentecostalism. They blended primitivism, an emphasis on spiritual gifts for all believers, leadership of Christians by impressions, revivalism, divine healing through the Atonement, as well as glossolalia, and thus formed a pre-Pentecostal, ecstasy-seeking sect that sharply distinguished itself from the rest of society.<sup>8</sup> Convinced that the gospel of the New Testament had been restored among them, the enthusiasts pointed to extraordinary manifestations in their midst as incontrovertible evidence that Christ would return at any moment. Note:

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<sup>7</sup>*Texas Christian Advocate* (22 November 1879), 2.

<sup>8</sup>Although sources often speak of the movement as separate, ‘No-Sectism’ in many cases may have included the Corsicana Enthusiasts. Organized denominations scorned the movement, including the Free Methodists, whose account of the fourth session (1884) of the Texas-Louisiana Conference mentions them: “This year Phillip Allen resigned as district elder, and went with the No-Sect movement, and was ever afterward one of the worst enemies the church [sic] had. He went from one fanatical notion to another, eventually leaving his faithful little wife and family. He wandered about as a vagabond, denouncing everything not like himself and his deluded followers, until he became very wicked.” The conference historian further observes, “For twenty-five years we have beheld the works of No-Sectism, and testify that we have never seen any good result from it, so far as we have been able to observe.” *The Texas Conference of the Free Methodist Church: Its Origin and Present Churches* (Texas Conference, 1960?), 10. B. T. Roberts presided over the 1884 session of this conference, and linked the conference’s troubles to a movement led by “Rev. Haines [sic],” one of the leaders of the Corsicana Enthusiasts. See Clarence Howard Zahniser, *Earnest Christian: Life and Works of Benjamin Titus Roberts* (Clarence Howard Zahniser, 1957), 316-317.

The services held in the tabernacle occupied by this band consisted in prayer, singing, reading the Scriptures, etc., and were of a very devotional character, as reported through the papers. . . . These enthusiasts not only claimed the “communion of the Spirits [sic]” but claimed the extraordinary “gifts” bestowed in the apostolic days. They could speak with tongues; heal the sick; had direct and frequent revelations.<sup>9</sup>

The correspondent associated the sect with Edward Irving, an early nineteenth-century English religious leader whose ministry was characterized by outbreaks of glossolalia and an intense expectation of the return of Christ. Contemporary scholars have often characterized Irving as a forerunner of twentieth-century Pentecostalism.<sup>10</sup>

The Corsicana Enthusiasts seriously disturbed regional Methodists. The *Texas Christian Advocate* carried several articles concerning this “wildfire” in November 1879. These articles reveal Methodism’s ambivalence over holiness, for while the article dated 15 November 1879 sharply denounced the doctrine of entire sanctification as connected with the “holiness bands,” the article dated 22 November 1879 distanced the holiness meetings of the Methodist-affiliated associations from those of the “fanatics.” The *Texas Christian Advocate* blamed much of the fanaticism on evangelists who defied church authority and spread the holiness message at will. Moreover, correspondents attacked the evangelists’ teachings, especially their specialized understanding of the doctrine of entire sanctification, and even characterized the latter as a fanaticism that attempted to set some church members above other Christians.

Sanctification is a work over and above regeneration—it is instantaneous—essential to salvation and pivots upon faith as its condition.... This mistaken view of sanctification forms the basis upon which these fungus formations of holiness bands and clubs rest and spread themselves. To become a member of such a band or club, is openly to profess that I am better than my brethren generally—I am advanced to a more elevated

<sup>9</sup>*Texas Christian Advocate* (22 November 1879), 2.

<sup>10</sup>See Larry Christenson, “Pentecostalism’s Forgotten Forerunner,” in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 20. Christenson calls Irving “the forerunner . . . of the entire Pentecostal phenomenon of the twentieth century.”

platform in Christianity—I am SANCTIFIED, while they are *only regenerated*. I am holier than thou!<sup>11</sup>

The correspondent connected these “holiness bands” with George Bell and Thomas Maxwell, whose fanaticism “gave Mr. Wesley so much trouble.”<sup>12</sup> While affirming Wesley’s doctrine of Christian holiness as “attainable—in a scriptural sense—in this life,” the writer dissociated the “holiness bands” from Methodism. Even at this early date, when holiness evangelists had scarcely entered the state two years earlier, the revivalists in Corsicana had seriously marred the reputation of any movement that emphasized holiness or sanctification. The church periodicals henceforth labored strenuously to exercise damage control. For instance:

It is worthy of note that *Second Adventism*, *Holiness-bandism*, and *Tramp-evangelism* have not originated in Methodism. It is true that some Methodists have been caught in the maelstrom and have been swept away from their doctrinal moorings into these wild fancies and speculations, but they did not originate in Methodism. They came out of the Calvinistic churches. From the late Adventist Convention in New York to the late abortive monstrosity of Haynes and Goodnight, and from Moody all the way down to Penn, Grant, Williams and all others of which we have knowledge, all were Calvinists. If not in full, at least in part.<sup>13</sup>

Here the article points out the conjunction between holiness and premillennialism as an irregular mixture of Methodist soteriology with Reformed eschatology.<sup>14</sup> Haynes and Goodnight, Cumberland Presbyterian ministers who were leading figures among the Corsicana Enthusiasts,

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<sup>11</sup>*Texas Christian Advocate* (15 November 1879), 2.

<sup>12</sup>For an excellent discussion of George Bell and Thomas Maxfield, see W. Stephen Gunter, *The Limits of “Love Divine”: John Wesley’s Response to Antinomianism and Enthusiasm* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1989), especially 215-217.

<sup>13</sup>*Texas Christian Advocate* (15 November 1879), 2. The “Adventist Convention” was the Prophecy Conference of 1878 held in New York City, often regarded as the starting point of premillennialism in North America. For a collection of essays presented at the conference, see *Second Coming of Christ: Premillennial Essays of the Prophetic Conference, Held in the Church of the Holy Trinity, New York City*. ed. Nathaniel West (Chicago, IL: F. H. Revell, 1879).

<sup>14</sup>For an example of Methodism’s critique of premillennialism, see “Chiliasm,” *Texas Christian Advocate* (27 September 1879), 2. Biblical literalism was the major point of contention in this article.

cross-fertilized traditions through eschatological expectation. This heightened expectation may explain their propensity for radical doctrines and “scandalous” conduct.<sup>15</sup> To a Methodist correspondent, their extreme teachings were nothing short of madness.

I asked Mr. Haynes if the “State Holiness band” set forth the doctrines preached by himself. He answered me in this way: “We are much in advance of them. They are now ready to take another degree higher; that is, a man must be converted—sanctified—instantaneously, be baptized with the Holy Ghost, then the growth in Christ begins; the divinity of Christ permeates the entire physical man until every muscle and fiber is made immortal. Thus we are prepared to spend the thousand years with Christ on earth.”<sup>16</sup>

The correspondent called on the Methodist Church to “stop this craze” along with the “skylogical” testimonies. More than any other factor, the radical doctrines and consequent extreme behavior of the Corsicana Enthusiasts severely restricted the effectiveness of the early holiness movement in central Texas.

However, the newspaper accounts provide little information on this sect that exercised a disproportionate regional influence. The most detailed resource is a small book published about seven years after the height of the movement. Written by Rev. George McCulloch, a Free Methodist minister, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas, and the Fanaticism Which Followed* distinguished the “true” holiness movement in Texas from the “Haynes Movement,” and defined the former as a

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<sup>15</sup>The Corsicana Enthusiasts may have shared the propensity in the South for supernaturalism as manifested in the belief in “remarkable providences and extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit.” Brasher attributes the spread of premillennialism in the Southern holiness movement to this inclination. See J. Lawrence Brasher, *The Sanctified South: John Lakin Brasher and the Holiness Movement* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 38. The potent blend of radical doctrines with their revivalism affected the Corsicana Enthusiasts’ perception of religious reality and set them at extreme variance with other churches. For a discussion on religious “facts” in the context of revivalism, see Frank Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening”* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 6. Lambert is citing Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 112.

<sup>16</sup> *Texas Christian Advocate* (29 November 1879), 2.

revival of primitive Methodism.<sup>17</sup> The most detailed account of the Corsicana Enthusiasts, McCulloch interviewed participants in the controversy but also relied heavily on memory. Since his thesis separates the “fanatics” from the “true” holiness movement, he views the “enthusiasts” as having been “sidetracked” by the devil. His account, although biased, sheds considerable light on this obscure sect.

### **Divergent Views of the Sanctified Believer**

At the heart of the controversy lay the divergent picture of the sanctified believer brought. McCulloch described the doctrines taught by the evangelists who first brought the holiness message to Texas, elaborating on them “in order to show that the fanaticism which followed never sprung out of their teaching.”<sup>18</sup> He emphasized that “the doctrine of entire sanctification as taught by these evangelists was the same as taught by Wesley, Fletcher, Clark [sic] and Watson, and all the other standard authorities who agree with God’s word.”<sup>19</sup> The evangelists taught the doctrine of entire sanctification as a second and separate work of grace that was never received in conversion, but was received “instantaneously, by consecration and faith; and that it might be lost by disobedience, and regained again by faith in Christ.” The evangelists also presented a consistent model of a “sanctified believer”:

His [sic] heart was cleansed from all sin; all the tendency to anger and hatred was taken away; that a sanctified person never got angry; nothing remained in the heart contrary to love; but he would love the Lord with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; that a perfect christian [sic] was a believer whose heart God had cleansed from all sin, and enabled, through grace, to keep God’s holy law, and sin not.<sup>20</sup>

McCulloch noted the confrontational preaching style of these evangelists,

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<sup>17</sup>George McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas, and the Fanaticism Which Followed*. Aquilla, TX: J. H. Padgett, 1886. For a sketch of Rev. McCulloch’s life and ministry, see *The Texas Conference of the Free Methodist Church*, 19-21.

<sup>18</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 4-5.

<sup>19</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 3. As prooftexts, McCulloch cites Romans 8:7; Romans 6:6; 1 Cor. 3:1-5; Romans 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:3; and 1 Thess. 5:23.

<sup>20</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 4.

especially that of Hardin Wallace, whose preaching “was sharp and cutting; his style was blunt; he gave sin no quarter. . . . The way he went for tobacco, snuff, gold and feathers was appalling; and all the popular sins of the day were handled in like manner.” However, these evangelists always pointed to the “remedy”—“the blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>21</sup> Their focus was salvation—the forgiveness of sins in conversion and, for sanctification, the cleansing of believers’ hearts from the inclination to sin. McCulloch disavows their concern with anything other than soteriology, implying that an alternative course would divert the movement from classical Wesleyan emphases.

They did not teach that it endued him with any supernatural gifts, such as discerning spirits, or seeing visions, or prophesying, or raising the dead, or looking for the coming of Christ, or getting special revelations from God; but instead of this, they always impressed it forcibly upon the minds of the people that perfect love was the greatest of all the gifts; and any one (as Mr. Wesley says) “seeking for anything else aside from more love was seeking for something wide of the mark.”<sup>22</sup>

In his polemical tract, McCulloch sharply distinguished the Wesleyan holiness movement from the “fanaticism” that became identified with holiness and sanctification. By distancing themselves from the fanatics, holiness leaders believed they could salvage the doctrine of Christian perfection from the disrepute inflicted by radicals.

