

# ***Wesleyan Theological Journal***

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

Note particularly in this issue the two special tributes, one to Howard A. Snyder for his milestone publication *Populist Saints* and one to Paul M. Bassett for his outstanding life, ministry, and scholarly achievements. The articles in this issue range widely in subject matter and are written by scholars from Australia, South Africa, and various parts of North America.

The 2008 annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society will convene jointly with the Society for Pentecostal Studies on March 13-15 on the campus of Duke University Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. The theme is “Sighs, Signs, and Significance: Pentecostal and Wesleyan Explorations of Science and Creation.” More detail is available on the WTS web site: [Wesley.nnu.edu/wts](http://Wesley.nnu.edu/wts)

The address of the WTS web site and the email addresses of all current officers of the Society are found in this issue. Also found is an application for membership. Here is who to contact for particular needs you may have:

1. If you wish to apply for society membership—Dr. Sam Powell
2. If you wish to write a book review—Dr. Richard Thompson
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Barry L. Callen  
Anderson, Indiana  
October, 2007



# THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

by

**Christopher Todd Bounds**

The Apostolic Fathers are a group of Christian writers from the late first to the middle second century after Christ, whose corpus of literature is considered by many to be “a fairly immediate echo of the preaching of the Apostles.”<sup>1</sup> Their importance is primarily derived from their close personal contact with the Apostles or their association with the disciples of the Apostles. They wrote from many different regions of the Roman Empire to address pastoral and theological issues arising in the infant church. Their literature is punctuated with references, statements, and occasional elaborations on Christian perfection.

For those who claim to be heirs to John Wesley’s theological legacy in general and his doctrine of Christian perfection in particular, an understanding of the Apostolic Fathers is paramount. The significance of early Ante-Nicene Christianity in John Wesley’s life is readily apparent. In his *Christian Library*, a fifty-volume set of abridged selections of the best treatises on “practical divinity,” Wesley places extracts of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, and Barnabas in the first volume. In his “Address to Clergy,” Wesley places the reading and understanding of the early Patristic writers second only to the Scriptures in importance, viewing them as the “most authentic commentators on scriptures.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. I (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1950), 40.

<sup>2</sup>John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed. (14 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), X:484, 492-3.

Specifically, the purpose of our study is threefold. First, we will attempt to illuminate the various doctrines of Christian perfection as they are addressed by individual Fathers. Second, we will try to identify common features found in each doctrine, pointing to a consensual, operative understanding of Christian perfection among them. Finally, we will argue that the Apostolic Fathers establish a foundation on which an orthodox tradition of perfection later developed in Ante-Nicene Christianity.

The simple method used in our study is a close textual analysis of the relevant Greek and Latin Patristic texts as found in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* and the *Cetedoc Library of Christian Latin Texts*.<sup>3</sup> First, we will locate those passages in the Apostolic Fathers which directly mention, address, and/or develop the term “perfection” in its various grammatical forms as it relates to humanity. Next, we will examine and interpret these texts for their meaning within their given literary contexts. Some of the Fathers will have well argued positions on Christian perfection, while others will have to have their views lifted inferentially from their texts. Specifically, the most commonly used words for “perfection” have been selected as the foundation for our study because of their usage in Matthew 5:48 and 19:21 in the original Greek manuscripts and in subsequent Latin translations.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, our paper will examine Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and the *Didache*.

## The Doctrines of Christian Perfection in the Apostolic Fathers

**A. Clement of Rome (A.D. 30-100).** While Clement was bishop in Rome he wrote the *Epistle to the Corinthians*, which is his only treatise to

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<sup>3</sup>The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG), University of California Irvine, is a database which now contains virtually all ancient Greek texts surviving from the period between Homer (8th century B.C.) and A.D. 600. This database also includes historiographical, lexicographical, and scholastic texts derived from the period between 600 and 1453. The *Cetedoc Library of Christian Latin Texts*, Brepolis, 1991, contains the entire contents of the series entitled *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* and *Continuatio Mediaevalis* (from the earliest Latin writers—Tertullian onward—through the high Medieval period). These resources were the most helpful in my research.

<sup>4</sup>For a more detailed discussion on the centrality of “teleiotes,” Matthew 5:48 and 19:21, in the doctrine of Christian perfection, see K. Prumm, “Das neutestamentliche Sprach- und Begriffsproblem der Vollkommenheit,” in *Biblica* 44 (1963), 76-92, especially 77-9.

survive to the present. Clement attempts to combat an insurrection within the church at Corinth. Apparently, various factions, which had been reprimanded earlier by Paul, had rebelled against ecclesiastical authority by overthrowing their appointed presbyters. For Clement, there was only one solution for the Corinthians—repentance, marked by a return to compassion, humility, obedience, and love. In developing his prescription for the church, Clement draws specifically upon the idea of Christian perfection.<sup>5</sup>

Clement opens his letter with the recognition of the greatness of the Corinthian church before its schism. Among other things, he praises them for their “perfect and well-grounded knowledge.”<sup>6</sup> By “perfect knowledge” Clement is referring to the Corinthians’ obedience to the commandments of God in hospitality, impartiality, humility, and the ordering of the community by presbyters.

Next, after addressing the problem of insurrection in the church and exhorting the Corinthians to repentance, Clement charges them to be obedient to God, which will lead to divine order in their community. He exemplifies his exhortation by recalling certain Old Testament figures who “perfectly ministered” to God’s “excellent glory.”<sup>7</sup> By recalling the lives and actions of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, and Rahab, Clement shows that “perfect ministry” involves: (1) “faith”—trusting God to fulfill his promises, even when they seem impossible, by obeying His commands and (2) “hospitality”—helping others even at severe personal expense.<sup>8</sup> Thus, “perfect ministry” is connected to the Corinthians fulfilling their responsibilities to God and neighbor, which is what Clement wants to see manifested in the Corinthian community once again.

These two citations prepare the reader for Clement’s concluding remarks and extended discussion on Christian perfection. Clement climaxes his letter by urging the church at Corinth to return to the practice

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<sup>5</sup>At this juncture, I will list the important passages on Christian perfection in each of the Apostolic Fathers. An asterisk will designate the most important ones. In the *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, these include: 1:2; 9:2; 44:2,5; 49:5-50:3\*; 53:5; 55:6; 56:1. Unless specified otherwise, English translations are taken from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to the Present*, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, reprint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977-79).

<sup>6</sup>*I Clement* 1.2.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.2.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.2-12.8.

of Christian love. In his lengthy appeal, he makes three statements about Christian perfection that clearly portray his understanding. First, he states that “by love the elect of God have been made perfect.”<sup>9</sup> Clement immediately explains that the love by which Christians are made perfect is the selfless redemptive work of Christ, whereby he “gave his blood for us . . . his flesh for our flesh, and his soul for our souls.”<sup>10</sup>

Second, Clement teaches that the “perfection” to which the elect are brought is the same as that which has perfected them—love.<sup>11</sup> Christians who have love would rather “that they themselves than their neighbors be involved in suffering.”<sup>12</sup> He illustrates this love by pointing to the “insuperable perfection” of Moses and the “perfect faith” of Esther, two people who saved the Israelites by risking their own lives.<sup>13</sup> Developing his thought further, Clement states that “perfection” in love leads to living godly lives, made manifest in keeping the commandments of God.<sup>14</sup>

At this point, Clement clearly ties Christian perfection to the selfless love of neighbor and loving obedience to God. This is congruent with Clement’s earlier statement on the Corinthians’ former “perfect and well-grounded knowledge,” and his mention of Old Testament examples of “perfectly ministering” to God’s “excellent glory.”

Third, Clement explains that people can only experience a perfection of love in the present life by the grace of God. He states, “Who is fit to be found in it, except such as God has vouchsafed to render so? Let us pray, therefore, and implore of His mercy, that we may live blameless in this love. . . .”<sup>15</sup> He clarifies that it is only “through the grace of God” that Christians have “been made perfect in love.”<sup>16</sup> While Clement gives no exact details about when this perfecting in love takes place, he does make clear that it can and does happen in the present life by imploring the Corinthians to pray for Christian perfection in their lives, with the expectation that God can render it so, and by speaking of Christians who in the present life have already been made perfect.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 49.5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 49.6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 50.1-3.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 51.2.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 53.5; 55.6.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 50.5-6; 49.5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 50.2.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 50.3.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 50.2-3.

As we leave our examination of Clement, an argument can be made that the basic appeal of Clement's *Epistle* is for the Corinthians to live out Christian perfection in their community. As such, the doctrine of Christian perfection forms the foundation and central thrust of Clement's case. Perfect love, made possible by the redemptive love of Christ, entails walking in obedient love to God, made manifest in submission to appointed presbyters and in sacrificial love of neighbor.

**B. Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 30-107).** According to Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Ignatius was the third bishop of Antioch who was condemned to death by the Emperor Trajan.<sup>18</sup> On his journey to execution in Rome, Ignatius wrote seven letters that have survived to the present. However, a problem arises in reading Ignatius' letters. There are two major and often divergent recensions. The "long recension" contains the seven undisputed letters of Ignatius, along with interpolations by unidentified writers, and six additional letters claiming to be written by Ignatius, but clearly are not. The "short recension" is an earlier collection of manuscripts, containing Ignatius' seven undisputed letters and is generally regarded as the most faithful to the original autographs.<sup>19</sup> For the purpose of our study, attention is given primarily to the "short recension," although the "long recension" is consulted as well.<sup>20</sup> The reason for our approach is twofold: the "long recension" addresses more completely the doctrine of Christian perfection than does the "short" and, although the "long recension" contains extended additions by other writers from a period later than Ignatius, they still provide an intimate view of perfection in the early Ante-Nicene period of the church.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 3.36.

<sup>19</sup>Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. I, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1992), 73-6.

<sup>20</sup>For the "short recension" of Ignatius' letters, *The Loeb Classical Library's* edition of *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. I (London: The MacMillan Company, 1914) is consulted. For the "long recension," J. P. Migne's *Patrologiae cursus completus*, series graeca, is used.

<sup>21</sup>It is interesting that the longest and most extensive interpolations found in the "long recension" address the issue of Christian perfection. It could be that the later interpolation is the addition of a more clearly defined teaching on perfection which existed later in the Christian community and was added to Ignatius' statements in order to more fully clarify them. That this later teaching was added and extensively developed further indicates the importance of the doctrine of Christian perfection in the early church.

Specifically, Ignatius addresses the idea of Christian perfection in three of his letters—the epistles to the Ephesians, the Philadelphians, and Polycarp.<sup>22</sup> First, in the *Epistle to the Ephesians* Ignatius mentions perfection in relationship to humanity two times in one section. After a long series of exhortations to prayer, humility, respect for appointed leaders, and peace, he states, “None of these things is hid from you, if you perfectly possess that faith and love towards Jesus Christ, which are the beginning and the end of life.”<sup>23</sup> Immediately, he connects the perfect possession of faith and love as the requisite for holy living, because faith does not allow sin and love does not permit hate toward anyone.<sup>24</sup> Ignatius’ statement directly ties perfect faith and love to his preceding discussion on humility, respect, and peace, as well as directly connecting them to freedom from sin and love of neighbor. He makes clear that this perfection is the chief purpose of human life.

At this point, the “long recension” clarifies that the perfect possession of faith and love makes Christians perfect. The “long recension” states: “And these two being inseparably connected together do perfect the man of God; while all other things which are requisite to a holy life follow after them. No man making a profession of faith ought to sin, nor one possessed of love to hate his brother. For He [Jesus] said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God,’ also said, ‘and your neighbor as yourself.’”<sup>25</sup> Thus, faith and love “do perfect” the “man of God,” and are directly linked with the fulfillment of the two great commandments—the love of God and the love of neighbor.

In the “short recension” Ignatius proceeds with his discussion of faith and love by teaching on the witness of Christians in the world. Witnessing is manifested in verbal testimony and Christ-like deeds. They must go hand in hand. As an example, he points the Ephesians to Christ who glorified God in his speech and in his actions of “silence.” He then suggests that people who are able to honor God in their words and actions can be “perfect.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>The important passages on Christian perfection in Ignatius include: *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (short) 14-15, (long) 8,15; *The Epistle to the Philadelphians* (short) 1, 3; (long) 1,3; *The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp* (long) 1-3.

<sup>23</sup>*The Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 14.1.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.2.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.2-3.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.1-3.

There is another passage in the “long recension” in which the writer declares that the Ephesians “are perfect in Christ Jesus.”<sup>27</sup> They are perfect because they are filled with the Holy Spirit and do nothing according to the flesh. Christian perfection here is synonymous with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, being “fully devoted to God,” having “no evil desire,” living “in accordance with the will of God,” and being “the servants of Christ.”<sup>28</sup>

Next, in his *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, Ignatius broaches the subject of Christian perfection one time. In the introduction, he generously praises the Philadelphian bishop. He states that he was so impressed by the bishop’s humility, meekness, obedience to the commandments of God, stability, and freedom from all anger that his only response to the bishop was one of admiration. As a result, Ignatius declares the bishop’s mind to be virtuous and “perfect.”<sup>29</sup>

The “long recension” of this letter includes one other discussion of perfection, one in which Matthew 5:48 is quoted. Specifically, the writer exhorts Christians to view schismatics as “enemies,” but not to persecute them. Rather, Christians are to associate with schismatics with the goal being to admonish them and encourage them to repent. It is hoped that this course of action will bring schismatics back into unity with the church. The basis for this action is God’s desire to save those who have left the unity of the church and God’s gracious benevolence. The writer substantiates his advice by stating, “the Lord, wishing us also to be imitators, says, ‘be ye perfect, even as your Father that is in heaven is perfect.’”<sup>30</sup>

Finally, in the *Epistle to Polycarp*, Ignatius opens his letter with a series of exhortations. One of these is to “bear the infirmities of all, as being a perfect athlete: where the labor is great, the gain is all the more.”<sup>31</sup> Ignatius proceeds to tell Polycarp the infirmities he must face in order to be a “perfect athlete” for Christ. Specifically, Polycarp must go beyond loving the “good disciples”; he must in meekness seek to care for and deal with the weaker disciples (“the more troublesome”) in their

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 8.2.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 8.1.

<sup>29</sup>The *Letter of Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 1.1-2.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>31</sup>The *Letter of Ignatius to Polycarp*, 1.3.

physical and spiritual problems. He must also “stand firm” in the face of those who oppose him.<sup>32</sup>

From Ignatius’ three epistles, we can discern that he ties Christian perfection to faith and love. Faith is related to keeping free from sin in daily living, while love is connected to keeping free from hatred. Both are manifested in Christ-like witness to the world in words and deeds. For example, Ignatius’ mention of perfection is always directed toward working with the less fortunate, serving difficult people in the Christian community, and being free from all anger toward others. While the “short recension” states that in faith and love Christians “may be perfect,” the “long recension” clarifies that they do make believers perfect. The “long recension” further connects Christian perfection to believers’ complete devotion to God, being filled with the Holy Spirit, being free from evil desire, and fulfilling the two great commandments—to love God and neighbor.

**C. The Didache (A.D. 100-150).** The *Didache* in many scholars’ estimation is a composite document comprised of three parts written over a fifty to seventy-five year period, with no definable author or redactor. The first section, called the “Two Ways,” is a statement on the principles of Christian conduct taught to catechumens before their baptism. The second part is a series of instructions regarding the practice of Christian worship, baptism, fasting, the Eucharist, and the treatment of apostles, bishops, and deacons. The final section is a short statement of eschatological hope, intended as a cautious exhortation to Christians.<sup>33</sup>

The importance of Christian perfection in the *Didache* cannot be minimized. Perfection plays a critical, if not central, role in the unified document. For example, the word “perfect” is the only major term that appears in and connects the three component parts of the treatise. The section on the “Two Ways,” the instruction on Christian practices, and the concluding eschatological exhortation all contain references to the content, practice, and means of achieving Christian perfection. In addition, the key statements on perfection are placed in the most crucial parts of the *Didache*, as seen in the culminating instruction at the end of the “Two Ways” section, which states that, if people follow the road of life and avoid the road of death, they will be perfect.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 1.3-3.2.

<sup>33</sup>See Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, *The Loeb Classical Library* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1914), 305-7.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 6.2.

Specifically, the *Didache* addresses the church's teaching on perfection four times, with each citation illuminating its understanding of perfection.<sup>35</sup> First, the treatise begins by teaching that there are two possible roads that can be traveled by people—one of life and one of death. The road of life is defined by following the two great commandments—the love of God and the love of neighbor. In the discussion of the implications of these commandments, the first statement on perfection is given: “If any man smites you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also and you will be perfect.”<sup>36</sup> After the road of life is fully explained, the *Didache* addresses the road of death, comprised of cursing, murder, fornications, thefts, pride, jealousy, oppression of the poor, and “everything sinful.” These actions and attitudes are to be avoided and the *Didache* prays for Christians to be delivered from them.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the “two ways” section concludes with the next statement on perfection, “For if you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect, but if you cannot, do what you can.”<sup>38</sup> As such, the first section of the *Didache* clearly ties Christian perfection to the attitudes and actions in the road of life and avoidance of sin in the way of death. It also points to the possibility of perfection in the present life, although it makes allowances for Christians who cannot be perfect.

The third reference to Christian perfection is found in the section on liturgical practices. In the instruction on the celebration of the Eucharist, and more particularly, in the written prayer of thanks said after the Eucharist, the *Didache* includes the petition, “Remember, Lord, your church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in your love and gather it together in its holiness from the four winds. . . .”<sup>39</sup> Clearly, this prayer shows Christian perfection to be a work of God in the church. Earlier, the *Didache* alluded to the need for individuals to strive to walk in the way of Life—perfection. This liturgical prayer clarifies that there is no Christian perfection apart from God's work in the lives of His people, a point corroborated earlier in the “Two Ways” section, where the

<sup>35</sup>The *Didache's* references to Christian perfection are found in 1.4; 6.2; 10.5; 16.2.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.7.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.2.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.2.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.5. In this passage “church” refers to her members—the believers who comprise her.

*Didache* teaches that completely avoiding the road of death, which is part of perfection, requires Christians being “delivered” by God.<sup>40</sup> People cannot completely avoid sin without divine intervention. The *Didache* appears to present perfection as a state which involves human effort, but is accompanied and sustained by God’s intervention. Also, the Eucharistic prayer reinforces the “Two Ways” section by teaching that the content of Christian perfection is supremely a love for God and neighbor.

The fourth and final citation is found in the last section addressing eschatological concerns. In its closing admonitions, the *Didache* entreats, “But be frequently gathered together, seeking the things which are profitable for your souls, for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you except you be found perfect at the last time.”<sup>41</sup> The *Didache* then proceeds to list the problems arising in the “last days,” problems capable of moving Christians away from their perfection. At the center of its concern are false prophets who will attempt to turn Christians from their love of God and neighbor. Deviation from love will be fatal for the believer in the coming time of tribulation.

In summary, the three sections of the *Didache* present a fairly uniform account of Christian perfection. Perfection consists, positively, in the fulfillment of the two great commandments in attitude and action—the love of God and neighbor (the road of life)—and, negatively, deliverance from sinful ways (the road of death). Also, the *Didache* seems to hold perfection as an attainable possibility in life by the work of God, but will probably not be attained by all Christians. Human effort is involved, but perfection cannot be experienced by people apart from God’s continual help and commitment to the church. Finally, as evidenced in the Eucharistic prayer, perfection is a work of God which the whole Christian community seeks.

**D. The Epistle of Barnabas (A.D. 130-138).** Although the *Epistle of Barnabas* never claims Barnabas as its author, or makes any claim to apostolic origin, church tradition has attributed it to Barnabas, the companion of the apostle Paul. While modern scholarship has showed that Barnabas could not have been the author, this does not diminish the high respect with which it was held by the early church.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 5.2.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 16.2.

<sup>42</sup>Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol.I, 89-91.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* is divided clearly into two parts. The first is theological in character, addressing the value and meaning of the Old Testament for the church through allegorical interpretation. Following in the tradition of the *Didache*, the second section gives specific moral instruction, describing the two ways of human existence—the way of life and the way of death. Specifically, the theological section of Barnabas addresses the idea of Christian perfection.<sup>43</sup> In three passages, each building on the other, the writer delineates a clear doctrine of Christian perfection.

The first mention of perfection is found in Barnabas' discussion of the relationship between the church and the Old Testament temple. In making this connection, he exhorts the church, "Let us be spiritually-minded: let us be a perfect temple to God."<sup>44</sup> This is having the Old Testament covenant, in particular the Ten Commandments, written upon human hearts. The transfer of the covenant from "tablets of stone" to human hearts is accomplished through the covenant Jesus established through his earthly life.<sup>45</sup> In a later passage, Barnabas again connects the idea of the "perfect temple" with Christians meditating on the fear of God, keeping the commandments, and avoiding sin.<sup>46</sup>

Barnabas then proceeds to develop the idea of Christian perfection through the image of Israel's conquest of Canaan. By allegorically interpreting one of Israel's greatest events—going into the land "flowing with milk and honey, and having dominion over it," he speaks about a second fashioning of humanity into the image of God in which the Spirit of God removes "stony hearts" and replaces them with "hearts of flesh."<sup>47</sup> This second fashioning allows the Lord to inhabit the human heart and makes Christians a "holy temple." When this has occurred by the work of the Spirit, people are able to once again possess the authority and dignity held in the beginning of creation by virtue of their being made in the image of God.<sup>48</sup> At this point Barnabas states, "If, therefore, this does not exist at present, yet still he has promised it to us. When? When we ourselves also have been made perfect so as to become heirs of the covenant of the

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<sup>43</sup>The places in the *Epistle of Barnabas* which mention or discuss Christian perfection are the following: 1.5; 4.11; 6.8-19\*; 14.4-8\*.

<sup>44</sup>The *Epistle of Barnabas*, 4.11.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 4.7-11.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 4.12-14.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 6.10.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 6.10-18.

Lord.”<sup>49</sup> Here, Barnabas directly connects Christian perfection with the restoration to or renewal in the image of God. This restoration is then tied to the removal of all impediments to the Spirit of God dwelling in Christians, and the restoration of human authority or dignity in creation.

Finally, picking up again on an idea first addressed in his discussion of the “perfect temple,” Barnabas makes clear how Christian perfection is made possible. In recalling the giving of the Old Testament covenant through the service and suffering of Moses, Barnabas argues that the new covenant has been enacted through the service and suffering of Jesus Christ. He states, “He was manifested, in order that they might be perfected in their iniquities, and that we, being constituted heirs through Him, might receive the covenant of Jesus.”<sup>50</sup> He proceeds by stating that the perfection of Christians is a result of the service and suffering of Jesus Christ. The result of Christ’s work is deliverance from sin, initiation into the new covenant, and liberating outreach to the world.

In summary, perfected Christians are like the Jewish temple, set free from sin, where the Spirit of God dwells on earth. The Spirit renews believers in the image of God, writes the law upon their hearts, and empowers them to serve the world on behalf of Christ. This work is made possible through the service and suffering of Jesus Christ. While Barnabas appears to infer that not all Christians are perfect, he does hold it as a possibility in this life. In his discussion about having the law of God written upon human hearts, the Spirit of God dwelling in humanity, and humanity’s renewal in the image of God (these are his concomitants of perfection), Barnabas points out that this may not have happened in the

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 6.19.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 14.5. The clause “that they might be perfected in their iniquities” could be difficult for the reader to understand apart from the larger immediate context of Barnabas’ discussion. Specifically, Barnabas argues that God tried to give His covenant to the Israelites at Sinai. However, their sin and rebellion kept them from receiving this gift from the Lord. For humanity to enter into a covenant relationship with God, human sin must be addressed and overcome. Barnabas states that Christ’s death did this. Christ’s death makes it possible for believers to be redeemed and perfected. Christ takes humanity in humanity’s sinful state and through Christ’s redemption sets humanity free from sin and renews/makes humanity in the image of God. This is the reception of God’s covenant. Christ came to perfect human beings, even while human beings were in sin.

lives of those to whom he is writing.<sup>51</sup> However, he states that through the redemptive suffering of Christ, people can be made perfect.<sup>52</sup>

**E. Polycarp (A.D. 65-155).** According to early church records, Polycarp along with Ignatius was a disciple of the Apostle John. He served as the bishop of Smyrna in the first half of the second century, until his martyrdom. Irenaeus records that Polycarp wrote several epistles, but only one remains in existence—the *Epistle to the Philippians*.<sup>53</sup> The purpose of the letter is to warn the church at Philippi about certain problems existing in the church, most notably apostasy, as well as to help in the collection and circulation of Ignatius' letters.

Polycarp mentions perfection in relationship to humanity only one time. However, his citation appears at the end of an extended discourse and is the culmination of his teaching in that section. Specifically, Polycarp closes a series of exhortations with the instruction, "Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings, and potentates, and princes, and for those that persecute and hate you, and for enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest to all, and that you may be perfect in Him."<sup>54</sup> This imperative concludes a series of admonitions throughout the letter for the Philippians to love their neighbors in attitude and action, including both friends and enemies. Polycarp declares that, in the inward intention and outward practice of love, all the commandments of the law and the requirements of righteousness are fulfilled.<sup>55</sup> He further instructs that "he that has love is far from all sin."<sup>56</sup>

For Polycarp, perfection in Christ is found in Christian love, in attitude and action, directed toward all humanity. When the practice of love is made manifest in the lives of Christians, they are perfect.

**F. The Shepherd of Hermas (A.D. 96-150).** According to patrology scholars, the *Shepherd of Hermas* is the compilation of various apocalyptic works from different periods of the early church that were brought together by a redactor into final form by the middle of the second century.<sup>57</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 6.19.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 14.5.

<sup>53</sup>Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, 5.33.4.

<sup>54</sup>The *Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*, 12.3.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 3.1-3; 12.1-3.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 3.3.

<sup>57</sup>Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. I, 92-3.

*Shepherd of Hermas* is divided into three sections, joined together by the theme of repentance and restoration.

While the mention of perfection in relationship to humanity does not play a prominent role in *The Shepherd Hermas*, only being mentioned twice, it is worthy of notice. The first reference is contained in the Shepherd's teaching on prayer. He speaks of Christians who are "perfect in faith."<sup>58</sup> They are able to receive everything they ask of the Lord, because they make their requests to God with confidence, free from double-mindedness. In the larger context, the Shepherd draws a contrast between the exercise of faith and the experience of doubt. On the one hand, faith is a gift from the Lord which is characterized by freedom from sin and has the power to "perfect all things." On the other hand, doubt originates from the Devil and is marked by wickedness, sin and double-mindedness.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the perfection of faith is a divine gift enabling singularity of mind toward God, liberation from sin and temptation, and a "power to perfect all things."

The second reference occurs in the context of a discussion on fasting. The Shepherd states, "be on your guard against every evil word, and evil desire, and purify your hearts from all the vanities of this world. If you guard against these things, your fasting will be perfect."<sup>60</sup> Here, the Shepherd is not speaking merely of the spiritual discipline of abstaining from food or water, but of a way of life. Fasting involves doing "no evil in life," serving the Lord with a pure heart, keeping the commandments of God, having purity of intention, and believing in God.<sup>61</sup> As such, a "perfect fast" is a Christian way of living.

In these two citations, the Shepherd uses the adjective "perfect" to describe a life characterized by a singularity of devotion to the Lord and freedom from sin. Furthermore, the Shepherd speaks of "perfect faith" and "perfect fasting" as an expected norm in the Christian's life. He describes these two aspects of the Christian life as being common in the faith community. While he also recognizes that this is not true in the lives of all Christians, he does hold these up as the expected standard in the church.

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<sup>58</sup>*The Shepherd of Hermas*, 2.9.1.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.9.1.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.5.3.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.5.1-2.

## The Doctrine of Christian Perfection in the Apostolic Fathers

From the preceding survey and analysis of the Apostolic Fathers, we can see that the use of “perfect” or “perfection” in relationship to humanity is common. While not every Apostolic Father uses the term in his writing, such as Mathetes and Papias, the most recognized and respected Apostolic Fathers in the orthodox tradition do, either making reference to it in their pastoral work or employing it as the primary thrust of their arguments.

Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, and the Shepherd of Hermas make limited reference to perfection. However, Ignatius makes clear that the purpose of human life, the “beginning and end” of life, is “perfect faith” and “perfect love,” and Polycarp deems Christians “perfect” who fulfill his treatise-long series of pastoral exhortations.<sup>62</sup> Clement of Rome, the *Didache* and *The Epistle of Barnabas* make the doctrine of Christian perfection an essential point in their works, rendering them incomplete without their appeal to and development of Christian perfection. In the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Clement appeals to the schismatics, as well as to the whole church, to live out Christian perfection in their communities. Clement’s argument begins, builds, and climaxes with the idea of perfection.<sup>63</sup> In the *Didache* the concept of Christian perfection is the only major concept that ties all three component parts of the treatise together. The first section on “The Two Ways” culminates its entire argument with the promise that, if people follow the way of life and avoid the way of death, they will be perfect.<sup>64</sup> Finally, the *Epistle of Barnabas* allegorically interprets the key events in the history of Israel to develop the doctrine of Christian perfection.<sup>65</sup>

From the preceding survey and analysis, we can also see consensus on Christian perfection emerging from the Apostolic Fathers, pointing to

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<sup>62</sup>See the discussion in *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians* 12.3 in which the mention of perfection forms the climatic point of one of Polycarp’s major exhortations. See also the *Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians* 14.1 in which Ignatius says “perfect faith” and “perfect love” are the “beginning and end of life.”

<sup>63</sup>See the *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, 1:2; 9:2; 44:2, 5; 49:5-50:3\*; 53:5; 55:6; 56:1.

<sup>64</sup>See the *Didache*’s references to Christian perfection as found in 1.4; 6.2; 10.5; 16.2; and particularly 6:2.

<sup>65</sup>See the *Epistle of Barnabas*, 1.5; 4.11; 6.8-19; 14.4-8.

a shared doctrine of Christian perfection. Specifically, there appears to be a mutual understanding of (A) what Christian perfection is, (B) perfection's attainability in this life, and (C) how perfection is made possible in believers.

**A. What Christian Perfection Entails.** First, the Apostolic Fathers teach that Christian perfection is a perfection of love, explicitly and implicitly summarized in the two great commandments, the love of God and the love of neighbor.<sup>66</sup> Christian love is the dominant rubric by which perfection is understood. Every aspect of the Fathers' doctrine is a logical development of love and its application. Perfect love entails a singularity of devotion and obedience to God and a sacrificial love of friends, strangers, and enemies.