Scholars often trace the origins of premillennialism and its subsequent adoption by the holiness movement to the dramatic social changes of the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The profusion of cities and

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<sup>21</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 1-2. Such “legalistic” preaching, with its stern denunciations of freemasonry, would have sharply conflicted with prominent Cumberland Presbyterian ministers of this era, many of whom were prominent Masons. For example, see “Young Harrington Hamilton, 1828-1880, Cumberland Presbyterian Minister,” available from <http://www.cumberland.org/hfcpc/minister/HamiltYH.htm> ; accessed 27 February 2003. Hamilton was a prominent pastor and evangelist in central Texas, not far from Corsicana, when the “fanaticism” occurred. A close friend of Rev. Allison Templeton, Hamilton “was killed by an accidental fall from a wagon” on August 20, 1880. Hamilton was a master Mason, buried with full Masonic rites. “His life work was preaching the gospel, but closely associated with it was his activity as a mason [sic].”

<sup>22</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 4.

their “wickedness,” the flood of immigrants, corruption in politics, and *laissez-faire* capitalism unleashed unprecedented social change in America. In some quarters these sweeping changes tempered public optimism concerning national destiny and engendered a fertile environment for premillennial eschatology, a philosophy of history that fostered pessimism of world affairs and an optimism of supernatural intervention. Several holiness leaders adopted premillennialism after 1890, but in the 1870s the holiness movement in large measure rejected it as a non-essential or speculative matter.<sup>24</sup> The enthusiasts’ adoption of premillennialism at this early date defies standard explanations; rather than social factors, the overwhelming supernatural power experienced in holiness revivals encouraged these believers to adopt a profoundly supernatural eschatology. When the Corsicana Enthusiasts adopted premillennialism in 1878, critics could only respond by calling them “Adventists,” a name that branded them as a heretical sect. The “enthusiasts” were certainly among the earliest adopters of premillennialism in the holiness movement, a radical move that immediately alienated them from other churches.

According to McCulloch, the leaders of the “fanatics” broke away from the holiness movement after having experienced entire sanctification. Some may have been influenced by an evangelist named “Bro. Willis” who “told the holiness people that it was their duty to come out of all the churches, as God could not save them if they remained in them.”<sup>25</sup> One of the leaders, a Cumberland Presbyterian named Robert J. Haynes,

<sup>23</sup>For example, see Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, Studies in Evangelicalism 5 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1987), especially pages 160-163.

<sup>24</sup>Scholars often point to the holiness movement’s widespread adoption of premillennialism after 1890. As William Kostlevy states, “The spread of premillennial eschatology in the Holiness Movement coincided with the growing resistance to the holiness messages on the part of denominational leaders during the 1890s” (William Kostlevy, “Nor Silver, Nor Gold: The Burning Bush Movement and the Communitarian Holiness Vision,” Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1996, 20). Others have interpreted the rise of premillennialism as a reactionary movement against modern currents of thought. See John Bruce Behney, “Conservatism and Liberalism in the Theology of Late Nineteenth Century American Protestantism: A Comparative Study of the Basic Doctrines of Typical Representatives” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1941), 2-8.

<sup>25</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 6. Besides the obvious characteristic of premillennialism, Rev. Willis’ use of “Babylon” to cast



attended a revival meeting in Dallas conducted by W. B. Colt and other workers from Illinois. After his experience of entire sanctification, Rev. Haynes became a holiness evangelist but deviated from the Wesleyan position, which brought him into conflict with Methodist-oriented holiness people.<sup>26</sup> Another Cumberland Presbyterian evangelist “by the name of Sims” preached on sanctification in meetings near Ennis, and deviated from the Wesleyan perspective as well.<sup>27</sup> When he held a revival at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Corsicana, Rev. Sims requested aid from Cyrus T. Hogan, a Cumberland Presbyterian in Ennis, who brought a team of workers to the revival in Corsicana.<sup>28</sup> The pastor, “Bro. Good-night,” soon became another leading figure in the forthcoming contro-

aspersion on existing churches points to Adventism as a possible source. See Jonathan Butler, “From Millerism to Seventh-day Adventism: ‘Boundlessness to Consolidation’” in *New and Intense Movements*, vol. 11 of *Modern American Protestantism and Its World: Historical Articles on Protestantism in American Religious Life*, ed. Martin E. Marty (New York: K. G. Saur, 1993), 81. Seventh-day Adventists sent R. M. Kilgore as a pioneer evangelist to Texas in 1876. See “Southwestern: History: Dortch Pump Organ,” available from <http://www.swau.edu/history/dortch/>; accessed 10 March 2003.

<sup>26</sup> McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Smith acknowledged the Cumberland Presbyterians as “fervently evangelistic,” having originated in the “Great Western Revival, after 1800.” With reference to central Texas, he states: “By the 1880s many Cumberland Presbyterian pastors were stressing the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace and supporting holiness camp meetings and revivals in their communities.” Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), 152. Smith is citing George McCulloch’s *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, but he also cites *Cumberland Presbyterian* LVI, no. 10 (9 September 1897), 2; and *Cumberland Presbyterian* LVI, no. 11 (16 September 1897), article by J. B. Mitchell, “The Discussion on Sanctification.” However, as demonstrated in this paper, Cumberland Presbyterians were involved in the holiness movement as early as 1878.

<sup>28</sup> Though most historical records present him in an unfavorable light, Rev. R. J. Sims became one of the first full-time evangelists in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church after the Civil War, and one of the denomination’s most effective revivalists until his departure in the ensuing controversy. One visitor to a protracted meeting observed that the congregation assembled to hear Rev. Sims was “immense,” and noted that ten pews had to be emptied to accommodate the penitents. See B. W. McDonold, *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 4th ed. (Nashville, TN: Board of Publication of Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1899), available from <http://www.cumberland.org/hfpcp/mcdonold/42-49.htm>; accessed 27 February 2003. If this is indeed the same evangelist, the loss to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was considerable, and partially explains the substantial effort to dismiss the sect as fanaticism.

versy, as well as another Cumberland Presbyterian minister who attended this meeting, Richard Groves.<sup>29</sup> McCulloch theorized that the fanaticism erupted among ministers not grounded in the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection.

The cause which led to their great error was mainly an error in doctrine as to the nature of christian [sic] perfection. All five of the leaders of this movement were Cumberland Presbyterian ministers, and, of course, Calvinistic in their belief; and they thought they saw in God's word a way whereby they could make Calvinism and Arminianism agree; and through harmonizing the two build up one of the grandest systems of theology ever known: They were saved in conversion from the possibility of falling from grace; and in holiness from the possibility of sinning, or ever being tempted, as many of them testified. In fact, they saw in the atonement of Christ a provision made to save them from sin, from sickness, from pain and death; and they become immortal. The perfection they taught was an absolute perfection, the perfection of the glorified state; and they believed it to be their privilege as preachers to have such power as that sinners would fall as dead men under their preaching.<sup>30</sup>

While an historian should read this account critically, especially since McCulloch relied on secondhand information, nevertheless this passage demonstrates that the leaders of the "fanatics" were harmonizing their experience of entire sanctification with their own theological tradition, and did this under the influence of intense eschatological speculation. While affirming these five leaders as "good men" who "probably had enjoyed the blessing of holiness, and likely did at this time," McCulloch states:

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<sup>29</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 8-9.

<sup>30</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 17-18. According to Charles B. Jernigan, all five Cumberland Presbyterian ministers who led the Corsicana Enthusiasts were well-educated. See Charles B. Jernigan, *The Holiness Movement in the Southwest* (Concord, NC: Wesleyan Heritage Library [CD-ROM], 1999), ch. 28. Certainly, ignorance does not appear to be a factor among the leadership; rather, the primary ingredient appears to be eschatological expectation of a fever pitch.

Under the great illuminating power of the Spirit in holiness, they imagined that it was the fore-runner of some great event in the history of the church . . . and their minds naturally supposed that it was the closing up of this dispensation, and it was the sign of the second coming of Christ.<sup>31</sup>

Critics loyal to the Wesleyan tradition condemned the innovations as “fanaticism.” Yet the spirit of these “enthusiasts” points to a late nineteenth-century trend toward seeking experience for its own sake, and in the context of intense eschatological expectation led to potent new doctrines of Christian experience.<sup>32</sup>

In many ways the Corsicana Enthusiasts presaged the holiness movement after 1890 as well as Pentecostalism in the twentieth century, particularly in regard to their efforts to appropriate the “full gospel” of the New Testament. Eschatological expectation led to renewed speculation concerning Christian experience, centering on the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup> The “enthusiasts” manifested strong interest in appropriating the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12—a common pursuit in today’s churches, but in the 1870s this signaled “wildfire.” When the Corsicana

<sup>31</sup> McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> “They had the plan of salvation divided into seven steps, which they called seven steps to the throne. The first step was repentance; the second, justification; the third, regeneration; the fourth, entire sanctification; the fifth, the baptism with the Holy Ghost; the sixth, the gift of healing; the seventh, translation faith. Those who obtained this faith could never see death, but would live to see Jesus come in His millennial glory, and be translated at His coming, which would be only a short time off.” Jernigan, *Holiness Movement in the Southwest*, ch. 28. This is merely an example of typological exegesis, a hermeneutic practiced by countless preachers of this era. William B. Godbey carried out the practice with the same passage, except he affirmed the last step as glorification, a state reached only in heaven. See William B. Godbey, *Holiness or Hell?* (Noblesville, IN: Newby Book Room, 1974), 92.

<sup>33</sup> Considering their emphasis on power, the Corsicana Enthusiasts may be the earliest sect to embrace the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a distinctive “work of grace.” Considering their emphasis on additional instantaneous works of grace beyond entire sanctification, the “enthusiasts” resemble the “Fire-Baptized” Movement of Benjamin Irwin. See Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, especially 50-58. His section on “Pentecostal Sanctification” (page 50) resonates with descriptions of Christian experience sought and obtained by the “enthusiasts.” Synan bases his research on Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 87-113 and Charles E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1974), 283-286.

Enthusiasts turned to spiritual gifts as a sign of eschatological approach, the leaders allegedly failed to connect them to the evangelistic work of the church—the central concern of revivalism.<sup>34</sup> Certainly this group pre-saged the birth of Pentecostalism as an ecstatic movement—but it lacked the “missionary origins” that made the latter a “Third Force” in the church. Instead, the Corsicana Enthusiasts pursued experience for its own sake and induced panic over the Second Coming. Certainly ignorance and fear gained the upper hand, and the little band of the “faithful” soon disintegrated as its leadership lost control.

After the revival meetings that emphasized “gifts,” the Corsicana Enthusiasts thoroughly scandalized the surrounding region by closing themselves up in a farmhouse to wait for the second coming of Christ. Meeting at the house of William Groves, about a dozen men and women stayed together for several weeks, the business of their meeting hidden from the public. The group included Rev. Goodnight, pastor of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Corsicana, who abandoned his invalid wife for this lengthy stay and “caused a great deal of talk, and much reflection on his conduct.” As they sought to “perfect their views and doctrines,” the enthusiasts became convinced that the Bible prophesied their imminent translation.<sup>35</sup> While neighbors called them “Adventists” and

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<sup>34</sup>See McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 19-21. According to McCulloch, the sect’s leaders “met together at Corsicana, as Bro. Sims was at this time (the spring of 1878) holding a meeting at the Cumberland church in that city. He was preaching on the gifts more than anything else (as recorded in 1 Cor., 12<sup>th</sup> chapter) and he invited several forward in order to receive some one or other of these gifts by the laying on of hands.” McCulloch names several individuals who profess to have received a “gift” by this means, but notes that Rev. Cyrus T. Hogan did not profess any such gift even after several “enthusiasts” laid hands on his head. “The fact is, Bro. Hogan was a man of too much hard sense to be deceived by any such pretensions,” adds McCulloch. He further points out that they “continued their meeting here for some time on this line; but they had no revival, or any success in saving souls.” McCulloch names “Bro. J. R. Sims” as “the leading spirit in this whole movement from first to last, as long as he went with it; and there is no doubt that he was the great cause of Bro. Haynes and the other preachers being led astray.” For a sketch of Rev. Cyrus T. Hogan—a leading holiness minister who opposed the Corsicana Enthusiasts—see *The Texas Conference of the Free Methodist Church*, 21-23.

<sup>35</sup> McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 21. “They professed to see from the prophecies of Daniel and Joel that the ‘Times of the Gentiles’ was about fulfilled [sic]; and that they were then about the middle of the ‘Gentile week,’ with about three and a half or four years yet to expire before Christ should come; but that a translation of the one-hundred and forty-four thousand would take place about forty-two months before his advent into the world.”

“fanatics,” and made them the target of malicious gossip and threats, the most distinctive activity of this group was their notion of supernatural communication. Rather than the ordinary means of prayer practiced by Christians, the Corsicana Enthusiasts sought extraordinary direct contact with the divine. More than any other factor, this “puzzlement” may hold the key to understanding their conjunctive tendencies.

In answer to one particular prayer, or kind of prayer, the nerves of the face would twitch around the corner of one eye. Another witness to another kind of prayer was a sudden movement of the muscles in the calf of the leg; and still another witness was a sudden nervous jerking motion in one or other of the big toes on either foot. I believe it was usually through William Groves that their witnesses were received; but they all claimed to receive them at times. How strange that sensible, well educated, earnest Christian ministers could ever be so far led astray by the devil as to recognize such absurdities as an answer to prayer.<sup>36</sup>

While such measures certainly baffled contemporary church leaders, these channels for supernatural contact are comprehensible once they are recognized as spiritualism. While several organizations, through periodicals and speakers, promoted spiritualism in Texas at this time, only a small amount of recorded material remains extant today. However, enough information exists to establish an identity—that the enthusiasts employed spiritualist practices to establish contact with God. Historians can only speculate why the Corsicana Enthusiasts diverged so sharply from conventional practice; however, their practices serve as a high-water mark of their religious and social radicalism. Such extremity risked the fear and outrage of the surrounding community, and several holiness min-

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<sup>36</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 25. McCulloch states that the “enthusiasts” provided this explanation to Rev. Cyrus T. Hogan. McCulloch provides additional detail on pages 33-34, when the Corsicana Enthusiasts reached greater extremes at the peak of their influence in the summer of 1879. “They continued from this [time] on to be led more and more by impressions. They would not preach now unless they were impressed to do so. . . . And what preaching they did now was but a declaration of their wild, unscriptural doctrines. Wm. Groves was generally the medium through which they had their supposed communication with God. He would get under the power, as they called it, and keep up a jerking motion, and in a minute or two he would give them the supposed answer.”

isters warned the enthusiasts to break up their meeting or risk mob action. The ministers also threatened to obtain a court order that would include the arrest of the enthusiasts. This strategy worked in due time, when the leaders prayed and “got the witness to go home.”<sup>37</sup>

The turn to spiritualism remains the most mysterious aspect of the enthusiasts, but it confirms the experimental nature of their radicalism. Under intense expectation of the second coming, apparently craving supernatural leadership within a tightly compressed time frame, the sect members endeavored to clarify their eschatology and were desperate enough to adopt the methods of spiritualism.<sup>38</sup> As unusual as it seems, this detail tells more about a vanished *mentalité* than any other feature of this story. Casting aspersion on organized religion as “Babylon,” these revivalists chased religious experience with unrestrained passion, apart from its Wesleyan roots, cross-pollinated their ecstatic religion with their own Reformed theology, and adapted other spiritual traditions for eschatological enlightenment—even spiritualism.<sup>39</sup> Profoundly motivated by

<sup>37</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 26. Much of the controversy generated in the surrounding community may have occurred over the common habitation of men and women, neither married nor of blood relation, as well as the radical nature of their religious motives. Many residents may have feared the spread of the radicalism to their own households, and consequent disruption of farm labor and domestic relations. This could have brought economic disaster and social ostracism on these households, as it surely did on the Corsicana Enthusiasts.

<sup>38</sup>Spiritualism should not be regarded as an organized body of teachings, but rather as a type of supernaturalism that swept across America in the mid-nineteenth century. Although much older, the American Spiritualist Movement originated in Hydesville, New York, as a means for communicating with the dead. Obviously, the Corsicana Enthusiasts did not adopt these measures to communicate with the dead, but as an extraordinary channel for eschatological information. Measures included sitting in circles, men and women alternating, with defined bodily movements as the medium. The mood of Spiritualism was highly individualistic, bypassing church tradition and even the Scriptures. This seems consistent with the sect’s rejection of existing churches, anti-ordnance sentiments and extreme inclination toward Spirit-guidance. Moreover, Spiritualism’s liberal notions of marriage coincide with the enthusiasts’ declarations that if husband and wife disagreed over sanctification, the parties were at liberty to separate. See McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 35.

<sup>39</sup>Some holiness evangelists accused early Pentecostals with spiritualism, which from their perspective was nothing less than communion with demons. “Their invasion of the Holiness Movement by Spiritualism is the most fatal effort which has ever been launched against it by the king of the bottomless pit. . . . It has been like bombshells thrown into the ranks from masked batteries throughout the whole earth and consequently breaking out everywhere.” William B. Godbey, *Spiritualism, Devil-worship and the Tongues* (Cincinnati, OH: God’s Revivalist Press, n.d.), 22.

their embrace of entire sanctification, these revivalists—apprehending the approach of the second coming—pushed experience beyond its limits, claiming that the Atonement included not only salvation from sin, but salvation from sickness and even death. Supernatural power pervaded the individual until death was defeated, and communion with the divine elevated to the point that each person could directly communicate with God and glean privileged knowledge about future events. Among the enthusiasts, the system made sense, but to the public and to religious leaders this new system of theology was utter nonsense that presaged disaster for its adherents as well as the community—unless the latter acted swiftly.

In the summer of 1879, the Corsicana Enthusiasts radicalized their theology—and consequently their behavior—to the point of open conflict with local citizens. According to McCulloch, the source of this radicalism was a periodical entitled “Glad Tidings,” published by Henry T. Williams of Brooklyn, New York.<sup>40</sup> As the evangelists retraced the path of their earlier meetings, their views reached unprecedented extremes. These meetings stressed spiritual gifts as well as the power of the Holy Spirit as signs of the imminent second coming.<sup>41</sup> And in many cases, people were delivered from physical illnesses in their meetings.<sup>42</sup> On this score they

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<sup>40</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 30. Research in several appropriate databases has turned up neither bibliographic information about the periodical nor biographical information about Henry T. Williams. An author by that name published nineteenth-century tourist information about the American West; however, at present nothing conclusive has been found that would tie this author to the Corsicana Enthusiasts.

<sup>41</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 30-31. “They began again to seek for the gifts mentioned in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians; and many claimed that they received them; and instead of preaching to sinners to get saved, and believers to get sanctified, they commenced to seek for imaginary blessings. The preachers sought for such power as that everywhere sinners would fall as dead men under their preaching; and yet they claimed that the Holy Spirit was taken out of the world, as Christ had left the mediatorial throne, and was now preparing a people for translation to himself. And they stated publicly that from henceforth no sinner ever could be converted to God. They also sought the power that on whomsoever they (the preachers) would lay their hands they should recover. And it is said that they actually tried to bring a dead child to life by laying on of hands, though we rather doubt it. Some of them believed that they had the power to baptize, or anoint, with the Holy Ghost; and many of their followers went forward and professed to receive the Holy Ghost at their hands.”

<sup>42</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 32. “Many remarkable cases of healing are mentioned, that took place amongst them, by the laying on of hands, during this time.”

shared common ground with the divine healing movement in nineteenth-century American evangelicalism that contemporary scholars connect with the holiness and Pentecostal movements.<sup>43</sup> However, their lack of numerous converts, their fixation on the second coming, their deviation from Scripture and embrace of spiritualism, their extreme teachings, an unstable leadership and failure to establish a durable organization sealed their destiny as a localized sect that soon vanished.<sup>44</sup> They also did not prove steady in the face of opposition, a key ingredient of the holiness and Pentecostal movements. And unlike the Pentecostal movement, which erupted in Los Angeles—a strategic urban center that sent believers across the country and around the world—the Corsicana Enthusiasts, located in a sparsely populated rural area, never sent a missionary from their ranks.

By the fall of 1879, local citizens were determined to rid the community of religious extremism. The enthusiasts began a series of revival meetings in October, with the intention of converting the world through a new Pentecost. Securing a rented house, they “held their meetings and fasted and prayed until about the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> of October.” The meetings reached a fever pitch, some feared Rev. Goodnight was “losing his mind,” while “the people were getting considerably stirred up about the doctrine that Haynes was preaching.” Finally, a “party of masked men” captured Rev. Haynes and took him “a mile or two from town” to be immersed in a pond and ordered to leave town. When Rev. Haynes became numb and

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<sup>43</sup>For example, see Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, especially 122-130. However, when Dayton discusses “Healing in the Atonement” (127-130), he discusses sources (A. B. Simpson and A. J. Gordon) dating from 1881 and later. The Corsicana Enthusiasts are without question among the earliest holiness people to explicitly embrace the doctrine of healing in the atonement.

<sup>44</sup>The Corsicana Enthusiasts taught that believers could be delivered from death, even in this mortal life. “They soon believed that it was their privilege to be saved from death; and to prove this they quoted 1 Cor. 15:22: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” And again, Heb. 2:14, 15: “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” And again, 2 Tim. 1:10: “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished [sic] death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”



speechless from the cold weather, the men returned to town with their hostage and abandoned him on the porch of a minister's home.<sup>45</sup>

Tragically, the enthusiasts fell prey to the stratagems of Henry T. Williams, who lured them to Little Rock as a preparation for the second coming. Families sold their farms and other possessions to raise money for the trip and on arrival turned over their money to Mr. Williams and his agents. These people were strongly motivated by fear, even panic, and in their ignorance gave up rights to property and family for the "sake of the Kingdom." Only after several weeks did the majority recognize the scheme to deprive them of their property and make the return trip to Navarro County, "poorer and sadder," but "a wiser people." Some of the enthusiasts organized independent holiness churches among the remnants, and continued to emphasize the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 along with the doctrine of entire sanctification.<sup>46</sup> These churches demonstrate the durable conjunction of holiness and spiritual gifts, later widely established by evangelists as a hallmark of holiness and Pentecostal theology.