Perfect love is manifested in different ways by the Apostolic Fathers, depending upon the particular pastoral context in which they write. For example, Clement connects the perfect love of God to the Corinthians' submission to divinely appointed presbyters, Ignatius to the call for "perfect faith," the *Didache* to walking in the way of life, Barnabas to the call to become a "perfect temple," and the Shepherd of Hermas to serving the Lord with a pure heart. The perfect love of neighbor is tied to Clement's exhortation for Christians to suffer willingly in service of others, to Ignatius of Antioch's instruction on the treatment of schismatics, to the *Didache's* teaching on "turning the other cheek," to Barnabas' expectation for the church to be "a light to the nations," and to Polycarp's encouragement for Christians to pray for their enemies.

Second, the Apostolic Fathers teach that Christian perfection entails freedom from sin. Negatively, this means that Christians are free from deliberate sin; positively, they live lives of complete obedience to the commandments of God.<sup>67</sup> While freedom from sin is primarily tied to outward actions, the Fathers relate Christian perfection to inward attitudes and intentions as well. For example, Clement ties perfection to an attitude

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<sup>66</sup>*I Clement* 49.5-50.1-3; *Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 14.1-3; *Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 1.1-3; *The Didache* 1.4, 6.2, 10.5; *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philadelphians*, 3.1-3, 12.1-3; and *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 2.9.1, 3.5.1-3.

<sup>67</sup>*I Clement* 1.2, 9.2-12:8; 50.5-6; *Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians* 14.2-3; *The Didache* 1.4 -6.2; *The Epistle of Barnabas* 4.7-14, 6.10-19, 14.5-9; *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philadelphians* 3.1-3; and *The Shepherd of Hermas* 2.9.1, 3.5.1-3.

of selflessness, Ignatius to deliverance from “evil desires,” Barnabas to the law of God being written on human hearts, the *Didache* to deliverance from pride and jealousy, Polycarp to purity of intention toward enemies, and the Shepherd of Hermas to freedom from temptations.

**B. The Possibility of Christian Perfection in the Present Life.**

The Apostolic Fathers point to the attainability of Christian perfection in the present life. Each of the Fathers teaches that Christians can be perfected in love, fulfill the two great commandments of Jesus, be freed from deliberate sin, and have their hearts oriented in love and purity. While they do not provide any detailed discussions, they acknowledge that there are Christians who have been made perfect, while also recognizing that there are Christians for whom perfection has not yet occurred.

For those who have not been perfected yet, there is exhortation and offers of hope.<sup>68</sup> For example, Clement gives no exact details about when a “perfecting in love” takes place, but he speaks of Christians who have already been made perfect and implores the Corinthians to pray for Christian perfection in their lives, with the expectation that God will do it. Ignatius describes a Philadelphian bishop as having a “perfect mind,” yet recognizes that not all Christians are perfect, though they “may be” perfect in the future as they are filled with the Holy Spirit. The *Didache* assumes that there are Christians who are walking entirely in the way of life, and as such are perfect, while encouraging others to do what they can. Likewise, Barnabas exhorts believers, “If, therefore, this does not exist at present, yet still he has promised it to us.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, the Shepherd portrays perfection as the Christian way of life, with the expectation that every believer is walking in it.

**C. The Means of Christian Perfection.** The Apostolic Fathers clearly teach that Christian perfection is the work of God, made possible through the redemptive life of Christ and the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, Clement teaches that Christian perfection is made possible through the redemptive exchange of Christ’s life for human lives, whereby he “gave his blood for us . . . his flesh for our flesh,

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<sup>68</sup>*I Clement* 50.1-3; *Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians* 14.1-3, 15.1-3; *Epistle of St. Ignatius to Polycarp* 1.3-3.2; *Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Philadelphians* 1.1-3, 3; *The Didache* 6.2, 10.5; *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philadelphians* 12.1-3; and *The Shepherd of Hermas* 2.9.1, 3.5.1-3.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.19.

and his soul for our souls.” Ignatius states that it is through the filling and fullness of the Holy Spirit, the *Didache* through divine deliverance from the way of death, Barnabas through the life and suffering of Christ and a “second fashioning” of humanity into the image of God by the Holy Spirit, and the Shepherd of Hermas through the exercise of divinely given faith.<sup>70</sup>

However, while the Apostolic Fathers recognize Christian dependency on God for the work of perfection, they do not absolve believers of any responsibility in bringing about Christian perfection. They expect Christians to make decisions, take appropriate actions, and exercise discipline over their minds and bodies in order for perfection to be realized. For example, while Clement acknowledges the Corinthian fall from Christian perfection, he believes they play a part in regaining it through repentance and a return to compassion and obedience. Ignatius implies that for the Philadelphians to be perfect they must cooperate with the Holy Spirit, while the *Didache* encourages Christians to walk in the way of life as much as possible, to be as perfect as they are able. Finally, Polycarp and the Shepherd of Hermas assume that Christians can choose to walk in the way of perfection or choose not to do so.

### **The Apostolic Fathers’ Doctrine of Christian Perfection in the Later Ante-Nicene Period**

The Apostolic Fathers’ doctrine of Christian perfection plays a significant role in the later Ante-Nicene period by forming a basic foundation for understanding Christian perfection and by establishing the parameters and trajectory for future work on this doctrine. As such, their work is essential in the development of a consensual orthodox tradition in Ante-Nicene Christianity that continues to impact the understanding of salvation in all of the major Christian traditions—Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. The Apostolic Fathers’ common understanding of Christian perfection forms the interpretive foundation upon which the later Ante-Nicene theologians build and apply their doctrines of Christian perfection, as well as evaluate other competing views of Christian perfection. This is most clearly seen in the major theologians of the

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<sup>70</sup>I Clement 49.5-6; *Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians* 8.1; *The Didache* 5.2, 10.5; *The Epistle of Barnabas* 6.10-19, 14.5; and *The Shepherd of Hermas* 2.9.1-3.

Ante-Nicene period—Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, each of whom extensively address, develop, and apply the doctrine of Christian perfection found in the Apostolic Fathers.<sup>71</sup>

While the examination of the relationship between the Apostolic Fathers' doctrine of Christian perfection and later Ante-Nicene Fathers is limited by the available space here, we can begin to see the intimate nature of their relationship. To begin, the indebtedness of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen to the Apostolic Fathers' doctrine is clearly established in their treatises by their own admissions. Irenaeus, who in his youth was influenced by the preaching of Polycarp, confesses in *Against Heresies* that he develops his doctrine of Christian perfection as an articulation of the "rule of faith," the clear teaching of the church passed down to him and to which he is obliged to be faithful, in contrast to and refutation of the Gnostic understanding of human perfection.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Clement of Alexandria appeals to the "rule of faith," the tradition of the church with which he had been entrusted, explicitly connecting his doctrine of Christian perfection to Clement of Rome's "perfect and well grounded knowledge" and "perfect ministry," as well as to the Shepherd of Hermas' "perfect fast."<sup>73</sup> In the same way, Origen in his *First Principles* takes great care to clearly articulate and distinguish the "unmistakable rule of faith," the consensual tradition of the church operative in his time, in his articulation of Christian perfection. While Origen is known for his creative speculation, he is careful to distinguish his imaginative theology from the "rule of faith's" doctrine of Christian perfection.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup>While there are differences between the Apostolic Fathers' doctrine of Christian perfection and the later Ante-Nicene Fathers, their differences are minor in comparison to the "common ground" they share.

<sup>72</sup>For Irenaeus' key passages on Christian perfection, see *Adversus Haereses* 2. Preface; 2.26.1; 2.28.1-2, 9; 2.30.7; 3.1.1; 3.2.1; 3.3.1; 3.12.5, 13; 4.9.2-3; 4.11.2-5; 4.20.12; 4.27.1; 4.37.7-4.39.4; 5.1.1-3; 5.6.1-2; 5.8.1-5.9.3; 5.21.2; 5.36.3. For Irenaeus' account of the Gnostic teaching on human perfection, see 1.6.1-1.8.4; 1.11.5; 1.13.1, 6; 1.21.1-4; 1.29.3; 1.31.2; 4.35.2.

<sup>73</sup>Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4:17-18. For Clement of Alexandria' key passages on Christian perfection, see *Paedagogus* 1:1; 1:16; *Stromata* 2.19, 22; 4.1, 17-26; 5.1, 10; 6.1, 8-9, 12; 7.3, 10-14.

<sup>74</sup>Origen, *De Principiis*, Preface. The doctrine of Christian perfection can be found throughout his commentaries, homilies, dogmatic works, and is even mentioned in his apologetical work *Contra Celsum*.

The connection between the Apostolic Fathers and the later Ante-Nicene Fathers' doctrine can be seen most clearly in the fact that when Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen articulate the "rule of faith's" teaching on Christian perfection, it is essentially the same as the Apostolic Fathers, although developed more extensively by them. For example, they connect Christian perfection with the perfection of love in believers. Irenaeus teaches that Christian perfection is a love marked by the fulfillment of the two great commandments—to love God and neighbor, which are the "precepts of an absolutely perfect life;" Clement of Alexandria summarizes Christian perfection as a love that leads Christians to freely and willingly lay down their lives for God and others; and Origen testifies that perfection is a dynamic love for God and neighbor ever increasing, ever deepening.<sup>75</sup> Also, like the Apostolic Fathers, they tie Christian perfection to freedom from sin in outward action and inward character. Irenaeus states that the Holy Spirit works to bring believers into "a greater likeness to God" by purifying them from all sin and adorning them with the fruit of the Spirit. Clement of Alexandria instructs that perfection cures Christians of the "disease of sin" and rids Christians of "habitual sinful inclinations." Origen teaches that initial perfection involves obeying the commandments of God and doing away with the "reek of sin."<sup>76</sup>

The connection between the Apostolic Fathers and the later Fathers can be seen further in the development of the theme "image or likeness of God" as a description for Christian perfection. By the time of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the later Ante-Nicene Fathers, this phrase becomes synonymous with Christian perfection. This concept is used to express the reflection of the character and nature of God, particularly God's love and holiness, in perfected Christians. The phrase is also used to link the fullness of the Holy Spirit or the abiding presence of the Spirit in the lives of believers. The Spirit's presence makes Christians into the likeness of God through the work of sanctification and empowerment for Christian living and ministry. However, even this concept has its roots in the Apostolic Fathers, specifically in Barnabas's idea of a "second fash-

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<sup>75</sup>*Adversus Haereses* 4.12-13; *Stromata* 6.9; *Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles* I, 1:4c-f.

<sup>76</sup>*Adversus Haereses* 5.8.4; 5.9.2; 5.11.1; *Paedagogus* 1.2; 2.1-13; *First Homily on the Canticle of Canticles* 1.2a and the *Second Homily on the Canticle of Canticles* 1.12-13.

ioning” of humanity into the image of God, which he connects to the presence and fullness of the Holy Spirit in Christian lives.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we have attempted to present a picture of Christian perfection in the earliest post-testamental period of the church through a specific analytic lens. We have argued that, while the Apostolic Fathers nuance perfection in different ways according to their pastoral contexts, they appear to be operating from a common theological conception of Christian perfection. For Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, the *Didache*, Barnabas, Polycarp and the Shepherd of Hermas, Christian perfection is expressed supremely in love, defined as the fulfillment of the two great commandments, and is evidenced in freedom from deliberate sin, obedience to God, and inner transformation of the human heart. They clearly understand that perfection is a divine work made possible by the redemptive work of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, coupled with human cooperation.

We have also argued that the Apostolic Fathers’ teaching on Christian perfection establishes the interpretive foundation, the parameters, and trajectory of doctrinal development on perfection in the later Ante-Nicene Fathers. Through a cursory examination, we have attempted to demonstrate that the three major theologians of the Ante-Nicene period acknowledge, use, and develop the doctrine of the Apostolic Fathers. Specifically, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen essentially see Christian perfection as perfect love, freedom from sin, and being (re)made in the image and likeness of God. As such, the teaching of the Apostolic Fathers forms the core of a consensual tradition on Christian perfection operating in the Ante-Nicene period of the church.

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<sup>77</sup>See the following for examples, *The Epistle of Barnabas* 6.18-19; *Adversus Haereses* 5.8.4; 5.9.2; 5.11.1; *Stromata* 7.11-14; *De Principiis* 3.1.1-22.

# DEFENDING THE OLD TESTAMENT'S WORTH: JOHN WESLEY'S REACTION TO THE REBIRTH OF MARCIONISM

by

**Matthew R. Schlimm**

Within Christianity, the precise role of the Old Testament in doctrine and practice has varied greatly. This variance was perhaps greatest during the second century C.E. when Marcion led a frontal attack on the Old Testament. In the times that have followed, the church has faced difficulties ridding itself of Marcion's influence. Even among those who defend the Old Testament, differences persist. The many who affirm the Old Testament's status as divinely inspired Scripture hardly agree on the exact role of these Hebrew writings in the Christian church. How does the Old Testament stand in relation to the New? Is the Old Testament only of value inasmuch as it points to Jesus Christ, or does the Old Testament have intrinsic value that does not derive from the New? Is all of the Old Testament pertinent to Christian belief and practice, or are some parts best left aside? Should Christians seek normative meaning from the plain sense of Old Testament passages, or is a typological or allegorical hermeneutic necessary with at least some texts? To put the question broadly, how does one formulate a Christian doctrine of the Old Testament?

How did John Wesley approach such questions? Many have written on his use of the Bible, but these works have limitations.<sup>1</sup> Countless arti-

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Michael Casto, "Exegetical Method in John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1977), 5-10, gives a survey of many of these works and their shortcomings.

cles and books address topics ranging from the “Wesleyan quadrilateral” to how Wesley’s psychological make-up relates to his approach to Scripture. Many of these studies are helpful in various ways, but they usually give little attention to the Old Testament in particular.<sup>2</sup> Works that deal specifically with Wesley and the Old Testament tend to ignore some of the broader questions about the Old Testament’s worth. Robert Michael Casto, for example, has examined Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, but his study is focused more on issues such as the *Notes*’ hermeneutics and how much of the *Notes* derive from other sources than on the overarching question of the Old Testament’s abiding worth for Wesley.<sup>3</sup> Other works on Wesley’s use of the Old Testament have appeared, though they have shortcomings as well.<sup>4</sup> To understand the value of the Old Testament for Wesley, a fresh study is needed to discern (1) whether Wesley displays any Marcionite leanings, (2) what is Wesley’s “canon within a canon,” (3) whether Wesley believes that the New Testament supersedes the Old, and (4) whether Wesley’s use of the Old Testament is in harmony with his beliefs about Scripture. A careful analysis reveals a tension within Wesley. Both in doctrine and practice, he consistently operates with a conceptual framework wherein the Old Testament’s worth is affirmed and used as inspired Scripture on the one hand

<sup>2</sup>A helpful general work on Wesley and Scripture is Frank Baker, “John Wesley and the Bible,” *Historical Highlights* 6 (June 1976): 3-16, which gives a popular introduction to Wesley’s use of Scripture that deals in limited ways with the Old Testament. A more academic piece is Wilbur H. Mullen, “John Wesley’s Method of Biblical Interpretation,” *Religion in Life* 47 (Spring 1978): 99-108, though it does not focus on the Old Testament.

<sup>3</sup>Casto treats issues such as the relation between the Old and New Testaments and the inspired nature of the Bible (e.g., Casto, “Exegetical Method,” 35-42, 102-104), but he does not focus first and foremost on the question of the worth of the Old Testament for Wesley.

<sup>4</sup>William M. Arnett, “A Study in John Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8 (Spring 1973): 14-32, is of some use, but Casto’s work offers a treatment of the same topic that goes into significantly more depth. John N. Oswalt, “Wesley’s Use of the Old Testament in His Doctrinal Teachings,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 12 (Spring 1977): 39-53, focuses on the Old Testament and is helpful on many fronts, though it is somewhat dated. Scott Jones has conducted an excellent analysis of *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*. This work is one of the best written, but its treatment of the Old Testament is rather short and can be expanded (Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture* [Nashville, Tenn.: Kingswood Books, an Imprint of Abingdon Press, 1995], 53-58).

and is diminished and lessened as inferior to the New Testament on the other hand.

### **Wesley's Historical Context**

Though studies have examined how Wesley as a biblical interpreter relates to his historical context, they largely lack attention to how the Old Testament was valued by Wesley's contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries witnessed a rebirth of Marcionism in England. A variety of individuals minimized the Old Testament's worth, and forms of anti-Semitism exerted themselves. With the flourishing of rationalism, reason attained supreme authority, usurping the place once held by Scripture. While the New Testament's worth decreased, the Old Testament was especially devalued. Even those within the church saw its contents as irrational and superstitious. Deists at the fringes of the church worked to demolish the Old Testament's sacred status to rubble.

Three individuals illustrate this larger trend: John Tillotson (1630-1694), Matthew Tindal (1653?-1733), and Thomas Morgan (d. 1743). These three are particularly useful for comparison with Wesley because they were highly influential figures whose work exemplified key features of religious thought in Wesley's time. Though they all died by the time Wesley reached the age of forty, their writings continued to exert influence after their deaths. John Tillotson's work shows how the Old Testament was attacked by one of the most revered figures in the Church of England. Tillotson became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1691 and, nearly fifty years after his death, Wesley would refer to him as "one so highly esteemed both in our own and many other nations."<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile,

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<sup>5</sup>For Wesley in context, see Casto, "Exegetical Method," 13-77; R. Larry Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (Spring 1981), 23-50; Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 89-94.

<sup>6</sup>Because of Tillotson's position and influence, Wesley refers to him as "an angel of the Church of God (as the great Shepherd terms the supreme overseers of it), and one so highly esteemed both in our own and many other nations" (John Wesley, Sermon 150, "Hypocrisy in Oxford," in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ], 4:396 [1.7]). One should note that, in the broader context of this sermon, Wesley is actually critical of Tillotson. In 1757, one of Wesley's contemporaries would refer to Tillotson as one of "The popular Preachers" (John Wesley, "A Sufficient Answer to 'Letters to the Author of "Theron and Aspasio,"'" in *Letters, Essays, Dialogs, and Addresses in The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978], 10:299).

Matthew Tindal's writings show how the Old Testament was attacked by one of the chief Deistic thinkers in Wesley's time. His *Christianity as Old as Creation* (1730) is among Deism's most significant works, known to many as "The Bible of Deism." Lastly, Thomas Morgan's writings show the level of intensity that attacks against the Old Testament reached. Though not as well known as Tillotson or Tindal, Morgan's relentless rejection of the Old Testament is remarkable enough that it earned him the title "The Modern Marcion."<sup>7</sup> Taken together, these three figures illustrate the range of ways that influential thinkers devalued the Old Testament in Wesley's time.

Tillotson's assessment of the Old Testament was not entirely negative. He preached many sermons on Old Testament texts, expounded upon them using their literary context, and mentioned Old Testament saints as exemplars in his sermons.<sup>8</sup> Insofar as the Old Testament aligned with the natural truths of reason, Tillotson had no qualms about using it. However, his prizing of reason caused him to make comments about the Old Testament and Judaism that lean in a Marcionite direction. A prime example is found in his highly popular *Sermons Preach'd upon Several Occasions*. His "Sermon Fifth" (on Phil. 3:8; vol. 1) crowns Christianity as the most reasonable of all religions. In so doing, it devalues Judaism and the Old Testament as less reasonable. Here, Tillotson does not deny that God speaks in the Old Testament, but he does say:

It is true indeed God himself did command sacrifices to the Jews, and all those external and troublesome observances of which their Religion did consist: But then it is to be consider'd, that he did not institute this way of Worship because it was most suitable to his own nature, but because of the carnality of their hearts and the proneness of that people to Idolatry. God did not prescribe these things because they were best, but

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<sup>7</sup>Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 403.

<sup>8</sup>John Tillotson, "Sermon Seventh," in *Sermons Preach'd Upon Several Occasions* (5th ed.; 4 vols.; London: B. Aylmer, 1688), 2:193, for Old Testament exemplars, 2:194-195, for interpreting a text using its literary context. Four of the ten sermons in this volume are based on an Old Testament text, as are three of the eight sermons in the first volume.

because the temper of that People would then admit of nothing better.<sup>9</sup>

Tillotson does not deny that the Old Testament is Scripture or revelatory, but, with a current of anti-Semitism, he does assert that the Old Testament is limited because of the flaws of those with whom it originated.

Tillotson makes similar comments elsewhere in this sermon, talking about how the law found in the Christian religion is vastly superior to the law found in the Jewish religion (i.e., the Old Testament): “[Christian Laws] command nothing that is unnecessary and burdensome, as were the numerous rites and ceremonies of the Jewish Religion, but what is reasonable, usefull, and substantial.”<sup>10</sup> Tillotson even goes so far as to contrast the God of the Old Testament with the God of the New, calling the former “very strict and severe,” and “*the great and the terrible God,*” while describing the latter as “*the father of mercies. . . the God of love and peace.*”<sup>11</sup> Next, he mentions that this sharp contrast gave rise to Marcionism. He does not condemn the Marcionites for claiming that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New, but instead he says that the Bible itself gives “at least some . . . pretence” for such a claim.<sup>12</sup> Here, one finds a most influential figure undermining the worth of the Old Testament, portraying its revelation as limited, its commands as unnecessary, and its depiction of God as deeply flawed.

Deists quickly followed Tillotson’s lead. Matthew Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as Creation* advances the thesis that the “One True Religion” (which is synonymous with Christianity) has been accessible to all peoples since creation by virtue of reason.<sup>13</sup> Tindal aims at stripping biblical

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<sup>9</sup>John Tillotson, “Sermon Fifth,” in *Sermons Preach’d upon Several Occasions* (7th ed.; 4 vols.; London: B. Aylmer, 1688), 1:182-183. For a concise description of Tillotson’s understanding of revelation, see H. D. McDonald, *Ideas of Revelation: An Historical Study a.d. 1700 to a.d. 1860* (London: Macmillan, 1959), 38-40.

<sup>10</sup>Tillotson, “Sermon Fifth,” 1:186.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:184, Tillotson’s italics.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation* (Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe, London 1730; ed. Günter Gawlick, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1967), esp. 1-12. On this work and its treatment of the Bible, see *ibid.*, McDonald, *Ideas of Revelation*, 47-51; Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*, 374-383.

revelation of any special status, of anything above and beyond what individuals could discern using their own mental faculties. Here, the Old Testament comes under heavy fire. Whereas Tillotson upheld Old Testament saints as exemplars, Tindal contends that they were just as flawed as everyone else.<sup>14</sup> Tindal also argues that the Old Testament's anthropomorphic depictions of God are inconsistent with what reason and the New Testament teach about the Creator.<sup>15</sup> He questions the sanctity of stories such as that of Balaam's donkey, actions such as the Israelite conquest of Canaan, and commands to the prophets such as Isaiah's walking naked.<sup>16</sup> He contends that the Old Testament portrays God as one who deceives, violates oaths, and conspires with Satan.<sup>17</sup> After painting such a picture of the Old Testament, Tindal quotes Tillotson's comments about the difference between the cruel God of the Old Testament and the loving God of the New, and he says, "if there's a Contrast between the Spirit of the Old, and the Spirit of the New Testament, ought not we *Christians* to stick to the latter. . . ?"<sup>18</sup> In this highly popular work published relatively early in Wesley's adulthood, Tindal not only strips the Old Testament of its revered status; he disdains it as unreasonable, ridiculous, and incompatible with the New Testament.

Within a decade, Thomas Morgan would attack the Old Testament with even greater force. His massive work *The Moral Philosopher* (1737-1740) extends over three volumes and in excess of one thousand pages. Throughout this work, Morgan seeks to raze the Old Testament's sacred value. One interpreter of Morgan talks of his "uncompromising rejection of the Old Testament" and how, for Morgan, "almost everything contained in the Old Testament is irreconcilable with his principle of 'moral truth.'" <sup>19</sup> Thus, Morgan attacks not just the ceremonial law of the Old

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<sup>14</sup>Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation*, 243-245, 264-265.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 251-254.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 254-255, 273-275.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 256-257, 266, 276.

<sup>18</sup>Tindal quotes Tillotson on *ibid.*, 267-268. Tindal's quotation printed here is on *ibid.*, 269, Tindal's italics.

<sup>19</sup>Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*, 398. The interpretation of Morgan presented here is somewhat dependent upon Reventlow's, though Morgan's work has been consulted throughout.

Testament (as Tillotson and Tindal), but also its moral law.<sup>20</sup> Whereas Tillotson praises Old Testament figures and Tindal describes them as equally fallible as everyone else, Morgan suggests that they are among the most morally debased individuals ever to have walked the earth.<sup>21</sup> While Tillotson and Tindal lean in a Marcionite direction, expressing some sympathy for those who differentiate the God of the Old Testament from that of the New, Morgan marches shoulder-to-shoulder beside Marcion: “This God of *Israel* . . . was a local, tutelary, visible, and audible God, and the God and Protector of that Nation only, without any such Relation to any other Nation or Country. This then could not be the God of Heaven and Earth, the infinite, omnipresent Creator.”<sup>22</sup> According to Morgan, the God of the Old Testament is not worthy of worship or adoration. Thus, he can make the following claims:

Such Accounts of [the Exodus and Conquest] must be looked upon by every Body, as the most incredible Fiction and Forgery that ever was invented, were it not for the Prejudice and strong Prepossession, contrary to all Reason and common Sense, that those Historians were infallible, and immediately inspired. But I am sure, that this miraculously stupid People were always inspired and prepossessed with the Spirit of the Devil. And it is both a Matter of Grief and Wonder, that they should be able thus to transfuse their Spirit and Faith into Christians.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Reventlow explains, “Morgan cannot even recognize the Mosaic moral law as divine. In his eyes it is merely a civil, political law, which only regulates outward actions in order to secure the civil rights of society, and does not extend to the inner disposition of men and women, in which alone true virtue and righteousness can exist” (Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*, 400). Cf. Thomas Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher* (3 vols.; Faksimile-Neudruck in einem Band; ed. Günter Gawlick; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1969), 1:26-27.

<sup>21</sup>Thus, Morgan says of David, “he had been the most bloody Persecutor that ever had been known, and his whole Life had been one continued Scene of Dissimulation, Falsehood, Lust and Cruelty” (ibid., 1:334).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 3:66, Morgan’s italics. Morgan also joins Marcion in revering St. Paul while disdaining the Old Testament (ibid., 1:354, 359).

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 2:71. For more on anti-Semitism in Morgan, see Jan van den Berg, “Thomas Morgan versus William Warburton: A Conflict the Other Way Round,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42:1 [Jan. 1991]: 82-85, esp. 85. For the extent of anti-Semitism in Britain more generally, see Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 202-206.

Morgan's title "The Modern Marcion" is much deserved. Seeping with anti-Semitism, he contends that the Old Testament is not just flawed, but diabolic.

While other examples of Marcionite tendencies in early eighteenth-century Britain exist (e.g., Thomas Chubb), Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan exemplify an environment wherein the Old Testament's worth was under attack both from within and without the church. One should not assume, however, that all of England agreed with these three. Many individuals produced works arguing against them and defending the Old Testament.<sup>24</sup> Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan, moreover, stand in some tension with the Articles of Religion, though the positions of Tindal and especially Tillotson allow for at least a loose alignment with the possibilities offered by the Church of England. The key Articles are VI and VII. Article VI asserts that the Old Testament is Holy Scripture. Morgan, and to a lesser extent Tindal, offer challenges to this assertion, while Tillotson contends that God spoke through the Old Testament, albeit in limited ways. Article VII has two main parts, the first of which states, "The Old Testament is not contrary to the New." All three of these individuals are in some tension with this Article. Tindal and Tillotson, however, are fairly nuanced in how they present this topic. They do not advocate an outright Marcionism, but instead say that there is "some pretence" for going in that direction. They imply that the Old and New Testaments may be contradictory, but they are hesitant to say explicitly that they are.

Morgan, on the other hand, has fully immersed himself in Marcionism and differs widely from the Article's teaching, asserting that the two Testaments contradict each other. The second part of Article VII is as follows: "Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof . . . yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral." Once again, Tillotson and Tindal have positioned themselves in such a way that

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<sup>24</sup>Tindal's treatise alone produced over 150 critical responses (W. Neil, "The Criticism and Theological Use of the Bible, 1700-1950," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* [ed. S. L. Greenslade; 3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963], 3:248). See Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*, 375 for the response to Tindal, and 396 for the response to Morgan (and Berg, "Thomas Morgan," passim), and 406-410 for the general response to Deism.

they align, at least loosely, with the Article. They say many negative things about Old Testament law, but their comments tend to be directed more toward the ceremonial law than the moral law. Morgan, on the other hand, disagrees strongly with the Articles, speaking specifically about the “Weakness and Insufficiency of the Moral Law.”<sup>25</sup> All three devalue the Old Testament’s worth, but Morgan alone goes well outside the Articles of Religion. In so doing, he sets himself off from a great deal of those in England.

What was John Wesley’s level of familiarity with these three individuals? Wesley read Tillotson while at Oxford, and twenty years later he published two sermons extracted from Tillotson’s *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions*, prefacing them with the words, “the Archbishop was as far from being *the worst*, as from being *the best*, of the *English* writers.”<sup>26</sup> Wesley also read Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as Creation*, though he does not refer to Tindal with much frequency in his writings.<sup>27</sup> He did, however, publish an abridgement of William Law’s *The Case of*

<sup>25</sup> Morgan, “The Moral Philosopher,” 1:26.

<sup>26</sup> John Wesley, *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity, Which Have Been Publish’d in the English Tongue* (50 vols.; Bristol: E. Farley, 1755), 45:295. Wesley’s italics. This work was examined at the Special Collections Library of Duke University. Neither of the sermons that Wesley includes focus on the Old Testament. On Wesley’s use of the book with the “Holy Club,” see Richard Paul Heitzenrater, “John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1725-35” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1972), 522.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. A search for “Tindal” in *The Works of Wesley*, in *The Master Christian Library on CD-ROM*, Ages Digital Library, Version 6.02, (Albany, Oreg.: AGES Software, 1998) reveals only two hits. The first is from Wesley’s journal dated August 7, 1746, wherein Wesley says, “Mr. Tindal, called upon me once more” (John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries*, 6 vols., eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols; [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ], 20:127; [August 7, 1746]). Because Matthew Tindal had been dead for nearly a decade at that point, Wesley obviously is not referring to him. The second appearance is found in a letter to William Law wherein Wesley quotes Law’s account of redemption and writes, “How would Dr. Tindal have smiled at this!” (John Wesley, “An Extract of a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law Occasioned by Some of His Late Writings,” in *Letters and Essays*, in *The Works of Wesley* [ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978], 9:495). This second reference likely does refer to Matthew Tindal.