As it struggled to distance itself from the Corsicana Enthusiasts, the "true" holiness movement could scarcely regain credibility in this region. Branded as fanatics, excoriated as "Free Lovers," holiness adherents were widely regarded as the offscouring of society, people who divided churches—and even worse, divided families over the issue of sanctifica-

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<sup>45</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 37-39. According to Jernigan, the most inflammatory issue in this instance concerned the enthusiasts' views concerning marriage. "They also taught that in case a man's wife did not believe as he did it was sufficient grounds for scriptural divorce. This of course gave them room to put into practice their doctrines. Public feelings were outraged and indignation meetings were held, and a committee waited on the preachers and demanded that they leave town or that such teachings be stopped." Jernigan's account of Rev. Haynes' defiance matches McCulloch's. "Rev. Mr. Haynes defied the whole community, and declared that he was death proof, that they could not kill him with a gun if they wanted to, boldly declaring his purpose to continue as he had, teaching such things as were revealed to him." Jernigan also provides an account of the capture of Rev. Haynes, but he states that the latter was indeed dunked in water and became "unconscious from the ducking and the chill of the cold." Jernigan notes that this nocturnal action "broke up the meeting and Haynes soon left town." Jernigan, *Holiness Movement in the Southwest*, ch. 28.

<sup>46</sup>McCulloch, *History of the Holiness Movement in Texas*, 57-69.

tion.<sup>47</sup> Nearly a decade later, holiness evangelist William B. Godbey observed the legacy of distaste left by the enthusiasts as he conducted meetings in this region.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the Corsicana Enthusiasts practically ruined the work of Free Methodist missions in that area. When Benjamin T. Roberts met with the fledgling Texas-Louisiana Conference in 1884, he held the “fanatics” at least partly responsible for the damaged witness of his denomination in the region.<sup>49</sup> The Cumberland Presbyteri-

<sup>47</sup>According to contemporary accounts by evangelists, most people who responded to altar calls in holiness revivals apparently were women. While historians can only speculate about their reasons for kneeling at the mourner’s bench, some women may have sought entire sanctification as a morally respectable channel for transcending an oppressive marriage. Anyone who challenged social mores concerning marriage and sexuality would earn the title “free lovers” from critics who used the term to discredit them *ad baculum*. The holiness movement employed the same tactic against early Pentecostals. Since the groups were remarkably similar, a common strategy involved casting moral opprobrium on opponents. See Grant Wacker, “Travail of a Broken Family: Radical Evangelical Responses to the Emergence of Pentecostalism in America, 1906-16,” in *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*, ed. Edith L. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler, and Grant A. Wacker (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 31. The same charges were hurled against nineteenth-century Spiritualism, whose leaders were accused of “Free Loveism” because of their radical notions of marriage and sexuality rather than actual practice of promiscuity. See Mary Farrell Bednarowski, “Outside the Mainstream: Women’s Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLVIII:2, 215-216.

<sup>48</sup> “We found in that country deep and inveterate hostility to sanctification, resulting mainly from a fatal fanaticism which had visited the land in preceding years, preaching a counterfeit sanctification, which required husband and wife to separate.” William B. Godbey, *Autobiography of W. B. Godbey* (Cincinnati, OH: God’s Revivalist Office, 1909), 328.

<sup>49</sup> “Mr. Roberts attributed the backwardness of the work to circumstances that were entirely out of their control. A fine impression of holiness work had been created by a holiness camp meeting held five years before by G. R. Harvey and Dr. Bush of the Methodist Church South. The meeting had been eminently successful, resulting in four hundred conversions, and two hundred professions of holiness. People were favorable to holiness, until a Rev. Richard [sic] Haines, of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, who professed and preached the experience of holiness, had followed the above mentioned camp meeting, and preached that people should come out of all the churches, claiming that the church was an instrument of the devil. This man professed unusual spiritual gifts and had indulged in the ‘wildest excesses,’ including waiting in an upper room with some of his followers for translation. He died and his body was kept for days awaiting the resurrection until finally police discovered it and forced burial. Mr. Roberts said, ‘A perfect revolution took place in the minds of the people, and the doctrine of holiness became as unpopular as it had been popular before.’” Zahniser, *Earnest Christian: Life and Works of Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 316-317.

ans took the strongest measures to check the influence of the Corsicana Enthusiasts. Revoking the credentials of the ministers who led the sect, the denomination warned its membership away from holiness and premillennialism.<sup>50</sup> The Cumberland Presbyterians took decisive steps to curb the influence of the holiness movement, and brought in prominent denominational leaders to maintain peace.<sup>51</sup> In fact, most churches distanced themselves from the Corsicana Enthusiasts and called their doctrines and practices fanaticism. However, the holiness movement eventually adopted several of their fanatical doctrines such as premillennialism and divine healing. Classical Pentecostalism comes even closer to their “wildfire.”

The Corsicana Enthusiasts were thus “early adopters” who put the conjunctive nature of Wesleyan theology to the test, long before social miasma and ecclesiastical policies pressed the holiness movement toward radicalism. After all, holiness revivalism is all about potency, and these enthusiasts found the combination of entire sanctification, premillennialism, divine healing, and earthly glorification a volatile mixture. With an arrogance that defied the rest of the world, these “fanatics” could have passed for Pentecostals in the twentieth century.

<sup>50</sup>J. Douglas Brackenridge states: “Occasionally synods and presbyteries warned their constituents to be wary of strange new doctrines taught by various Adventist groups. In 1878 Brazos Synod charged its people ‘to stand aloof from and close their doors against the teachings of the Seventh Day Adventists and Reformed Mormons as being propagated in our country.’ About the same time Texas Synod eschewed any connection with several ex-Cumberland ministers who had organized ‘The Temple of the Coming Lord’ in Corsicana, Texas. Deeming their doctrines ‘heretical and fanatical . . . poisonous and insidious,’ synod leaders charged people to stay clear of such doctrinal aberrations. Colorado Synod lashed out against so-called ‘Christian perfectionists,’ accusing them of advocating ‘free lovism under the garb of the higher life.’ It also condemned ‘new and startling revelations both of prophecy and miracles,’ referring to the many Adventist-oriented groups which were springing up at this time.” Brackenridge is citing, respectively: Brazos Synod Minutes (1878), 87; Texas Synod Minutes (1879), 242; and Colorado Synod Minutes (1879), 234-235, 237-238. R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Voice in the Wilderness: A History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Texas* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1968), 108-109.

<sup>51</sup>“One of the outstanding ministers of the Cumberland Presbyterian church [sic] in the early days was Rev. Allison Templeton, who moved from Tennessee to Corsicana in 1879 to bring harmony to the church after a disruption caused by the question of sanctification which at that time was causing trouble to many congregations. He made a vivid impression on the people of Corsicana but unfortunately he lived only three years after reaching Texas, dying June 28, 1882.” Love, *History of Navarro County*, 161.

# **“IN PRISON FOR CHRIST’S SAKE”: DIVINE HEALING TRIALS AND THE CHURCH OF GOD (ANDERSON)**

by

**Michael S. Stephens**

Between 1897 and 1917 the tendency to reject secular medicine in favor of divine healing led to at least nine criminal trials of members of the Church of God (Anderson).<sup>1</sup> The leaders of the church initially believed that the trials were part of God’s plan to promote holiness. They predicted that these bold examples of church members voluntarily suffering legal prosecution for their faith in divine healing would attract new members and strengthen the faith of those already belonging to the Church of God movement. However, court trials proved to be a poor vehicle for the promotion of religious doctrines. Instead of attracting new converts to divine healing, the trials created dissention in the Church of God and contributed to a reformulation of the doctrine of divine healing that did not challenge health laws.

The first trial was in 1897 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. A church member named Henry Smith was charged with child endangerment for refusing to

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<sup>1</sup>The group that is now called the Church of God (Anderson) was one of the first radical holiness churches. It was strongly opposed to denominations and denominational labels, and therefore the members used the Biblical descriptor “Church of God” or “church of God.” Since 1906, the publishing house and the organizational center for the Church of God have been in Anderson, Indiana. The modifier “(Anderson)” is not officially part of the Church’s name but distinguishes it from other “Church of God” groups, most notably the Church of God (Cleveland) and the Church of God (Holiness).

give his 12-year-old daughter medicine for her “typhoid pneumonia.” The girl suffered hearing loss and possibly some brain damage. The doctor who testified on behalf of the county was reasonably certain that orthodox medical treatment would have prevented these effects. The court found Smith guilty and fined him \$5.00 plus court costs, \$17.50 in all. He chose to go to jail instead of paying the fine.

The *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel* and the *Fort Wayne Weekly Gazette* both reported extensively on Smith’s arrest and trial. They printed court reports, arrest reports, and editorials about divine healing, child rearing, and public safety.<sup>2</sup> The periodical of the Church of God movement, *The Gospel Trumpet*, devoted the Divine Healing page of the November 25, 1897, issue to this trial. Under the heading “In Prison for Christ’s Sake,” the *Trumpet* published a letter Smith wrote from jail recounting his arrest and asking the editor to answer the question: Must the saints be subject to human laws that conflict with God’s laws?<sup>3</sup> After a reprint of the account from the *Fort Wayne Weekly Gazette*, E. E. Byrum, the editor of the *Trumpet* and the person in the Church of God most closely associated with divine healing, took up Smith’s case and his question.<sup>4</sup> Byrum’s article was tellingly titled, “The Lord or Doctors, Which?” and was a strong assertion that medical healing was not compatible with God’s means of healing. It said that God’s laws always took precedence over human laws, but, in the United States, human laws and God’s laws were actually in accord. According to Byrum, the Constitution’s protection of the free exercise of religion logically extended to divine healing, and therefore the law itself was on the side of the saints. However, the “opinions and make-beliefs of ungodly lawyers and doctors” often were not. Because there was no law that required taking medicine, the saints could practice divine healing assured that they were following God’s laws and the laws of the

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<sup>2</sup>“Will Be Arrested,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 10, 1897, 4; “Faith Cure. That is What a Typhoid Pneumonia Patient is Receiving,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 10, 1897, 3; “Faith Curist Fined,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Gazette*, Nov. 11, 1897, 9; “The Case of Henry Smith,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 17, 1897, 2; “Like a Martyr,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 17, 1897, 5.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Smith, “In Prison for Christ’s Sake,” *Gospel Trumpet* [Hereafter GT] 17:47 (Nov. 25, 1897): 4.

<sup>4</sup>For an excellent introduction to E. E. Byrum and divine healing, see Merle D. Strege, *I Saw the Church: The Life of the Church of God Told Theologically* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2002), 63-74.

land. If they had to go to jail for that, it was unfortunate and painful, but was part of God's plan to spread holiness. As Byrum wrote, "When a person is arrested and put in prison, if without compromise he stands true to God and acts as he directs in accordance with the word, although it may seem at the time, perhaps, to many, that it would be an awful disgrace upon the cause of Christ, yet the Lord will get glory out of it in spreading his truth."<sup>5</sup> Thus, at the beginning of the Church of God's experience with divine healing trials, the church hoped the trials would spread the gospel and promote holiness.