*Reason*, a harsh critique of Tindal's work.<sup>28</sup> Concerning Morgan, there is little evidence that Wesley read his works, though Wesley at times responds to the types of thoughts advocated by Morgan (see below), which suggests at the least that Morgan was part of a broader current of thought to which Wesley reacted.<sup>29</sup> On the whole, therefore, Wesley was aware of the negative assessments of the Old Testament that took place in his historical context. He has some continuities with such assessments, particularly the more reserved devaluing by Tillotson, but these are outweighed by his discontinuities with them, which are strongest when Wesley is compared with Morgan.

### **Discontinuity: Wesley's Praise of the Old Testament**

Though there are times when John Wesley relegates the Old Testament to a place of secondary importance, the thrust of his writings affirm and defend the Old Testament's sacred worth. On occasion, he even

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<sup>28</sup>Thomas Jackson, ed., "List of Works Revised and Abridged from Various Authors, by the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., with the Prefaces by which They are Accompanied," in *Grammars, Music, Letters*, in *The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 14:260 (LXVIII). Law's work does not go into much depth about the Old Testament, though he does spend some time refuting a few of Tindal's remarks about it. See William Law, *The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, Fairly and Fully Stated: In Answer to a Book Entitul'd Christianity as Old as the Creation* (Part I; London: W. Innys, 1731), 114-116, cf. 93-94. This book was examined at the Special Collections Library of Duke University. For commentaries on Law's response to Tindal, see McDonald, *Ideas of Revelation*, 113-116; Gerald R. Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964), esp. 93-98.

Neil erroneously implies that Wesley was not concerned with Deism (Neil, "The Criticism," 254-255). Many examples of Wesley's disdain for Deism could be cited. One of the more vivid is in his sermon "On Faith."

<sup>29</sup>There is no reference to Thomas Morgan in the lists of Wesley's readings and libraries found in Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists," 493-526; Randy L. Maddox, "Kingswood School Library Holdings (ca. 1775)," *Methodist History* 41.1 (Oct. 2002): 342-370; Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley's Reading: Evidence in the Kingswood School Archives," *Methodist History* 41.2 (Jan. 2003): 49-67; Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley's Reading: Evidence in the Book Collection at Wesley's House, London," *Methodist History* 41.3 (Apr. 2003): 118-133; or the private bibliographical list compiled by Frank Baker over his lifetime, which is held at Duke University (Frank Baker, "Bibliographical List of John Wesley's Readings" [MS]).

responds directly to Marcionite sentiments in his religious context. He makes a key statement in his sermon “The Means of Grace,” which was preached not long after the publication of Morgan’s *The Moral Philosopher*.<sup>30</sup> Here, Wesley quotes 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which talks of how Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and righteous instruction. Next, he points out that St. Paul (whom Wesley assumes authored 2 Timothy) is referring to the Old Testament because the New had not yet been written. Then, Wesley writes the following key words:

How far then was St. Paul . . . from making light of the Old Testament! Behold this, lest ye one day “wonder and perish”, ye who make so small account of one half of the oracles of God! Yea, and that half of which the Holy Ghost expressly declares that it is “profitable”, as a means ordained of God for this very thing, “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”: to the end [that] “the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”<sup>31</sup>

Wesley’s talk of those who “make so small account of one half of the oracles of God” is a clear reference to those with Marcionite leanings. Wesley stresses that St. Paul did not make light of the Old Testament specifically because individuals like Thomas Morgan were quick to portray Paul in this way. Like Marcion, Morgan interpreted the writings of Paul as being strongly opposed to the Old Testament.<sup>32</sup> In a shrewd rhetorical move, Wesley uses Paul to show the folly of their position, and he warns that disregarding the Old Testament could incite eternal punishment (“perish”). Though Wesley may not have read Morgan, he was aware of

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<sup>30</sup>*The Moral Philosopher* was published 1737-1740. While the sermon cannot be dated exactly, 1741 and 1746 are possible dates. See Albert C. Outler, introductory comment to “Sermon 16, The Means of Grace,” by John Wesley, in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 1:376.

<sup>31</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 16, “The Means of Grace,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 1:388 (III.9).

<sup>32</sup>Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher*, 1:27, 29, 354, 359.

Tindal does not use Paul the way that Morgan does to devalue the Old Testament, though he interprets 2 Timothy 3:16 creatively to bolster his own argument (Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 328).

the types of claims made by him and others. He attacks them, and in so doing, he upholds the worth of the Old Testament.

Wesley defends the worth of the Old Testament on other occasions as well. In his sermon "On Divine Providence," he writes of how God has given "a clear, consistent, perfect account . . . of his manner of governing the world . . . in his written Word: all the oracles of God, all the Scriptures both of the Old Testament and the New." He continues by quoting an unidentified source who upholds the Old Testament's value. Wesley says, "It is the beautiful remark of a fine writer: 'Those who object to the Old Testament, in particular, that it is not a connected history of nations, but only a congeries of broken unconnected events, do not observe the nature and design of these writings. They do not see that Scripture is *the history of God*.'"<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, the identity of the writer whom Wesley quotes remains elusive.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Wesley's quotation here illustrates that he was aware of the devaluation of the Old Testament and aligns himself with those who defend the Old Testament's worth.<sup>35</sup>

Wesley's appreciation for the Old Testament is also seen with respect to how he refers to the Old and New Testaments in tandem. As previous comments suggest, Wesley sees the Old and New Testaments and as the two halves of Scripture. Consequently, when he wants to refer to the entirety of Scripture, he frequently will name both Testaments together. He often makes comments like the following: "All the inspired writers, both

<sup>33</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 67, "On Divine Providence," in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976-), 2:536 (§4).

<sup>34</sup>Albert Outler, while editing this sermon, remarks that this type of idea, though not the precise language, is found with Jonathan Edwards and Johann Cocceius (*ibid.*, n. 7). Another possibility is John Leland, who defends the Old Testament's worth against the onslaught of many Deists, including Thomas Morgan. In his defense, Leland upholds especially the importance of Old Testament history. E.g., see John Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers of the Last and Present Century* (2 vols.; London: B. Dod, 1755), 2:356-415 (Letter XI; cited 1 May 2005; *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* [Gale Group]; <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>).

<sup>35</sup>See also John Wesley, "Remarks on Mr. H.'s Account of the Gentoo Religion in Hindostan," in *Letters*, in *The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 13:406 (§ 11-13), where Wesley likewise defends the worth of the Old Testament from those who seek to devalue it.

in the Old Testament and the New, take the words *to fast* in one single sense, for not to eat, to abstain from food.”<sup>36</sup> Wesley also makes more general, sweeping comments that tie the Old and New Testaments together. One of the most important is in his preface to his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, where he writes the following:

The Scripture therefore of the *Old and New Testament*, is a most solid and precious system of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God; and all together are one entire body, wherein is no defect, no excess. It is the fountain of heavenly wisdom, which they who are able to taste, prefer to all writings of men, however wise, or learned, or holy.<sup>37</sup>

Though this excerpt comes from Wesley’s *New Testament Notes*, he stresses the importance of the Old Testament as well, going so far as to say that “every part thereof” is perfect. Based on such comments, it is clear that Wesley not only accords to the Old Testament the status of Scripture, but he also understands the Old and New Testaments to form a united whole. While more needs to be said on Wesley’s understanding of the relation between the two Testaments, his comments here contrast with those made by Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan.<sup>38</sup>

Contrast between Wesley and the Marcionite currents of his day is also seen in how he encourages study of the Old Testament as an impor-

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<sup>36</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 27, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Seventh,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 1:594 (I.1), Wesley’s italics. Many other examples could be given.

Wesley also emphasizes the wholeness of Scripture by talking about the “the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament” (John Wesley, Sermon 99, *The Reward of Righteousness: Preached before the Humane Society*, in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ], 3:405 [I.6]). For an example of Wesley’s using an almost identical phrase, see John Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, in *Letters, Essays, Dialogs, and Addresses in The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 10:211 (§ 19). For more on this matter, see Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 43-53, 151-158, 219-221.

<sup>37</sup>John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (16th ed.; Nashville, Tenn.: Barbee and Smith, 1894), 5 (§ 10), Wesley’s italics.

<sup>38</sup>As Casto shows, Wesley was not alone in emphasizing the continuity between the Old and New Testaments (Casto, “Exegetical Method,” 36-42).

tant and vital part of holy living. He does so on a number of occasions. While his format varies somewhat (e.g., how long and how much to study), he consistently urges others to read the Old Testament first, followed by the New.<sup>39</sup> At times, he even encourages reading more of the Old Testament per day than the New, perhaps because the Old is longer.<sup>40</sup> Wesley, moreover, fosters knowledge of both Testaments among clergy, urging them to examine themselves and ask, "Am I acquainted with the several parts of Scripture; with all parts of the Old Testament and the New?"<sup>41</sup> Wesley encourages others to study the Old Testament with care, and there is a great deal of evidence that he did so himself.<sup>42</sup>

Wesley's thorough analysis of the Old Testament is evident in the skill and frequency with which he uses it. His writings abound with references to the Old Testament. As Sangster puts it, "Some of [Wesley's] pages are little more than a catena of [biblical] quotations. He seems to have lived in the Scriptures so long that Bible phrasing has become second nature to him, and he swims from one citation to another with effortless

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<sup>39</sup>John Wesley, "Letter CCXX, To Miss L—, n.d.," in *Letters*, in *The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 12:260 (§ 3); John Wesley, "Letter DII, To the Same [a Young Disciple], January 25, 1771" in *Letters*, in *The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 12:440; John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* (3 vols.; Salem, Ohio: Schmul, 1975), 1:ix (§ 18).

<sup>40</sup>John Wesley, "Letter DCCXLIV, To the Same [Miss Ritchie, afterwards Mrs. Mortimer], November 29, 1774" in *Letters*, in *The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 13:54; John Wesley, "Letter DCCLXXXIX, To Miss Patty Chapman, December 17, 1773" in *Letters*, in *The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 13:87. Encouraging others to read more of the Old Testament is remarkable because it sets Wesley as distinct from many in his day, even those without strong Marcionite leanings. See Casto, "Exegetical Method," 36.

<sup>41</sup>John Wesley, "An Address to the Clergy," in *Letters, Essays, Dialogs, and Addresses* in *The Works of Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 10:490 (II.1[1]).

<sup>42</sup>For how Wesley used the Bible in his own devotional life, see Baker, "John Wesley and the Bible," 3-5; William M. Arnett, "John Wesley and the Bible," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 3 (Spring 1968): 3-9, esp. 4-5, 7-8.

ease.”<sup>43</sup> In the 151 sermons by Wesley in the critical edition of Wesley’s *Works*, Wesley quotes, cites, or alludes to the Old Testament 2,455 times (an average of 16 citations per sermon), omitting no book from the Old Testament except Ruth and Obadiah.<sup>44</sup> In nine appeals and open letters published between 1743 and 1763, Wesley refers to the Old Testament 556 times (an average of 62 references per work), using 32 of the 39 Old Testament books.<sup>45</sup> Over the course of Wesley’s career, he preached sermons on an Old Testament text at least 2,760 times (an average of 41 times per year), including texts from every book of the Old Testament except six.<sup>46</sup> All of these figures indicate that Wesley used the Old Testament with a great deal of frequency, and that in so doing he used a great deal of the Old Testament. Wesley’s knowledge and use of even obscure Old Testament passages is remarkable. The book of Habakkuk, for example, has never been an extremely popular book of the Old Testament. Yet, Wesley’s sermons contain several references to all three of the book’s chapters.<sup>47</sup> With Wesley, one finds not a Marcionite who downplays the worth of the Old Testament, but rather one who values and uses even unfamiliar verses.

<sup>43</sup>W. E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection: An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (war ed.; New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), 36. For more on how Wesley uses Scriptural phrasing to express his thoughts, see the excellent discussion in Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 135-138.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 155, cf. 226-227. See esp. 226 for the limitations of such figures. Jones bases these numbers on Albert C. Outler, ed., “Index of Scriptural References,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 4:651-687.

<sup>45</sup>Casto, “Exegetical Method,” 2. Casto bases these numbers on Gerald R. Cragg, ed., “Index of Scriptural References,” in *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Oxford Edition, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975- ), 11:559-571. The books Wesley does not cite are Ruth, 1-2 Chronicles, Obadiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Haggai.

<sup>46</sup>Wanda Smith, “Wesley’s Sermon Register, 1725-1791” (MS). The books Wesley does not use are Ezra, Esther, Song of Songs, Obadiah, and Zephaniah.

<sup>47</sup>Outler, ed., “Index of Scriptural References,” 4:662. Oswalt talks of how Wesley refers to an obscure phrase from Ezekiel 13:10-12. He notes how unlikely it is that Wesley scoured the Bible looking for passages to allude to, and he writes, “Surely, the truth is that [Wesley] knew even the obscurer parts of the Bible well enough, *in context*, that such a phrase as this would come to the surface at the appropriate time” (Oswalt, “Wesley’s Use of the Old Testament in his Doctrinal Teachings,” 44, italics his). Cf. Arnett, “John Wesley and the Bible,” 4.

One reason why Wesley values the Old Testament is that he understands the New Testament to be dependent upon the Old. Whereas Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan talk about the differences between the two Testaments, Wesley not only brings the two together, but also emphasizes that New Testament writers relied on the Old Testament: “[The apostles] were to prove their assertions by the written Word.”<sup>48</sup> In *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part III*, Wesley makes an even bolder claim, saying that not only the apostles but also Christ himself always depended on the Old Testament: “Our Saviour and all his apostles, in the midst of their greatest miracles, never failed to prove every doctrine they taught by clear Scripture and cogent reason.”<sup>49</sup> Like those who fought Marcionism in the second century, Wesley contends that the New Testament is dependent upon the Old.

When Wesley relies on the Old Testament, he tends to favor a literal interpretation that makes use of each passage’s surrounding context, though many exceptions can be found. He writes, “But it is a stated rule in interpreting Scripture, never to depart from the plain, literal sense, unless it implies an absurdity.”<sup>50</sup> One of the more important cases where

<sup>48</sup>John Wesley, “To ‘John Smith,’ [Sept. 28, 1745],” in *Letters*, 6 vols., ed. Frank Baker, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols.; (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 26:154-155 (1.4). This paper is indebted to Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 34, for pointing out this tendency of Wesley (see also next note).

<sup>49</sup>John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part III*, in *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Oxford Edition, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975- ), 11:311 (III.29). Not surprisingly, in light of such comments, Wesley uses the Old Testament to interpret the New. Cf. Oswalt, “Wesley’s Use of the Old Testament in His Doctrinal Teachings,” 49.

<sup>50</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 74, “Of the Church,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 3:50 (I.12); see also John Wesley, Sermon 21, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the First,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 1:473 (§6), n.22.

For more on Wesley’s literal approach and attention to context, see Casto, “Exegetical Method,” 106-111, 175, 177-180, 222; Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 198-199; Shelton, “John Wesley’s Approach,” 41-42; Oswalt, “Wesley’s Use of the Old Testament in His Doctrinal Teachings,” 44-50. One of the key points made by many of these authors is that what Wesley understands to be a literal approach differs from many more strict understandings today. For more on the ways that Wesley uses Scripture, see especially Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 129-138; Oswalt, “Wesley’s Use of the Old Testament in His Doctrinal Teachings,” 42-44.

Wesley explicitly breaks from a literal approach is his interpretation of the Song of Songs. In Wesley's *Notes* on this book, he relies heavily on Matthew Poole and argues that this book is allegorical because understanding it literally as a reference to Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter would be "absured and monstrous."<sup>51</sup> Two key points must be noticed here. First, though Wesley engages in allegorical interpretation, his doing so does not mean that he intends to devalue the meaning of the text by imposing external ideas upon it. Rather, Wesley believes that the text is by its nature allegorical—filled with symbolism that requires unpacking. Second, Wesley believes that this book is allegorical because he presupposes that Scripture, including the Old Testament, is not absurd. A literal interpretation would go in that direction, and so Wesley concludes that the text must be allegorical. Unlike Morgan who explicitly maintains that the Old Testament is absurd,<sup>52</sup> Wesley contends that the Old Testament is reasonable.

One of Wesley's most extended uses of the Old Testament is in his work *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part II*. Here he sets out "to observe what account the Scriptures give of the Jews, the ancient church of God . . . with regard to their moral character, their tempers, and outward behaviour."<sup>53</sup> Wesley uses the terms "the Jews" and "the ancient church of God" to refer to what today are called "Israelites" and "Israelite religion." At first glance, he appears to be going the route of Tindal if not Morgan, using the Old Testament to accuse the Jews of stunted moral development. But then this *Appeal* takes an unexpected turn. Having outlined a negative view of Israelite religion, Wesley compares this "ancient church of God" with the church of his own day, asking, "how much we are better than they?"<sup>54</sup> Unlike Morgan, who takes such opportunities to exercise his brash anti-Semitism, Wesley comes down harder on the church of his day than he did on the Israelites. He

<sup>51</sup>Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, 3:1926. For Wesley's source, see Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible* (2 vols.; London: Thomas Parkhurst, et al., 1696), 1: n.p., but see introduction to "Canticles."

<sup>52</sup>E.g., Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher*, 1:136, 295.

<sup>53</sup>John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part II*, in *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Oxford Edition, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975- ), 11:204 (I.3).

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 11:213-214 (II.1).

puts it this way, "There is indeed a wide difference . . . between the Jews and us: they *happened* (if I may so speak) to forget God because other things came in their way; but we *design* to forget him; we do it of set purpose, because we do not like to remember him."<sup>55</sup> With example after example, Wesley shows that the church of his day cannot claim to have attained a position of moral or religious superiority. After listing a series of such examples, he condemns those who condemn Jews, writing, "Who of these then can cast the first stone at the Jews for neglecting the ordinances of God?"<sup>56</sup>

While there are comments elsewhere in Wesley's writings that ought to be denounced for their anti-Semitism,<sup>57</sup> Wesley here is to be praised for demanding that Christians place judgment on themselves, not Jews. Wesley may agree with Tindal that Old Testament figures were as fallible as everyone else,<sup>58</sup> but even here when he does so, he realizes that the church's first priority must be to remove the planks from its own eyes and engage in the repentance and confession of sin that he advocates at the end of this *Appeal*.<sup>59</sup> In sharp contrast to Morgan who saw the Jews as a chief problem,<sup>60</sup> Wesley sees his church's sins as the chief problem.

The primary grounds on which Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan differentiated the Old Testament from the New were the portrayals of God

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 11:215 (II.2), Wesley's italics.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 11:216 (II.3). Such a comment is not an isolated example. See Wesley, Sermon 106, "On Faith," 3:495 (I.6).

<sup>57</sup>Comments like the following are unfortunately quite common in Wesley's writings, and they should be denounced: "[Lord Chesterfield] was a man of much wit, middling sense, and some learning, but as absolutely void of virtue as any Jew, Turk, or heathen that ever lived" (John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries*, 22:468 [October 12, 1775]).

<sup>58</sup>Thus, Wesley talks about how David is "far . . . from being the pattern or standard of Christian perfection" (John Wesley, Sermon 40, *Christian Perfection*, in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ], 2:111 [II.13]).

<sup>59</sup>Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part II*, 11:270 (III.24).

<sup>60</sup>An excellent point of contrast is Thomas Morgan's anonymous pamphlet *Christianity Revived, and Judaism Subverted* (London: J. Roberts, 1734), 21-22 (cited 2 May 2005; *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* [Gale Group]: <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>), which uses superlative after superlative to condemn Jews (i.e., the Israelites) and then praises Christianity for breaking free from the "Vassalage and Darkness of Judaism."

offered by each Testament. The God of the Old, they said, is portrayed as so strict, severe, and terrible that the Marcionites of the second century were at least somewhat justified in claiming that the Old Testament God is evil, fierce, cruel, and therefore different from the loving, merciful, New Testament God. Wesley believes, to the contrary, that there is no such distinction. This conviction manifests itself clearly in his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*. Over 99% of these *Notes* consist of abridgements of Matthew Poole's and Matthew Henry's commentaries on the Old Testament, meaning Wesley's alterations are scarce.<sup>61</sup> And yet, one of the cases where Wesley most consistently alters Poole's and Henry's commentaries is where the text would otherwise portray God as the cause of evil. With a wide range of passages (Exod. 4:21; 7:13; 8:15, 19, 32; Deut. 2:30; Ps. 105:25; Isa. 63:17; Ezek. 3:20, and 38:16), Wesley changes their commentaries so that God's goodness is not jeopardized. As Casto shows in his careful study of the *Notes*, "In no case can Wesley accept a text which allows God to be the cause of evil, either through direct action or through ignorance which leads to evil results."<sup>62</sup> For Wesley, the God of the Old Testament is no different from the God of the New. Throughout all of Scripture, he maintains, God is portrayed as good, loving, and kind. Wesley is no Marcion.

### **Continuity: Devaluing of the Old Testament**

Wesley does, however, have limited areas of agreement with Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan. In spite of all that Wesley does to praise the Old Testament, he sometimes diminishes its worth. Fundamental to understanding Wesley's assessment of the Old Testament is his conception of history and God's dispensations therein. For Wesley, as well as many in his day, the divide between B.C. and A.D. had to do with much more than numbering years. For them, the Christian era brought with it a new dispensation in which God interacts with humanity in new ways that are vastly superior to how God was revealed in the previous dispensation. Wesley refers to the way God operates in the Old Testament as "the Jewish dispensation." While he has some positive comments about this dispensation, he believes that the Christian dispensation supersedes the Jewish. He writes the following:

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<sup>61</sup>"Wesley's additions to the commentaries of Poole and Henry comprise only 0.83% of the *Notes*" (Casto, "Exegetical Method," iii).

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 258-260. When he says "in no case" here, he is referring to the verses in the parentheses, not the entirety of the Old Testament.

Therefore we cannot measure the privileges of real Christians by those formerly given to the Jews. Their "ministration," (or dispensation) we allow, "was glorious," but ours "exceeds in glory." So that whosoever would bring down the Christian dispensation to the Jewish standard, whosoever gleans up the examples of weakness recorded in the law and the prophets, and thence infers that they who have "put on Christ" are endued with no greater strength, doth "greatly err, neither knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."<sup>63</sup>

When Wesley makes such comments, he is echoing Tillotson and others, who talk of the "insufficiency of the Jewish dispensation, both to our justification and sanctification, to the reconciling of us to God, and the making of us really good."<sup>64</sup> Wesley was part of a broader culture that devalued the Old Testament and the dispensation to which it belonged.

A popular way of contrasting the Old and New Testaments, which inevitably diminished the former's worth, was using metaphors pertaining to light and darkness. Thus, Tillotson talks of how Christian religion is "in truth and substance what the Jewish [i.e., Old Testament] was [only] in type and shadow."<sup>65</sup> Wesley joins Tillotson in using metaphors about light to devalue the Old Testament in relation to the New. He says, "As is the difference between the light of a lamp and that of the day, such is that between the light of the Old Testament and of the New."<sup>66</sup> Elsewhere, he writes, "For there is no comparison between the state of the Old Testament believers, and that which ye now enjoy: the darkness of that dispen-

<sup>63</sup>Wesley, Sermon 40, *Christian Perfection*, 2:108 (II.8). H. Ray Dunning expresses amazement that some Wesleyans are attracted to dispensationalism, and he contends that the two are incompatible (H. Ray Dunning, "Biblical Interpretation and Wesleyan Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 9 [Spring 1974]: 47-51, esp. 47). For Wesley himself, however, dispensational thinking plays a key role in how he understands history and the Old Testament.

<sup>64</sup>John Tillotson, "Sermon CIV," in *Sermons on Several Subjects and Occasions* (12 vols.; London: R. Ware, et al., 1742-1744), 6:1711 (Cited 3 May 2005; *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* [Gale Group]: <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>). Cf. Morgan, *The Moral Philosopher*, 29-30. Tindal is reluctant to talk of dispensations because doing so would undercut his argument. He does not posit God's acting differently in various dispensations because he contends that true religion has been available via reason throughout all of time.

<sup>65</sup>Tillotson, "Sermon Fifth," 1:179.

<sup>66</sup>Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 623 (on 2 Peter 1:19).

sation is passed away; and Christ, the true light, now shineth in your hearts.”<sup>67</sup> Despite all the praises that Wesley showers upon the Old Testament, he believes it is inferior to the New. God’s way of dealing with the world changed with Christ, meaning that the Old Testament is part of a dispensation that has less value.

Wesley’s view of Old Testament law is also reminiscent of Tillotson, especially with regard to the ceremonial law. As noted above, Tillotson contends that ceremonial laws were instituted, not because they were most suitable to God’s nature, but because of “the carnality of their hearts and the proneness of that people to Idolatry.”<sup>68</sup> In the same vein, Wesley writes, “the ceremonial or ritual law . . . was only designed for a temporary restraint upon a disobedient and stiff-necked people.”<sup>69</sup> He includes a large amount of material in this ceremonial law, saying that it makes up a “great part of the book of Exodus, and almost the whole of the book of Leviticus.”<sup>70</sup> In this context, Wesley speaks about how the believer is freed from being obligated to conform to “the whole Mosaic institution,”<sup>71</sup> which Christ has abolished by nailing it to the cross.<sup>72</sup> While the vast majority of Christians would say that the ceremonial law is no longer binding, Wesley’s tone and lack of sympathy for the ceremonial law, combined with these highly negative comments about the Mosaic institution, suggest that he devalues the Old Testament to a higher degree than a num-

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 632 (on 1 John 2:8).

<sup>68</sup>Tillotson, “Sermon Fifth,” 1:182-183.

<sup>69</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 25, “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse the Fifth,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 1:551 (I.2). This comment, especially as it relates to how Jews are viewed, is theologically problematic and in many ways inconsistent with Wesley’s urging others not to judge Jews.

<sup>70</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 65, “The Duty of Reproving Our Neighbor,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 2:511-512 (Introduction).

<sup>71</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 35, “The Law Established through Faith, Discourse I,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 2:29 (III.2-3).

<sup>72</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 36, “The Law Established through Faith, Discourse II,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 2:33-34 (§2).

ber of others. In the context of his day, however, such devaluation was fairly common, and Wesley here shows himself to be a man of his times.

In accordance with the Articles of Religion, Wesley is much more positive about the moral law, especially in comparison to Morgan, who calls it weak and insufficient. Wesley gives the moral law highest accolades, characterizing it as “the fairest offspring of the everlasting Father, the brightest efflux of his essential wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High.”<sup>73</sup> Clearly, Morgan would not make such a comment. And yet, Wesley believes that a vast amount of the Old Testament is not part of the moral law (e.g., most of Exodus and Leviticus).<sup>74</sup> For Wesley, as is the case with Tillotson, the moral law does not include a great deal from the Old Testament other than the Ten Commandments and the Two Great Commands (love of God and neighbor).<sup>75</sup> In fact, much of Wesley’s moral law comes from the New Testament. He stresses that the key to the moral law is not only the outward actions that are commanded but also its “spiritual meaning,” that is, the inward principles that affect “the thoughts, desires, and intents of the heart.” Wesley asserts that this spiritual meaning was hid, for the most part, from “the bulk of the Jewish nation”<sup>76</sup> in the Old Testament and, in contrast, is revealed with clarity in

<sup>73</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 34, “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” in *Sermons*, 4 vols., ed. Albert C. Outler, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, 34 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976- ), 2:10 (II.6), n. 28.

<sup>74</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 65, 2:511-512 (Introduction).

<sup>75</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 25, 1:551 (I.2). While Sermon 65 notes that some moral precepts are interspersed in Exodus and Leviticus (Wesley, Sermon 65, 2:511-512 [Introduction]) and though Wesley talks generally of the moral law in the Psalms (Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, 2:1626 [Introduction to Psalms]), the sermons where Wesley speaks most extensively about the law tend to connect the moral law with little from the Old Testament other than the Decalogue (e.g., Wesley, Sermon 34, 2:8, 17-18 [II.1, IV.6]). Thus, Oswalt writes, “One must confess. . .that when one comes to inquire of Wesley precisely what is contained in the moral law, beyond Deut. 6:5 (as quoted in Matt.), he is vague at best” (Oswalt, “Wesley’s Use of the Old Testament in His Doctrinal Teachings,” 46).

John Tillotson, “Sermon CCIX,” in *Sermons on Several Subjects and Occasions* (12 vols.; London: R. Ware, et al., 1742-1744), 11:4726; John Tillotson, “Sermon XXII,” in *Sermons on Several Subjects and Occasions* (12 vols.; London: R. Ware, et al., 1742-1744), 2:86 (both cited 4 May 2005; *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* [Gale Group]: <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>).

<sup>76</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 36, 2:35-36 (I.2-4).

the New Testament (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount). Even within Wesley's praising of the moral law, therefore, he is not entirely positive about the Old Testament, especially in relation to the New.

While Wesley thus joins Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan in devaluing the Old Testament, there is an important, overarching difference. While they (especially Tindal and Morgan) tend to devalue the Old Testament for not measuring up to their standards of rationality, Wesley devalues it for not measuring up to the New Testament. Wesley valued reason, but he knew it had limitations. His ultimate concern, therefore, was not to prove reason's all-sufficient powers, but to bring others into an encounter with Christ. Wesley believed that the Old Testament is a portal to Christ, and while this belief helps explain his devotion to the Old Testament, it also explains his devaluation of it. For if the Old Testament offers a glimpse of Christ, the New Testament allows one to experience Christ directly. In an important study of Wesley's Christology, John Deschner describes how Wesley understands the Old Testament to contain "types," which "are facts, persons, ceremonies, things which, in a measure, embody Christ's significance, and in a sense speak for Christ in the Old Testament, yet remain signs which press for 'an answer' in Jesus Christ Himself."<sup>77</sup> In Wesley's mind, the Old Testament has sacred worth and it points to Christ, but it does not offer the fullness found in the New Testament. He writes about the Old Testament saying, "'Tis called the *Old Testament* with relation to the *New*, which doth not cancel, but crown and perfect it, by *bringing in* that *better hope* which was typified and foretold in it."<sup>78</sup> Wesley maintains that the Old Testament has value, but it does not attain the level of perfection found with the New Testament.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), 87. See also Arnett, "A Study in John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*," 21, 25-26.