The last major divine healing trial covered in the *Gospel Trumpet* went all the way to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. On June 20, 1911, *Owens v. State of Oklahoma* upheld Lawrence Owens's conviction for misdemeanor child neglect.<sup>6</sup> This was the highest court a Church of God trial attained, and it presumably would have been a great opportunity to publicize the church's teachings about healing and its opposition to medicine and coercive health laws. The Oklahoma newspapers covered the case, and it was arguably the most important legal decision related to the Church of God.<sup>7</sup> However, by this time, the Church of God's reaction to divine healing trials had changed markedly, and there were only two brief notices about it in the *Gospel Trumpet*. The first was a "General Notes and News" item that said simply, "The case of Bro. Lawrence Owens is to be decided in the Supreme Court in July."<sup>8</sup> Two years later and almost an

<sup>5</sup>E. E. Byrum, "The Lord or Doctors, Which?" *GT* 17:47 (Nov. 25, 1897): 4.

<sup>6</sup>*Lawrence Owens v. State of Oklahoma* 6 Okla. Crim. 110; 116 P. 345; 1911 Okla. Crim. App. LEXIS 302. The *Gospel Trumpet* reported one case after the *Owens*, but it was simply a notice that a grand jury in Pocahontas, Arkansas had rendered a "true bill" for manslaughter against Bro. L. E. Rogers. The judge dismissed it because of a lack of material witnesses. See "General News Notes," *GT* 32:6 (Feb. 8, 1912): 10 and "General News Notes," *GT* 32:37 (Sept. 19, 1912): 11.

<sup>7</sup>The other important Church of God case was from Butler, Pennsylvania, *Commonwealth v. Hoffman* (1903). It was a precedent in *Owens v. State of Oklahoma* and in a number of other cases. It established the principle that parents have a duty to provide orthodox medical care to minors. Barry Nobel discusses this case in his dissertation, "Religious Healing and American Courts in the Twentieth Century: The Liberties and Liabilities of Healers, Patients, and Parents" (Ph.D. diss. University of California, Santa Barbara, 1991), 190-192. Nobel followed the court in calling Hoffman a Christian Scientist.

<sup>8</sup>*GT* 30:17 (April 28, 1910): 8.

entire year after the final court decision, another note in the *Trumpet* said that Owens had lost both the county court case and the appeal but that donations had covered all his expenses. Further, Lawrence Owens and his daughter were well and still in the faith.<sup>9</sup>

How did the *Gospel Trumpet* get from its position in 1897 to that of 1912? The editor was the same, and if anything he was more committed to the ministry of divine healing than he was in the 1890s.<sup>10</sup> Judging by testimonies and articles in the *Trumpet* and by the fact that church members were still being arrested and tried for refusing medical attention for their children in 1912, divine healing was still an important part of the life of many of the church's adherents. Yet, the lack of coverage of the trials in the *Trumpet* indicates that the editors had come to reject their earlier opinion that God was using the courts to spread the truth about divine healing. A full explanation of this change is beyond the scope of this paper. However, an analysis of the reports of the trials in the *Trumpet*, the secular newspapers, and the courts will suggest why the church changed its approach to divine healing trials. Before exploring the trials, a brief introduction to the history of the doctrine and practice of divine healing in the early Church of God movement will provide a context for the issue.

### **The Church of God and Divine Healing**

The Church of God (Anderson) was one of the earliest of the radical holiness movements. It began in 1881 and centered on Daniel S. Warner's newspaper, *The Gospel Trumpet*. The main theological emphases of the group were a Wesleyan holiness soteriology and a Free Church ecclesiology. The movement taught that there was a second blessing after regeneration called sanctification. This second blessing with the Holy Spirit was an event—not a process—that cleansed the moral nature and removed the desire to sin, thus enabling a "saint" to live a holy life. Further, the church was nothing other than the unity of the sanctified. Ministers were to be "known by their fruits" not by ordination papers, church members showed their membership by a holy life and not by a certificate. All worldliness and sin had no place in the church. The Church of God was to

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<sup>9</sup>"General News Notes," *GT* 32:17 (April 25, 1912): 11.

<sup>10</sup>E. E. Byrum was the editor. For evidence of his continuing ministry of divine healing, see his book *Miracles and Healing: Scriptural Incidents and Evidences of the Miraculous Manifestation of the Power of God, and of the Healing of Sicknesses and Diseases* (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Co., 1919).

be a visible unity of the sanctified and a restoration of the New Testament church.<sup>11</sup>

Church of God members believed that divine healing was a prominent feature of the apostolic church and explored the possibility that healing power might return with the restoration of the primitive church. At first, Church of God preachers believed that divine healing was a “side issue,” a benefit that came from sanctification and the restoration of the New Testament church, but not something that should be “preached.”<sup>12</sup> However, it quickly moved from a side issue to a central tenet of Church of God faith. Church members believed that the presence of the grace of divine healing in the church was the most visible evidence that God was using the Church of God movement to fulfill the promises of the New Testament. Moreover, opposition to any form of medicine grew markedly. Six of the early books and five of the first pamphlets produced by the Church of God publishing house were about divine healing, and most of these publications included testimonial evidence that congregations around the country were holding divine healing services. In the three healing books published before 1900, there were over 80 testimonies, ranging from a healed finger to a resurrection from the dead. One of them, E. E. Byrum’s *Divine Healing of Soul and Body*, sold over 20,000 copies between 1892 and 1898.<sup>13</sup> An advertisement promised that *The Gospel Trumpet* itself was “interesting to all truth seekers and those seek-

<sup>11</sup>The best narrative history of the Church of God is Merle D. Strege’s *I Saw the Church: The Life of the Church of God Told Theologically* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2002). Barry L. Callen’s edited volume, *Following the Light: Teachings, Testimonies, Trials and Triumphs of the Church of God Movement, Anderson* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2000), is a documentary history of the Church from 1880 to 2000. For primary sources explaining the early teachings about sanctification and ecclesiology respectively, see D. S. Warner, *Bible Proofs of the Second Work of Grace, or, Entire Sanctification as a Distinct Experience, Subsequent to Justification, Established by the United Testimony of Several Hundred Texts, Including a Description of the Great Holiness Crisis of the Present Age, by the Prophets* (Goshen, IN: Evangelical United Mennonite Publishing Society, 1880), and D. S. Warner, *The Church of God; or, What is the Church and What is it Not* (Moundsville, WV: Gospel Trumpet Publishing Co., n.d.).

<sup>12</sup>George L. Cole, “History of Divine Healing Among Us,” *GT* 25:28 (July 20, 1905): 8.

<sup>13</sup>John W. V. Smith, *Heralds of a Brighter Day* (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Co., 1955), 65.



ing healing of the body.”<sup>14</sup> By 1895, the *Gospel Trumpet* dedicated the last page of every issue to divine healing articles and testimonies.

At the annual national camp meeting of the Church of God in 1902 “about eighty” of the ministers—including all of the most prominent writers and evangelists—signed a statement that divine healing was “in the Atonement.” This meant that part of the mission of Christ’s atonement was physical healing, not just salvation of souls. Therefore, any minister who was committed to the “full gospel” had to preach divine healing.<sup>15</sup> Considering that Church of God people were constitutionally opposed to anything remotely resembling a creed or denominational governance, this was an amazing symbol of unanimity or at least the desire for unanimity. This was the only doctrinal statement signed by more than a few members in the first thirty years of the Church of God movement.

The statement may have been little more than symbolic, however. Living as a community committed to divine healing began to create very real stresses in the Church of God. The list of “failed” healings was growing. In the 1903 camp meeting, the year after the signing of the divine healing statement, two infant girls died on the campgrounds after receiving prayer for healing.<sup>16</sup> An article in the *Trumpet* in 1904 urged the saints to commit themselves more completely to divine healing, because too often the medical community and the world opposed the Church of God for its *failure to heal*, in contrast to the New Testament church which was opposed for its *success*.<sup>17</sup> The church also had to confront the issue of compulsory vaccination for children attending public schools. In 1906, an editorial in the *Trumpet* said that the medicine in vaccinations was not beneficial, but Church of God parents should vaccinate their children so as not to bring hostility toward the child, the family, or the Church of God.<sup>18</sup> Faith would protect the child from the harmful effects of the vaccine.

Many of the writers and ministers in the Church of God concluded that the church’s extreme position of divine healing was not effectively spreading the message of holiness. Divine healing remained a “better

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<sup>14</sup>Advertisement in *The Doctrine of Divine Healing* (Anderson IN: Gospel Trumpet Co., n.d.).

<sup>15</sup>“Divine Healing in the Atonement,” *GT* 22:25 (June 19, 1902): 1-3.

<sup>16</sup>Clarence Hunter, “God Called Our Darlings Home,” *GT* 23:36 (Sept. 3, 1903): 4.

<sup>17</sup>George P. Tasker, “Need of an Awakening,” *GT* 24:14 (April 7, 1904): 8.

<sup>18</sup>E. E. Byrum, “What to do,” *GT* 26:40 (Oct 11, 1906): 8.

way” of healing, a benefit enjoyed by the saints, but it was repelling more potential converts than it was attracting.<sup>19</sup> The church’s experience with the courts and the newspaper reports of the divine healing trials proved that they were not successfully communicating the connection between holiness, the New Testament church, and divine healing.

### The Trials

The nine trials I have located were in Fort Wayne, Indiana (1897); Marion, Indiana (1898); Vincennes, Indiana (1899); Butler, Pennsylvania (1903); Bluefield, West Virginia (1905); Ironton, Ohio (1905); Beaver Co., Oklahoma (1909) and Oklahoma City (1911); Pocahontas, Arkansas (1912); and Oran, Missouri (1917). There also was an arrest—but no trial—for manslaughter in Riverview, Ontario (1905), and a case of Health Services workers removing children from their parents’ custody to administer medicine in Jersey City, New Jersey (1910). The Marion, Indiana, case was the odd one. Three Church of God ministers attended a fourth Church of God minister when she died from complications related to childbirth. The three were charged with murder and practicing obstetrics without a license. The grand jury reduced the charge to involuntary manslaughter, but the trial jury failed to return a verdict and the judge dismissed the case.<sup>20</sup> The other trials and arrests were of lay members of the Church of God movement accused of refusing to give medicine to their sick children. Three of the trials (Butler, Pennsylvania; Bluefield, West Virginia; and Pocahontas, Arkansas) were for involuntary manslaughter, and the remaining five were for child endangerment or neglect. Interestingly, the only two cases not either decided in favor of the defendant or overturned on appeal were also the only cases in which the children lived. In the Fort Wayne case of 1897, the child suffered hearing loss, and in the Oklahoma case of 1909/1911, the child had a full recovery.