<sup>78</sup>Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, 1:1 (Introduction to Genesis), Wesley's italics.

<sup>79</sup>While Wesley refers to the Old Testament with a great deal of frequency, he utilizes the New Testament even more. Though Wesley cites the Old Testament 2,455 times in his sermons (found in the critical edition of Wesley's *Works*), he cites the New Testament 7,635 times (Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 155, 226-227; cf. Outler, ed., "Index of Scriptural References," 4:651-687). Wesley refers to the Old Testament 556 times in nine appeals and letters published between 1743 and 1763, but he refers to the New Testament 1,015

## Conclusion

John Wesley has some similarities and many differences with those like Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan who diminished the Old Testament's worth. At times, he joins them in devaluing the Old Testament, its dispensation, and its law. But even when he does, he devalues it with respect to the New Testament, not reason. He approaches the Bible not with a Deistic lens but with a Christological focus, which means that the Old Testament's worth is diminished not for being irrational but for failing to reveal the fullness of God found in Christ and the Christian dispensation. Wesley's dissimilarities with Tillotson, Tindal, and Morgan, moreover, greatly outweigh his similarities. In a context that increasingly attacked the Old Testament, Wesley repeatedly attests to its value and worth. He defends it against a variety of accusations and affirms its Scriptural status alongside the New Testament. He urges others to study it devotionally, and he uses it continuously in his sermons and writings. He contends that it is reasonable, not absurd. While others suggest that its God differs from the New Testament's God, Wesley avoids such contrasts and instead argues that the God of the Old Testament is filled with goodness and love.

On the whole, therefore, Wesley upholds the Old Testament's abiding worth in both doctrine and practice, even though his belief in the New Testament's superiority, combined with the climatic pull toward Marcionism, must have made doing so difficult. One suspects that, were Wesley around today, he would proclaim the Old Testament's value amid the current forms of Marcionism, which manifest themselves less in explicitly denying the Old Testament's worth and more in quietly ignoring its importance.

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times (Casto, "Exegetical Method," 2; cf. Cragg, ed., "Index of Scriptural References," 11:559-571). And though Wesley preached on Old Testament texts at least 2,760 times during his career, he preached on a New Testament text at least 10,961 times (Wanda Smith, "Wesley's Sermon Register, 1725-1791" [MS]). The Old Testament clearly has great value for Wesley, but the New Testament has even more.

**THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN:  
JOHN WESLEY'S FAITHFUL CONVICTIONS;  
CHARLES BONNET'S  
INFERENCEAL CONJECTURES**

by

**Laura Bartels Felleman**

The religious significance John Wesley attached to discoveries made in the fields of medicine, electricity, and natural history has been well documented. Typically, articles on Wesley and science emphasize his medical mission to the poor and the texts he published for a general readership that, in effect, brought science to the masses. This article details an instance where Wesley's interest in the study of nature, or Natural Philosophy as it was called in the eighteenth century, served a theological rather than practical purpose. This usage is evident in one of his sermons on Hebrews 11:1, Sermon 132, "On Faith," written in 1791. In this sermon a theme common to some Natural Philosophies is used to illustrate Wesley's conception of faith.

Many of Wesley's writings contain references to the Hebrews 11:1 definition of faith. In fact, Sermon 132 begins with an acknowledgment of his continual rumination upon this scripture verse:

Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the evidence of things not seen." Many times have I thought, many times have I spoke, many times have I wrote upon these words, and yet there appears to be a depth in them which I am in no wise able to fathom.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler, vol. 4, Sermon 132, "On Faith" (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), p. 188, par. §1. Bicentennial edition hereafter cited as *Works*.

This is not hyperbolic sermonizing. One finds in the collected works of John Wesley frequent mention of faith as the evidence of things not seen. He did speak on this passage from Hebrews 11:1; his *Journal* records two preaching occasions, while his *Sermon Register* for 1747-1761 lists sixteen.<sup>2</sup> He did write about this verse, and while his written reflections on faith as an evidence of unseen things are too numerous to cover in detail, a survey of five polemical writings penned over the course of Wesley's ministry provides ample illustration of the different ways he used Hebrews 11:1 to explain his theological teachings.

### I. The Evidence Of . . .

Occasionally, John Wesley merely quoted Hebrews 11:1 without any theological elaboration.<sup>3</sup> This was the method he employed in his clash with William Warburton, the Bishop of Gloucester. In Warburton's treatise *The Doctrine of Grace* (1762), the Bishop had charged Wesley with religious enthusiasm and had cited multiple examples from Wesley's *Journal* as proof of the Methodist leader's tendency towards the extreme.<sup>4</sup> To rebut the focus Warburton placed on the words "zeal and faith" in one *Journal* entry, Wesley simply gave his definition of these terms and claimed St. Paul as his authority: "By zeal, I mean the flame of love, or fervent love to God and man; by faith, the substance or confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Is this the zeal and faith of a fanatic? Then St. Paul was the greatest fanatic on earth."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, Journal entry (31 March 1761) 3:49; and Journal entry (8 April 1790) 4:485 (Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959). Hereafter cited as *Works* (Jackson). *The Journal of John Wesley*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock, vol. 8, "Sermon Register," (London: Epworth Press, 1938), pp. 184-251, (21 April 1749), (15 October 1749), (28 October 1755), (5 December 1757), (10 May 1758), (14 January 1759), (23 January 1759), (5 August 1759), (1 January 1760), (11 March 1760), (18 April 1760), (26 July 1760), (13 April 1761), (26 May 1761), (27 June 1761), (27 October 1761).

<sup>3</sup>For examples see *Works* (Jackson) Sermon 30, "Sermon on the Mount, Discourse 10," 5:399, par. 15; Sermon 72, "On Evil Angels," 6:375, par. II.4; Letter to Mr. John Smith (28 September 1745) 12: 58, par. II.7; and Journal entry (17 November 1760) 3:24.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald R. Cragg, Introduction to "A Letter to the Right Reverend The Lord Bishop of Gloucester," *Works* 11: 461, 462.

<sup>5</sup>*Works* 11: 484, par. I.19.

Charges of religious enthusiasm had earlier prompted Wesley to produce the treatise *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1743).<sup>6</sup> He cited Hebrews 11:1 in this defense of Methodist teaching by contrasting faith with human reasoning.<sup>7</sup> The ability to reason, to form judgments, or to change opinions, is dependent upon the five physical senses, according to Wesley. Without the information supplied by the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin, the mind would be unable to learn about the physical world or arrive at conclusions about it.

The sense organs can provide impressions of the natural world, but they are ineffectual when it comes to the spiritual world. None of the senses can detect God or the things of God; they do not supply the mind with sensory information about the spiritual realm that the mind can then reason over. The Methodists taught that faith was able to compensate for the limitation of the physical senses. Faith is a spiritual sense; it can perceive the world of invisible, spiritual things and transmit these impressions to the mind. The mind is then able to reason, judge, and form ideas about divine matters.<sup>8</sup> Wesley would repeat this definition of faith as a spiritual sense, an evidence of things not seen, throughout his ministry.

Sometimes Wesley used Hebrews 11:1 to differentiate between a “general” and a “particular” evidence of invisible things.<sup>9</sup> For instance, in

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<sup>6</sup>For part of the historical context of this treatise see Laura Bartels Felleman, “The Evidence of Things Not Seen: John Wesley’s Use of Natural Philosophy” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2004), chapter one.

<sup>7</sup>*Works* 11: p. 46, par. 6. For other examples of Wesley’s use of Hebrews 11:1 to contrast reason and faith see John Wesley, “The Life of Faith: Exemplified in the Eleventh Chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Hymns and sacred poems, 1740 : a collection of hymns by John and Charles Wesley*, vol. 1 (London : Printed by W. Strahan; reprint, Ryen, Holland: Sheppey Publications, 1994), 19 (page citation is to the reprint edition); *Works* (Jackson) Journal entry (12 May 1746) 2:14; Sermon 70, “The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,” 6: 355, par. II.1; Sermon 110, “On the Discoveries of Faith,” 7: 232, par. 4; and Sermon 113, “Walking By Sight and Walking By Faith,” 7:258, par. 10.

<sup>8</sup>*Works* 11: pp. 55-57, pars. 30-32, 35.

<sup>9</sup>For references to “general” and “particular” faith see *Works* (Jackson), “Thoughts on the Writings of Baron Swedenborg,” 13: 428, par. 8; “Extract of a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law,” 9: 496; Sermon 7, “The Way to the Kingdom,” 5: 85, par. II. 10; Sermon 9, “The Spirit of Bondage and the Spirit of Adoption,” 5:106, par. III.3; Sermon 36, “The Law Established Through Faith, Discourse 2,” 5: 463, par. II.3; Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” 6: 46, par. II.1 and p. 47, par. II.2; and Sermon 44, “Original Sin,” 6: 64, par. III.3. Other

his open letter to Conyers Middleton, Wesley lectured Middleton on the essence of "genuine Christianity" by defining true faith as an evidence or conviction of the unseen.<sup>10</sup> The contention that the physical senses are of no help in the discernment of supernatural matters is repeated in Wesley's dispute with Middleton. Only by faith can one see the invisible and eternal things of God. This divine, inward evidence of things unseen is called the general notion of faith, while assurance of both acceptance by and reconciliation with God is distinguished as the particular notion.<sup>11</sup>

Wesley's controversy with evangelicals of a more Calvinistic persuasion exhibits another use of Hebrews 11:1. In the Preface to *A Treatise on Justification* (1764), Wesley answered posthumously published letters written by James Hervey. The two had first become acquainted at Oxford University. While an undergraduate, Hervey had joined the Holy Club, a religious society led by Wesley, and had been instructed in the Hebrew language by the Lincoln Fellow. In later years they debated their competing understandings of justification through an exchange of tracts.<sup>12</sup> Their reliance on different passages of Scripture is apparent in the following:

"Faith is a persuasion that Christ has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead" [Hervey, 285]. I can by no means subscribe to this definition. There are hundreds, yea, thousands of true believers, who never once thought one way or the other of Christ's fulfilling all righteousness in their stead. I personally know many who, to this very hour, have no idea of it; and yet have each of them a

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terminology employed by Wesley similar to the uses above included "Living" and "Notional" faiths in Letter to Lady \_\_\_\_\_ (18 March 1760) 12: 237; "proper Christian" faith or "Christian sense" in Letters to Mr. Richard Tompson (25 July 1755 and 5 February 1756) 12: 468 and 469; Sermon 108, "On Riches," 7: 215, 216, par. II.1; and Letter to Charles Wesley (27 June 1766), *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 5: 16.

<sup>10</sup>Ted Campbell, "John Wesley and Conyers Middleton on Divine Intervention in History," *Church History* 55.1 (March 1986): 39-49. Wesley's open letter to Middleton is dated January 4, 1749.

<sup>11</sup>*Works* (Jackson) 10: 73, pars. 6 and 7. Faith as evidence of assurance is also mentioned in *Works* (Jackson) Sermon 17, "Circumcision of the Heart," 5:205, par. I.7; Sermon 4, "Scriptural Christianity," 5: 39, I.1; Sermon 46, "Wilderness State," 6: 78, par. I.1; and "Advice to the People Called Methodists," 8:353.

<sup>12</sup>Luke Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), 201-333.

divine evidence and conviction, “Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.” This is St. Paul’s account of faith; and it is sufficient. He that thus believes is justified.<sup>13</sup>

Wesley cited Hebrews 11:1 in his definition of justifying faith as an internal conviction of Christ’s love and sacrifice for humanity, as opposed to Hervey’s allusion to Matthew 3:15 and the teaching that the faithful are those who have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. The testimony of thousands of converts was all the proof Wesley needed to convince him that his understanding of faith was consistent with the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith.

The final example of Wesley’s polemical use of Hebrews 11:1 is found in Sermon 81 (1784). According to Albert Outler, Wesley wrote this sermon to allay suspicions that the Deed of Declaration for the Methodist Conference was the first step in the establishment of a new denomination. The formal creation of a corporation was a legality that ensured the continuation of the Methodist movement after the death of its founder, and was not, Wesley insisted, a move out of the Anglican church. By authoring a sermon on 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, “Come out from among them,” Wesley could distinguish himself from those who used these verses to support their departure from the Church of England.<sup>14</sup>

Rather than Nonconformity, Wesley took as his theme for this passage the need to distance oneself from the worldly:

By the same degrees all needless intercourse with unholy men will weaken our divine evidence and conviction of things unseen: It will dim the eyes of the soul whereby we see Him that is invisible, and weaken our confidence in him. It will gradually abate our “taste of the powers of the world to come;” and deaden that hope which before made us “sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.” It will imperceptibly cool that flame of love which before enabled us to say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>*Works* (Jackson) 10:333. For other examples see Sermon 5, “Justification By Faith,” 5:60,61, par. IV.2; Letter to the Reverend Mr. Walker (16 September 1757) 13: 201, 202; and Letter to the Reverend Dr. Free (2 May 1758) 8:501, par. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Albert Outler, Introduction to Sermon 81 by John Wesley in *Works* 3: 141.

<sup>15</sup>Sermon 81, “In What Sense We are to Leave the World,” *Works* (Jackson) 6: 468, par. 10.

The spiritual senses of faith are mutable in Wesley's opinion. The believer who ventures too far from the carefully prescribed disciplines of the Methodists, who enjoys too much familiarity with the worldly, will inevitably lose the capacity to sense the unseen things of God. The gift of faith is not inviolable; human actions can cause the return of spiritual blindness. This suggests that the opposite of faith is not doubt or intellectual uncertainties, but rather insensibility.<sup>16</sup> Though surrounded by a spiritual world, the backslider will no longer internally sense evidence of the existence of God.

This survey of Wesley's various uses of Hebrews 11:1 illustrates that he understood justifying faith to be, in general, an inner sensation of God and the things of God, and in particular a perception of atonement. This inwardly perceived evidence of the unseen was caused by a set of spiritual senses, analogous to the physical senses, which could detect the divine and share this discernment with the mind as long as the believer remained faithful.

The ability of faith to convince us of such things as the existence of the invisible world of spirits and the eternal world to come is suggested in other places throughout the Wesleyan corpus.<sup>17</sup> Most of these references are brief and provide little detail about what is encompassed in these worlds. Sermon 132, however, does elaborate upon the eternal world in ways that parallel the writings of natural philosophers.

## II. . . . Things Not Seen

The last sermon John Wesley wrote before his death in 1791 offers a reflection on what awaits us in the eternal world. Wesley compared the differing fates of the holy and unholy dead, as well as the various activities they engage in after death. We read of the holy dead's welcome into Paradise by the good angels and the unholy dead's fiendish reception by the bad angels. The saints are allowed to accompany the good angels as they minister to those still on earth, while the damned assist the demons in tempting and tormenting the living.

<sup>16</sup>For mention of doubt and the degrees of faith, see Journal entry (28 November 1750), *Works* 20: 370.

<sup>17</sup>For example, see in *Works* (Jackson) the Letter to Mrs. Mary Savage (30 June 1778) 12:499; Sermon 39, "Catholic Sprit," 5: 497, I.12; Sermon 52, "Reformation of Manners," 6:159, par. III.3; Sermon 54, "On Eternity," 6:196, par. 17; Sermon 106, "On Faith," 7:195, par. 1; and Sermon 110, "On the Discoveries of Faith," 7: 235.