***Gospel Trumpet Reports.*** The *Gospel Trumpet*’s editors devoted extensive coverage to the first four trials mentioned in this paper (Fort Wayne, Marion, and Vincennes, Indiana; and Butler, Pennsylvania). In

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<sup>19</sup>For instance, see C. E. Hunnix, “Physicians and Remedies,” *GT* 29:37 (Sept. 23, 1909): 16.

<sup>20</sup>“Charged With Murder,” *GT* 18:23 (June 9, 1898): 4-5. See also Merle D. Strege, *Tell Me Another Tale: Further Reflections on the Church of God* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1993), 127-130.

each case, the *Trumpet* interpreted the trials as signs that the church was doing something right. Just as Peter and John were incarcerated after drawing a crowd by performing miracles of healing (Acts 3:1-4:4), the Church of God was experiencing the persecution that followed naturally from making a bold stand for the truth.<sup>21</sup> Commenting on the Marion trial, editor Byrum wrote, “The time is here now for apostolical work and to be sure apostolical persecution will follow the same.”<sup>22</sup> *Persecution* was a sign to the church that it was properly offending the world by spreading the message of holiness, and *prosecution* was literally an opportunity to gain a hearing from the world. The saints “must expect now and then to be arrested for Christ’s sake.”<sup>23</sup>

This positive theological interpretation of prosecution did not mean, however, that the church relished all opposition. Much of the commentary from the popular press never made it into the *Gospel Trumpet*. One example was an article from Vincennes, Indiana, about the arrest of Church of God member Thomas Wilson that the *Trumpet* reprinted. The *Trumpet* version left out two important points. First was that Wilson’s wife had also been very ill until her father came with a shotgun and insisted that she take medicine. After taking the medicine, her health improved. The other omission was that this child was the “third or fourth person that these people [meaning the congregation in Vincennes] have let die on account of their fanatical practices.”<sup>24</sup> There is no way to know if the newspaper or the *Gospel Trumpet* was more accurate. The point, of course, is that the *fact* of opposition to divine healing fit the church’s expectation that the world would oppose holiness. The *details* of that opposition, however, were often problematic. The readers of the *Gospel Trumpet* who had not seen the original article from the newspaper would have thought that the readers of *The Western Sun* had read a much more positive testimony than was the case. The early articles in the *Gospel Trumpet*, therefore, presented these cases as simple contrasts between divine healing and human medical systems. They said that such a contrast

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<sup>21</sup>E. E. Byrum used this passage from Acts in his report on the trial in Fort Wayne. See “The Lord or Doctors, Which?” *GT* 17:47 (Nov. 25, 1897): 4.

<sup>22</sup>E. E. Byrum, “Charged with Murder,” *GT* 18:23 (June 9, 1898): 5.

<sup>23</sup>E. E. Byrum used this phrase in both the Fort Wayne report (*GT* 17:47 [Nov. 25, 1897]: 4) and the Vincennes report (*GT* 20:4 [Jan. 25, 1900]: 4).

<sup>24</sup>Compare “Prayer,” *The Western Sun* [Vincennes, Indiana], Dec. 15, 1899, 1 and *GT* 20:4 (Jan 25, 1900): 4.

would eventually work to spread the message that divine healing was far superior to human medical practice.

In addition to the overarching argument that divine healing was God's will for God's people, the articles in the *Trumpet* made more mundane cases for the legal protection of divine healing. The theological position was that divine healing was inherently superior to any possible kind of medicine and that the saints had to follow God's will no matter what the law demanded. In reality, the arguments were that any objective observer could see that divine healing was at least as effective as the medicine of the time, and, further, that no federal or state law banned divine healing.

The reports in the *Trumpet* indicate that the interaction between the church and the medical establishments was considerably more complicated than the theological statements indicated. Medical science was still quite primitive at the end of the nineteenth century. Competing schools of thought, such as homeopathy and allopathy, prescribed radically different treatments for illnesses, and many of these treatments proved harmful.<sup>25</sup> The editorials in the *Trumpet* and some of the arguments made on behalf of Church of God defendants in the courts noted that the states licensed doctors who practiced mutually contradictory systems. If any one of the medical practices were right—and the church said none was, then the others logically had to be wrong. Thus, according to the Church of God, choosing one medical system over the others was an act of misplaced faith that had no more scientific basis than any other faith commitment.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, many of the Church of God people involved in the divine healing trials abandoned medicine only after it did not work for them. The defendant in the Fort Wayne trial had suffered chronic indigestion for many years until he stopped taking the medicine given him by his physician and turned to prayer. When his children became sick he relied on

<sup>25</sup>On medicine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see, William G. Rothstein, *American Physicians in the Nineteenth Century: From Sects to Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), and Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession and the Making of a Vast Industry* (NY: Basic Books, 1982).

<sup>26</sup>See "The Lord or Doctors, Which?" *GT* 17:47 (Nov. 25, 1897): 4, and also the testimony from the Butler, Pennsylvania trial, reprinted in E. E. Byrum, *Travels and Experiences in Other Lands* (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Co., 1905), 583-84.

divine healing, but also called a minister who was formerly a “regular practicing physician.”<sup>27</sup> That divine healer may have been George Achor, one of the defendants in the Marion, Indiana, trial. Achor had been a regular physician for twelve years before he entered the ministry and had even lectured on anatomy at the college in Marion. His wife, another of the defendants in the childbirth-related death case, was a midwife. The Achors had many connections with the medical establishment in Marion and, according to the testimony, they did call a physician. That physician testified in court that the medicine he had prescribed aggravated the woman’s condition and may have hastened her death.<sup>28</sup> In the Butler, Pennsylvania, case the defendant had called a doctor from the Board of Health, but he misdiagnosed the child and said the boy was in no danger.<sup>29</sup> In the Missouri case of 1917, the reports conflict, but the defendant said that he had called a doctor but could not obtain medicine for his children.<sup>30</sup>

There were many connections between the Church of God people and doctors. The message of avoiding medicine notwithstanding, the reports of these trials indicate that Church of God people had tried medicine and continued to seek medical opinions even after affiliating with the church. In the later cases, people called doctors and the Board of Health officials because it was required by law that they determine that the disease was not a danger to the community.<sup>31</sup> The *Trumpet* followed the laws closely and published reports on exactly what the law required regarding medical attention. After the Marion case, E. E. Byrum wrote to all the Secretaries of State in the United States asking if their state had a law forcing a sick person to take medicine. None did. With the Butler, Pennsylvania, trial decision, however, the church had to drop the argument that the First Amendment guaranteed the right to practice divine healing. Adults could choose to rely on prayer for healing, but everyone had to

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<sup>27</sup>“Faith Cure,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 10, 1897, 3.

<sup>28</sup>“Involuntary Manslaughter Case,” *GT* 18:41 (Oct. 13, 1898): 4.

<sup>29</sup>E. E. Byrum, *Travels*, 580.

<sup>30</sup>Warren W. Hency, Jr., ed. *Twentieth Century Descendents, Lives & Legacies of Warren Walter Hency Sr. & Effie Lou Burger* (n.p., 1999), 23.

<sup>31</sup> E. E. Byrum, “Is There Really a Law in Ohio?” *GT* 20:11 (March 13, 1902): 1; E. E. Byrum, “Indiana Health Laws,” *GT* 20:12 (March 20, 1902): 1; J. W. Byers, “Death without Medical Attendance in California,” *GT* 26:5 (February 1, 1906): 1.

<sup>32</sup>“Involuntary Manslaughter Case,” *GT* 18:41 (Oct. 13, 1898): 4, 8.

submit to medical examinations, and therefore the legally recognized superiority of medical knowledge in cases involving communicable diseases. The state could even force children to take medicine. After the trial in Butler (1903), the *Trumpet* had only brief notices of trials and arrests.

**Newspaper Reports.** Newspaper coverage of the divine healing trials proved a serious obstacle to the spread of the church's message. The idea that God was using these trials to publicize the truth about divine healing relied on the press to report accurately on the trials. In many of these cases, the newspapers reported very little other than the arrest and the trial date. This was particularly a problem with dropped cases or cases decided in favor of the defendant.<sup>33</sup> When the newspapers did report, they were frequently inaccurate. Articles in Vincennes and Butler misidentified the Church of God as Christian Science.<sup>34</sup> Another newspaper in Vincennes correctly reported that the defendant was an "Evening Light Saint" (another name for a member of the Church of God at the time), but followed that with the editorial comment "he is cranky on religion."<sup>35</sup> A few of the reports described how the church members called the elders, anointed with oil, and followed James 5:13-15. Only the *New York Times* article mentioned the Church of God, the *Gospel Trumpet*, or anything else that would have enabled a reader to learn more about the movement.<sup>36</sup>

In many instances, the church found newspaper reports hostile or dismissive. According to the *Trumpet*, the editor of the *Marion Chronicle* was a chief instigator of the prosecution who "would love to see all the saints serve a term in the penitentiary, and doubtless would love to see them burned at the stake."<sup>37</sup> An editorial in a Fort Wayne newspaper suggested it was the other way around. The judge merely fined the defendant, but he was "no doubt disappointed that he had not been condemned to the

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<sup>33</sup>The judges threw the Vincennes, Indiana and the Butler, Pennsylvania cases out of court, but no surviving newspapers reported on them. The Ironton, Ohio papers ignored the case in that town entirely.

<sup>34</sup>"Gave Bond," *Western Sun* [Vincennes, Indiana], Dec. 22, 1899, 2; "Divine Healer was Convicted," *The Butler [Pennsylvania] Herald*, Sept. 24, 1903, 2.

<sup>35</sup>"Under Bond," *Vincennes [Indiana] Capital*, Dec. 23, 1899, 1

<sup>36</sup>"Relied on Prayer to Cure their Ills," *New York Times*, Sept. 24, 1910, 6.

<sup>37</sup>E. E. Byrum, "Charged with Murder," *GT* 18:23 (June 9, 1898): 4-5.

stake.”<sup>38</sup> The mutual recrimination in the press and the *Trumpet* made it very difficult for the church to spread its message.

The medical and legal reporting was not much better than the reports on religion. Most reports simply said that the defendants refused to use medicine of any kind. Some suggested that the practice of divine healing could pose a serious health risk for the community, although none of these cases involved diseases that required quarantine.<sup>39</sup> The one editorial that did discuss medicine at length demonstrated the state of popular medical knowledge of the time. It argued that “these religious fanatics” confounded the body with the soul. However, the writer also told the story of an itinerant “Red Man” who had given a local man the secret of curing diphtheria. That knowledge unfortunately was lost. Still, human beings through medical experimentation had learned “all the functions of all the organs, excepting the Spleen.” The Church of God people, according to this editorial, were returning to the “darkest of ages” by refusing to use science and medicine to discover the secrets of nature that were once known by Native Americans.<sup>40</sup>

Reports on legal decisions frequently noted only the crime charged, the court schedule, and the final decision of the court. In a few instances, the newspapers accurately reported that the courts had declared that the state could regulate behavior, even when that behavior related to religious belief. The Fort Wayne, Indiana and the Beaver, Oklahoma, papers both said that the court had declared that nothing restricts the *beliefs* of the church members, just their *actions*. This missed the subtle point that restricting behavior did restrict belief, but the courts had ruled that the state could do so to protect the general welfare.<sup>41</sup> Another report from

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<sup>38</sup>“Like a Martyr,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 17, 1897, 5.

<sup>39</sup>See “The Case of Henry Smith,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 17, 1897, 2.

<sup>40</sup>“The Hoffman Case,” *The Butler [Pennsylvania] Citizen*, Sept. 24, 1903, 2.

<sup>41</sup>In a decision about polygamy, *Reynolds v. United States* (1879), the Supreme Court of the United States declared that the government could regulate religious action. See Anson Phelps Stokes, *Church and State in the United States*, Vol. II (NY: Harper and Brothers, 1950). See also Noble, “Religious Healing and the Courts,” 189. [RTF bookmark start: OLE\_LINK1] The articles about the Church of God and religious practice were “The Case of Henry Smith,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 17, 1897, [RTF bookmark end: OLE\_LINK1]2, and “Religious Belief Held no Defense,” *Beaver [Oklahoma] Herald*, June 29, 1911, 5.

Fort Wayne added, “Deputy Thomas quoted Supreme Court decisions which say that faith cure attendance is not proper for sick people.”<sup>42</sup> No state or federal Supreme Court decisions made such a declaration, but sometimes they seemed as though they did.

**Legal Decisions.** The verdicts in these trials were frequently for the defendants, but the trials themselves seldom progressed as the Church of God members had hoped. In order for the trials to set forth the church’s teachings about divine healing, the judges would have had to allow testimony about religion. This happened in only two of the reported cases.<sup>43</sup> In a third, the judge might have permitted testimony, but the counsel for the defense rested without argument because it thought the prosecution had not made the case.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the legal strategy for winning the case took precedence over testifying about divine healing. The charge to the jury in the Butler, Pennsylvania, trial asserted that the case was “in no sense whatever a question of Christian faith or the efficacy of prayer,” and therefore religious testimony was irrelevant and out of place.<sup>45</sup>

Defense lawyers did manage to introduce testimony about divine healing in the Butler case by finding a member of the church who had studied with a regular physician and had a diploma for physiology and hygiene. However, the attempt to challenge the privileged status the court gave to expert medical testimony failed. The medically trained church member explained to the court that the members of the Church of God followed James 5:14-15, which said that elders should be called to pray for the sick.<sup>46</sup> The judge undermined this testimony in his charge to the jury. He noted that the elders normally had no medical training or expertise.<sup>47</sup> He instructed the jurors that, since this was a case about caring for

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<sup>42</sup>“Faith Curist Fined,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Gazette*, Nov. 11, 1897, 9.

<sup>43</sup>The cases were in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Bluefield, West Virginia. “Like a Martyr,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel*, Nov. 17, 1897, 5, reported, “Smith himself was on the witness stand for a long time and gave his story of his conversion to the faith cure, and quoted the Scriptures for his authority.” A “General News Notes” entry in the *Gospel Trumpet* [26:4 (Jan. 25, 1906): 4] said that “a number of witnesses” testified to their faith at the trial in Bluefield, and that “this has awakened interest.”

<sup>44</sup>Marion, Indiana. See *GT* 18:41 (Oct. 13, 1898): 4, 8.

<sup>45</sup>*Commonwealth v. Hoffman* 29 Pa. C.C. 65 (1903), 65.

<sup>46</sup>E. E. Byrum, *Travels*, 582.

<sup>47</sup>*Commonwealth v. Hoffman*, 69.



the sick, they were obliged to “consider carefully the testimony of the physicians called in this case.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, he said in regard to the testimony about the book of James that “the same inspired writer, whose injunctions the defendant has sought so literally and conscientiously to observe, informs us that ‘as the body, without the spirit, is dead, so faith without works is dead also.’”<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

Court trials proved a poor vehicle for the message of the Church of God movement concerning healing and holiness. At the end of the nineteenth century, members of the church believed that they were enjoying the re-emergence of the New Testament church. An unfortunate difficulty was the re-emergence of the kind of persecution the apostles had to endure, but church members hoped that God would use the trials to promote the gospel. They also believed that divine healing was superior to human medical systems and that they had the law on their side.

The trials did not live up to their hopes. Instead of teaching the outside world about the Church of God movement, they showed church members how the outside world perceived them. The papers and the courts were hostile to or uninterested in religious doctrine. Therefore, church members ended up looking like uninformed religious fanatics who did not love their children and were a threat to the health of the community. This result was the opposite of what the Church of God movement had hoped.

Further, fanaticism was the opposite of what the cases revealed to the church about the church members. The early editorials in the *Trumpet* portrayed these cases as a stark contrast between God’s ways of healing and the theories of human medical systems. However, the details of the cases suggest that the interaction between medicine and prayer was more complex. These were terrible cases of suffering and loss; only secondarily were they opportunities for testimony. Many of the defendants tried divine healing only after unsuccessful experiences with medicine. Some relied on prayer *and* medicine. Even the ministers in the Marion, Indiana, trial were more interested in winning their court case than in spreading the message of divine healing. The *Trumpet* said that the courts would

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<sup>48</sup>*Commonwealth v. Hoffman*, 67.

<sup>49</sup>*Commonwealth v. Hoffman*, 69.

give the church a forum in which to explain divine healing, but the defendants chose to follow their lawyers' advice and not testify.

By the end of this period, the laws regarding the medical care of children had changed, medical science itself was improving, and the Church of God had been chastened by its experience with divine healing trials. The church still taught divine healing and still insisted that God's methods of healing were far superior to human medicine. However, the church no longer wanted anyone to go to prison for Christ's sake.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Ivan A. Beals, *Our Racist Legacy: Will the Church Resolve the Conflict?* Notre Dame, Ind.: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc., 1997. 228 pp. \$21.95.

Reviewed by Stanley Ingersol.

Ivan Beals devoted fourteen years to being managing editor of the *Herald of Holiness* publication. During this time he wrote countless articles for church publications and penned ten books—all except one published by the Nazarene Publishing House. Ironically, that one is his clearly his best-written book in this reviewer's opinion. *Our Racist Legacy: Will the Church Resolve the Conflict?* is volume 9 in "The Church and the World Series" published by Cross Cultural Publications, a division of Cross Roads Books of Notre Dame, Indiana. The "Foreword" is written by Rev. Emmanuel Cleaver, former mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, long-time civil rights leader, and a United Methodist pastor.

Beals was generally conservative in his political and social philosophy. Despite his lack of liberal credentials, he was burdened by the lack of resolution to America's ongoing racial divide. He began an intensive study of race in America that focused increasingly on the Christian church's historic role in the rise and perpetuation of racist attitudes and acts. Beals devoted several years to research, investigating a wide variety of primary sources and consulting some of the best secondary sources in the fields of Black history and American religion. *Our Racist Legacy* comes straight from the author's heart. Yet it is a well-informed book, balanced in critical analysis and judgment, though often blunt. It is an excellent introduction to the complicated interaction between race and religion in American society.

Beals avoids many of the clichés that often crop up in typical conversation about race. For instance, he disdains the “down on the South” attitude that makes the South the scapegoat for the racial sins of an entire nation. To the contrary, he confesses at the outset: “Living in Sioux City, Iowa, the first half of this 20th century, I eventually learned that subtle racism mingled with the Northern tradition against slavery” (ix). It is a personal observation that dovetails with Leon Litwack’s compelling thesis in *North of Slavery*, which demonstrated that Blacks who escaped from slave states and reached freedom in the North still lived lives bounded by a racial prejudice that prevented the attainment of a humane life. As Beals states late in the book, “slavery eventually divided the churches,” but the notion of “white supremacy prevailed in both Northern and Southern churches” (p. 186).

*Our Racist Legacy* is, fundamentally, an extended argument based on historical evidence. Beals explores the role of white religion in sanctioning the slave trade, including the construction of “the myth of Ham,” which asserted that Africans were the descendents of Noah’s son and were under a perpetual curse of servitude because of their alleged ancestor’s sin. Around the myth of Ham, the Southern evangelical clergy played the leading role in constructing a view of reality in which God was the lynchpin in a hierarchical universe. Within it, everything was seen as subordinated by divine decree to a higher authority—women to men, children to parents, and slaves to masters. All parts of this rigid social orthodoxy had to be maintained, lest the system unravel. The fate of women was tied as closely to the ideology as that of slaves.

There was, of course, another side to evangelical religion, and Beals deals with that also—namely the role of churchmen in the politics of abolition. Religious liberals, such as Unitarians, were active alongside some Northern evangelicals in advocating the cause of Black emancipation from slavery. And in the era immediately following the Civil War, people of faith took leading roles in educating the Black freedmen. But the abolitionist movement never really captured the heart of Northern churches generally, nor of the North as a region.

The problem is that Christians have historical amnesia. Today we like to emphasize the abolitionist side of the Christian heritage, while ignoring the role that Christianity played in the construction of racial barriers. The negative side is often perceived as “ancient history.” In reality, it is anything but that. Freed Blacks experienced nearly a full generation

of social progress after the Civil War, but in the 1890s this progress slipped away as “Jim Crow” laws swept the South and the border states. And in this process, Christian ideology was adapted once again to serve conservative social needs at the expense of justice, as Beals recounts in the chapter “How the Church Befriended Jim Crow.” Even the Ku Klux Klan, a post-Civil War development, was billed primarily as a Christian organization and a “defender of the faith.” The strongest state chapter of the Klan that developed was not on Southern soil but was Indiana. As Beals shows so well, the distortion of Christianity to serve the ends of racial prejudice is both ancient and recent, not “there” but “here,” and it extends well into the life-times of those who read this.

Thus, we are faced with our Christian legacy—a legacy that straddles both sides of America’s racial divide. And what will do with this legacy? Ignore it or learn from it? Beals argues convincingly that, if we ignore this legacy, we can never move past it. Ignorance is not bliss; it breeds far more problems than self-knowledge will. Those who sense no need for repentance and correction will neither repent nor amend their ways.

Bob McCahill, *Dialogue of Life: A Christian Among Allah's Poor*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1996. 109 pp. \$13.00.

Reviewed by Stanley Ingersol.

Very little is conventional in the ministry of Bob McCahill, a native of Des Moines, Iowa, who has been a Maryknoll missionary in Bangladesh since 1975. He is a priest who doesn't preach. He lives simply as a Christian among Bangladesh's poor. He eats what the poor eat and sleeps as they sleep. His only possessions are a bicycle and a few books. He spends his days carrying the sick to the doctor on his bike. His ministry is one of dialogue, which arises from his lifestyle.

Muslims and Hindus want to know *why* he does what he does. *Why did you come to this poor country*, they will ask. *Because I am a disciple of one who was himself poor*, he answers. *Why do you help the sick?* And he responds, *Because I am a disciple of one who had compassion upon the sick*. In these conversations, McCahill witnesses to the Christ-life within.

His conversations with Muslims are honest to a fault. Here is an example: "'What will I receive if I become a Christian?' men ask me cynically. 'Suffering' is my one-word reply." . . . Taken aback, one man presses his point, saying, 'I know that Christian missionaries give money, or houses, or cows, for anyone's conversion. I have heard it from reliable people!' 'Brother,' I reply, 'even if you give me 100,000 takas, I will not accept you into the Christian religion.' It rocks them to hear it. They had been so certain that missionaries would go to great lengths to conquer Muslims and attach them to the Christian religion" (p. 7). McCahill's aim is not to convert Muslims but to generate dialogue which makes Christ present in the conversation. This dialogue, he believes, should help Muslims be better Muslims, Hindus better Hindus, and Christians better Christians.

When he introduces Christ language and Christ philosophy into the conversation, McCahill often draws parallels with Islamic teachings. For instance, new acquaintances will ask about his education and are surprised to learn that he has a Master's degree. "*The Bangladeshi is sure that holders of such degrees dress nicely, ride motorized vehicles, and avoid activities which might soil them.*" And so he tells them: "*It is true that I spent twenty-one years in schools, colleges, and universities. But what good is education if it does not prepare a person to serve the needs*

*of others? In fact, I believe that no one who is truly educated evades service to fellow creatures. Service to others is the mark of a genuinely educated person."* He notes: "*It so amazes a Muslim to hear an educated person claim radical equality between the literate and the illiterate that he maintains a stunned silence. . . . He knows well the Islamic teaching about equality. But to hear the teaching proclaimed by a disheveled degree holder gives new meaning to a familiar belief*" [pp. 8-9].

McCahill discusses his philosophy of ministry in Chapters 1 and 3 ("The Model of Jesus" and "The Model of Gandhi"). Chapters 2 and 4 ("Life Among the Poor" and "Life Among the Faithful") are altogether different, consisting of short stories that give insight into the lives of the poor, often speaking to universal realities among the poor of all nations. His approach to mission differs sharply from the aims and methods traditionally employed in the Wesleyan tradition. Still, he has something valuable to speak to us. The Wesleyan tradition has utilized more than one mission paradigm in its history. The dominant paradigm, intensified by our Pietist roots, is that of "a mission to the world." The world-wide spread of Methodism and related holiness churches springs directly from this.

But another paradigm at work has focused on "Christianizing Christianity"—or revitalizing Christianity by substituting *the real* for that which is perceived as the merely *formal*. While the "mission to the world" has dealt with evangelization, "Christianizing Christianity" has been about sanctifying the church and extending that sanctifying work to culture.

The two paradigms can be held in tandem. In principle, at least, early Methodism tried to keep them together, stating in the minutes of the first Methodist conference (London, 1744) that "God's design" in raising up the Methodist preachers was "to reform the nation, more particularly the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land." And yet the subsequent history of the Methodist and holiness churches demonstrates that one paradigm usually has eclipsed the other.

At some point in the 21st century, Wesleyan churches will be organized and led by national leaders virtually everywhere in the world. When the "mission to the world" has been completed, will Wesleyan evangelicals in the West, accustomed to living out of this paradigm, lose their *raison d'être*? One hopes not.

Bob McCahill's reflections on life among Allah's poor has a distinct message for us, for his story and ministry are as much about the *presence*

*of holiness* in this world as they are about anything else. The sanctity of his life infuses his writing, and his purpose-driven ministry inspires faith and hope. In a day of pop spirituality, celebrity-driven religious autobiography, and much in the world of religion that is just plain hokey, it is good to know that God has scattered some real saints around—men and women from ordinary backgrounds who have made extraordinary choices with their lives.



Yeatts, John R. *Revelation: Believers Church Bible Commentary*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2003.

Reviewed by John E. Stanley, Professor of New Testament, Messiah College

John Yeatts has written one of the best and most useful commentaries in recent decades on the Book of Revelation. As an Anabaptist, Yeatts states that “the message of Revelation to Christians in the first century as well as today is straightforward: persevere because the forces of evil will be defeated and the overcomers will be rewarded with a new heaven and a new earth where they will dwell with God” (24). Victory comes via suffering love, not only of the suffering Lamb of God, but also of Christians who resist the dominant culture. Suffering love has often led to martyrdom.

While Yeatts regards his text as thoroughly Anabaptist, his reading of the Apocalypse contains at least six affinities with Wesleyan/Holiness interpretations, which is expected given his Brethren In Christ commitment. Randy Maddox’s concept of “responsible grace” frequently appears, as when Yeatts states that salvation comes as a gift from God, but “Christians validate and preserve their faith” (85). Yeatts affirms a free-will rather than a deterministic rendering of Revelation. He sides with John Wesley, who warned not to take the words of Revelation “too literally and grossly” rather than with Charles Wesley who was a premillennialist who expected Christ to return in 1794. For Yeatts, the symbols of Revelation are “often too artistic and impressionistic to be tied to specific events or persons” (178). However, he does not neglect the hymn lyrics which these apocalyptic symbols inspired for Charles Wesley. Like most Wesleyans, Yeatts provides an amillennial eschatology. The tribulation is now and the kingdom of God exists as an already—but—not—yet inaugurated eschatology. Thus, he persistently criticizes futurist and dispensational readings of writers, including John Walvoord, Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and Jerry B. Jenkins. Yeatts accuses dispensationalists if substituting prediction for social action and holy living. He strengthens the warning of assimilation into the dominant modern culture which appeared in Robert Wall’s 1991 *New International Biblical Commentary*.

Yeatts’ sophisticated theology of Scripture probably influences his conclusions on two contemporary issues—how to interpret Scripture and the degree of persecution in Domitian’s reign. Not content merely to say

that the Bible should not be interpreted literally because biblical writers did not interpret prior texts literally, Yeatts further acknowledges that often the language of Revelation is inadequate to express the truths John sought to communicate. For instance, symbols such as the woman from heaven in Revelation 12 give rise to many interpretations. Introducing Rev. 20, he acknowledges that it “is arguably the most controversial chapter in the book” (371). Then he asks six questions that he rightly claims are unanswerable from Rev. 20 because elements in the passage contradict other texts in Revelation. However, despite admitting these difficulties he affirms as a basic hermeneutical principle that “the Bible cannot mean what it never meant. Another way of saying this is that the Bible cannot mean what its original author did not intend” (212).

Thus, Yeatts argues for recovering the authorial intention of the writer named John while admitting that John’s polyvalent symbols sometimes defy definition by today’s readers. In a surprising move, Yeatts puts postmodern and fundamentalist interpreters in the same bed because “both agree that the meaning of a text is not dependent on what the author meant” (212). Rejecting postmodernist readings, inerrancy and infallibility, Yeatts, commenting on Rev. 22:18-19, affirms the authority of the Bible’s trustworthiness and value for useful guidance in Christian living. Contrary to those who affirm the Wesleyan quadrilateral, as an Anabaptist, Yeatts posits the Bible as “the standard by which all other authorities—church tradition, reason, science, experience—are judged” (431). Perhaps his reliance on the primacy of the Bible is why he takes the increasingly minority position among biblical interpreters that actual persecution existed during the reign of Emperor Domitian. Although he thoroughly reviews the revisionist literature which claims that Domitian was not as evil as Suetonius portrayed him, Yeatts ultimately accepts John’s claim that persecution, and even martyrdom, occurred during Domitian’s reign. Yeatts has given the Bible priority over an emerging view that challenges prior tradition through rational historiography.

This commentary is an excellent teaching tool. It has convenient charts on topics such as *gematria*, Revelation’s contents, the parallel stories in Rev. 12, and the seven emperors of Rev. 17. It abounds in intertextuality, but in a manner much less intimidating than R. H Charles’ *International Critical Commentary*. However, Yeatts should have stated the criteria for deciding what constitutes citations, allusions or echoes of the Hebrew Bible in the Apocalypse. The bibliography includes often other-

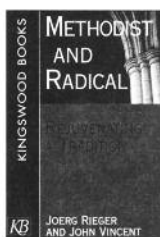
wise overlooked books, as well as strong new contributions from as recently as 2001. Each chapter contains an outline, a section entitled “The Text in Biblical Context,” and a “The Text in the Life of the Church” where Yeatts applies the text to contemporary issues and situations. Mini-lectures and outlines occur on controversial topics such as universalism versus limited salvation, three views on hell and divine punishment, and ignorance and infallibility. Yeatts’ skill and experience as a teacher exude in the wealth of topics in these aids.

An Anabaptist emphasis on pacifism abounds throughout. Yeatts remembers that during World War II his father did not receive pay raises because he refused as a machinist to work on parts used for war. Yeatts and I teach at an affluent Anabaptist college. How does Revelation’s economic critique of ancient Roman culture relate to the affluence we enjoy now as participants in an American economy which is very deeply tied to the military-industrial complex? Yeatts does not adequately explain how Anabaptists can calculate the growth of our TIAA/CREF investments without being consumed by the materialism of the dominant culture. Also, where is persecution and social stress occurring for Anabaptists who faithfully read Revelation as a call to resist the dominant culture? Apart from these nagging questions, this is a wonderful work.





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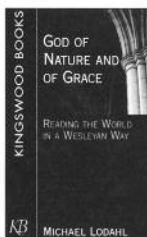
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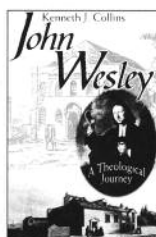
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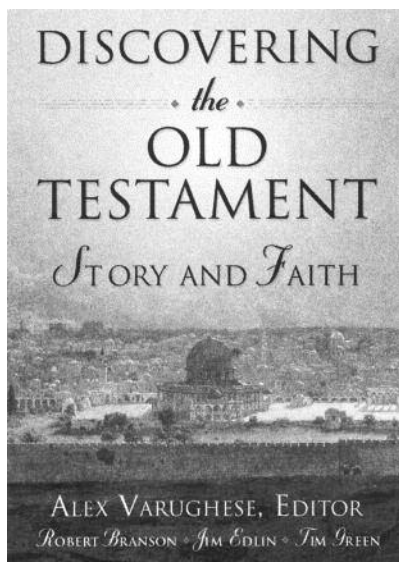
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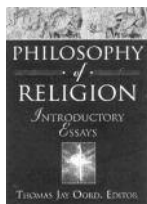
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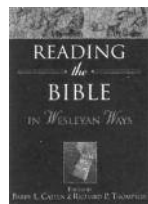
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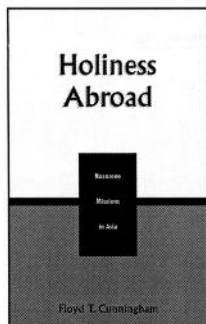
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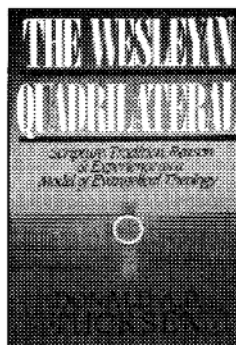
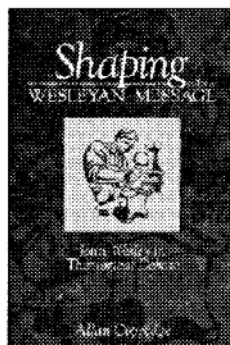
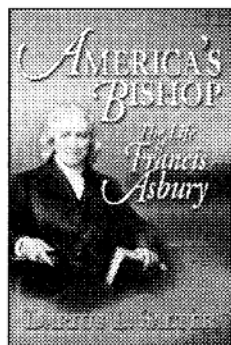
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