Conjectures concerning the employments of the dead in the afterlife can also be found in works of natural philosophy. The natural philosophies of John Ray and William Derham are not about heaven or the afterlife, but instead are texts that use observation of the natural world as evidence for the existence of God. The study of such things as the propagation of plants, the structure of the human body, and planetary motion would inevitably lead to belief in a Creator, according to Ray and Derham.

*The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* does not claim to know what awaits us after we die, but its author, John Ray, seems to have had a very strong preference for how he wanted to spend eternity:

It is not likely that eternal life shall be a torpid and unactive state, or that it shall consist only in an uninterrupted and endless act of love; the other faculties shall be employed as well as the will . . . in contemplating the works of God, and observing the divine art and wisdom, manifested in the structure and composition of them; and reflecting upon their great Architect the praise and glory due to him. Then shall we clearly see, to our great satisfaction and admiration, the ends and uses of these things, which here were either too subtle for us to penetrate and discover, or too remote and unaccessible for us to come to any distinct view of, viz. The planets and fixed stars; those illustrious bodies, whole contents and inhabitants, whose stores and furniture, we have here so longing a desire to know, as also their mutual subserviency to each other.<sup>18</sup>

Ray had spent a lifetime traveling around England and Europe recording observations on plants, insects, and animals and then publishing his findings. Judging from this passage, it would appear that Ray did not want his life's work to end just because his physical life concluded. Ray anticipated an afterlife full of more of the same activities he pursued on Earth, only in the next life he would be able to study species on other planets, too. Death would not stop him; he would continue investigating the inner-workings of the universe for all eternity.

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<sup>18</sup>John Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (Edinburgh: Printed by and for W. Darling, 1777), 159, 160. See John Ray (1627-1705) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Ray](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ray) and [www.jri.org.uk/ray/cal/whojohnray](http://www.jri.org.uk/ray/cal/whojohnray).

Ray will have company on this endeavor if what William Derham wrote in *Astro-Theology: Or a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from a Survey of the Heavens* is any indication: "With what Pleasure then shall departed happy Souls survey the most distant Regions of the Universe, and view all those glorious Globes thereof, and their noble Appendages with a nearer View?"<sup>19</sup> One of the pleasures of heaven, at least as far as this Anglican priest was concerned, would be the ability to travel to other planets and discover what they are like.

There is one reference to heavenly space travel in the 1763 edition of John Wesley's *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation: or, a Compendium of Natural Philosophy*. It occurs in the conclusion where Wesley summarized Sir Matthew Hale's defense of natural philosophy, *Contemplations Moral and Divine*:

When once the immortal has taken its flight thro' the Stories of the Heavens, in one moment all these will be known distinctly and evidently. All our Doubts will be resolved, and our Souls filled with Light, without any mixture of Darkness.<sup>20</sup>

The 1777 edition of the *Survey* contains this additional passage that comes from a different source:

Ye inhabitants of the earth, who have received reason sufficient to convince you of the existence of these worlds, will you for ever be denied entrance into them? Will the INFINITELY GOOD BEING who shews them to you at a distance always refuse you admittance into them? No; since you are called to reside e're long among celestial hierarchies, you will like them fly from planet to planet: you will eternally advance from perfection to perfection, and every instant of your duration will be distinguished by the acquisition of farther degrees of knowledge. Whatever has been withheld from your terres-

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<sup>19</sup>William Derham, *Astro-Theology: Or a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from a Survey of the Heavens* (London: Printed for W. Innys, 1715), 115. A biographical sketch of William Derham (1657-1735) is included on the Galileo Project website <http://galileo.rice.edu/Catalog/NewFiles/derham.html>.

<sup>20</sup>John Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: Or a Compendium of Natural Philosophy* (Bristol: printed by William Pine, 1763), 2: 243, 244. Sir Matthew Hale (1609-1676) was the lord chief justice of England from 1671 to 1676. See [www.1911encyclopedia.org/H/HA/HALE\\_SIR\\_MATTHEW](http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/H/HA/HALE_SIR_MATTHEW) for more information.

trial perfection, you will obtain under this economy of glory:  
*you will know even as you are known.*<sup>21</sup>

This quotation comes from Wesley's paraphrase of a work by the natural philosopher Charles Bonnet (1720-1793). An eighteenth-century Swiss naturalist, Bonnet specialized in the observation of insects. Bonnet authored several works on natural philosophy which earned him membership in the Royal Society in 1743. As a student, he had a negative reaction to philosophy, preferring scientific observation to metaphysical speculation. Later he read Leibniz's *Theodicy* and decided that such speculations might hold relevance for his observations after all. He is best known for his work on the "Chain of Being," an attempt to sequentially order life forms from least to most complex.<sup>22</sup>

Wesley published two of Bonnet's works, *Contemplation of Nature* and also *Conjectures Concerning the Nature of Future Happiness*. The 1777 edition of the *Survey* contains an abridgement of the *Contemplation*, as did every succeeding edition. Wesley published the *Conjectures* as a small pamphlet, and in the Preface to this work he called Bonnet's *Conjectures* "one of the most sensible Tracts I ever read."<sup>23</sup>

The *Conjectures* offers speculations on what the afterlife will be like, and there is a striking similarity between Bonnet's comments on heavenly employments and some of Wesley's in Sermon 132. In the *Conjectures*, activities such as eternally praising God and loving others are both commented on.<sup>24</sup> The text also mentions other activities besides these, activities that have an obvious relation to Bonnet's interest in natural philosophy. Bonnet did not foresee death causing any interruption to his work as a natural philosopher. Not only would the dead be able to

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<sup>21</sup>John Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation, or, a Compendium of Natural Philosophy: In Five Volumes*, 3d ed. (London: Printed by J. Fry and Co., 1777), 4:112.

<sup>22</sup>Lorin Anderson, *Charles Bonnet and the Order of the Known* (London: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1982); Virginia P. Dawson, "The Problem of Soul in the 'Little Machines' of Reaumur and Charles Bonnet," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1985): 503-522; Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 194, 230, 231, 275, 283-286; and Oliver Rieppel, "The Reception of Leibniz's Philosophy in the Writings of Charles Bonnet (1720-1793)," *Journal of the History of Biology*, 21 (1988): 119-145.

<sup>23</sup>Charles Bonnet, *Conjectures Concerning the Nature of Future Happiness* (London: New Chapel, City-Road, 1790), 2.

<sup>24</sup>Bonnet, 14, sec. 6, 16-19, sec. 7.

make scientific observations of life on Earth, they also would be able to study life on other planets. To facilitate this work, Bonnet thought the dead might be able to move throughout the entire creation at the speed of light.<sup>25</sup> Wesley also described the dead as “quick as thought” and “swifter than the light; even as swift as thought; they are well able to traverse the whole universe in the twinkling of an eye.”<sup>26</sup>

The ability to travel throughout God's creation serves a purpose beyond the satisfaction of wanderlust. For Bonnet, the comparison of worlds with worlds and the discovery of life forms on other planets will enable the completion of the Chain of Being:

When we shall have been allowed to contemplate this *chain*, as I have supposed those intelligences contemplate it, for whom our world seems to have been principally formed; when we shall be able, like them, to follow the *prolongations* of it into other worlds; then, and then only, shall we know the *natural order* of the links, their reciprocal dependence, their secret relations, the proximate reason of each link. . . .<sup>27</sup>

Apparently Bonnet's life-work was to be his after-life work as well. In death he would finally be able to fill in the gaps and missing links in the Chain. Bonnet's interest in furthering his explorations of the Creation even after death is understandable given his profession, but this is not an interest usually associated with Wesley. Nevertheless, in Sermon 132 Wesley also speculated that the discovery of new life forms would be one of the employments of the next life:

What astonishing scenes will then discover themselves to our newly-opening senses! Probably fields of ether, not only ten-fold, but ten thousandfold, “the length of this terrene” and with what variety of furniture, animate and inanimate! How many orders of beings, not discovered by organs of flesh and blood. Perhaps thrones, dominions, principedoms, virtues, powers?<sup>28</sup>

Instead of Bonnet's missing links, Wesley proposed the ether of classical physics and the beings mentioned in Colossians 1:16 as some of the probable discoveries awaiting us in the life after death.

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<sup>25</sup>Bonnet, 20, sec. 8.

<sup>26</sup>*Works* 4: 193, par. §7, 196, par. §11.

<sup>27</sup>Bonnet, 13, sec. 5.

<sup>28</sup>*Works* 4: 192, par. §7.

The exploration of the cosmos will involve not only the search for exotic new life forms in remote parts of the universe, but will include the study of species on this planet as well. Bonnet speculated that new properties and qualities will be discovered in plants, animals, and minerals already identified and studied by naturalists.<sup>29</sup> Wesley echoed this expectation and thought the dead would be able “to penetrate the inmost substance of things, whereof we now discern only the surface.”<sup>30</sup> Both men thought this activity would be aided by new senses that would be opened up in the soul after death.<sup>31</sup>

### III. Faith and Conjectures

There is one important difference between the expectations of Bonnet and those of Wesley. Sermon 132 states that faith as the “evidence of things not seen” imparts knowledge of the eternal world awaiting the believer after death. Bonnet’s thesis makes clear that his text is based on speculations and not revelation. Rather than edit out the statements he disagreed with, Wesley instead noted his contrary opinion through a series of footnotes. In response to Bonnet’s statement,

Can the man, who is ignorant of so many things which belong to the world he *does* inhabit, form any idea of the things which belong to the world he only *will* inhabit?<sup>32</sup>

Wesley replied in a footnote:

This falls full upon unbelievers, and upon all nominal Christians. But it does not touch those who have that faith, which is *the evidence of things not seen*. J. W.<sup>33</sup>

Wesley dismissed the limits of knowledge described by Bonnet as a reference to the faith of unbelievers and “nominal Christians”. Those with a Hebrews 11:1-type faith would be able to form ideas of the world to come because they would “see” that world by faith.

In another point of contradiction, Wesley took exception to the following Bonnet statement:

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<sup>29</sup>Bonnet, 10, 11, sec. 4.

<sup>30</sup>*Works* 4: 192, par. §7.

<sup>31</sup>Bonnet, 11, sec. 4; *Works* 4: 192, par. §7.

<sup>32</sup>Bonnet, 6, sec. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Bonnet, 6, sec. 1.

I think, therefore, "that we know of the life to come, all that we can know here below, and that to give us more light upon the subject of this future state, our present state must, it seems, undergo some change."<sup>34</sup>

Wesley stated in a footnote to this sentence: "Yes, we must be *born again*."<sup>35</sup> This statement is consistent with Wesley's characterization of justifying faith as an evidence of things not seen, which includes "the life to come."

The term "spiritual senses" does not appear in Wesley's series of footnotes, but the concept can be noted in the next exchange. Bonnet wrote:

The *degree* of perfection to which men can attain upon earth, has a direct *relation* to the *means* of knowing and of acting which are given him; these means themselves have a direct relation to the *world* which he inhabits.<sup>36</sup>

Wesley replied, "Most true, all the *natural* means: But are there no *supernatural*?"<sup>37</sup> Based on all the instances in his writings mentioned above, where Wesley defined faith as a spiritual sense that provides evidence of the unseen things of God, we may presume that this footnote is a rhetorical question because there definitely were, in his opinion, supernatural means for acquiring knowledge of the spiritual world. Immediately after the paragraph cited above, the argument continued:

A more elevated state, therefore, of human faculties would not have had relation to this world, in which man was to pass his first moments of existence. But these faculties are capable of indefinite perfection and we can easily conceive that some of the natural means which will one day perfect them may exist in man even at present.<sup>38</sup>

Wesley responded, "Yea, and they may be 'put into action' too."<sup>39</sup> Building upon what Wesley wrote about the capabilities of the spiritual senses, it is reasonable to interpret this comment as referring to the Christian's

<sup>34</sup>Bonnet, 6, sec. 1.

<sup>35</sup>Bonnet, 6, sec. 1.

<sup>36</sup>Bonnet, 8, sec. 2.

<sup>37</sup>Bonnet, 8, sec. 2.

<sup>38</sup>Bonnet, 8, sec. 2.

<sup>39</sup>Bonnet, 8, sec. 2.

ability to “put into action” the spiritual senses and thereby perceive God and the things of God by faith.

Sermon 132 comes to a similar conclusion. In the sermon’s final paragraph, Wesley gave thanks for faith which he called “a new set of senses” opened up in the soul by God which provides “evidence of unseen things.”<sup>40</sup> One of the unseen things faith reveals is the activities in which the dead will engage while in Paradise. The pursuits described in the sermon may sound like bizarre suppositions to current readers, but within Wesley’s historical context some of these employments would have had a familiar ring to any of his contemporaries who read natural philosophy.

Though presented as if gathered through the evidence of faith, Wesley’s description of “holy employments” in Sermon 132 reflects a motif found in the natural philosophies of John Ray, William Derham, and Charles Bonnet. All three envisioned a natural philosopher’s Paradise awaiting them after death. In the next life they would carry on the work they did while on Earth. They will investigate God’s creation by traveling throughout the universe and scientifically analyzing all they discover. These are not the sorts of activities one might expect Wesley to anticipate as he contemplated the eternal world. Nevertheless, such sentiments can be found in the sermon Wesley wrote approximately six weeks before his death.

Given the timing of this last sermon, it would be easy to practice a kind of hagiographical, psycho-historical analysis and conclude that Wesley was sharing with his audience a prophetic gift of grace. In Sermon 132, however, we get no indication that Wesley was writing out of his faith experience or describing his personal anticipation of the afterlife. Neither can we mark this sermon as the emergence in Wesley’s theology of a turn towards a scientific inferential Christianity. Bonnet’s *Conjectures* provided a model for speculating on the afterlife without attributing such reflections to faith, but Wesley did not follow this line of logic. Instead, in his final sermon Wesley continued to define faith, not speculation, as the only source for inwardly convincing evidence capable of imparting knowledge of the unseen things of God.

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<sup>40</sup>*Works* 4: 200, par. §18.

# JOHN WESLEY, A FAITHFUL REPRESENTATIVE OF JACOBUS ARMINIUS

by

W. Stephen Gunter<sup>1</sup>

In an important essay written on the occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Leiden, Gerrit Jan Hoenderdaal<sup>2</sup> quotes the late Albert Outler regarding possible connections between Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and John Wesley (1703-1791): “Arminius himself had never been one of Wesley’s really decisive sources.”<sup>3</sup> He concludes, “Whether Wesley interpreted Arminius’ thought correctly may be doubted.”<sup>4</sup> This assertion has been commonplace for the last half century. The implicit assumption seems to be that textual dependence is required for an accurate interpretation. This issue needs to be revisited at both levels: textual awareness or dependence and faithfulness in interpretation. In order to do this adequately, we must recognize some important distinctions with regard to the theology of Arminius, Arminianism, and Remonstrantism.

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<sup>2</sup>G. J. Hoenderdaal, “The Debate about Arminius outside the Netherlands.” *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century, An Exchange of Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 157, note 33.

<sup>3</sup>Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 23.

<sup>4</sup>G. J. Hoenderdaal, *Leiden University*, 144.

In his 1958 doctoral dissertation, Carl Bangs pointed out that these three do not denote the same thing, although the latter two may historically be said to have begun with Arminius. At times Arminianism is used to describe all three, but this is at best confusing. Bangs notes that Arminianism “can mean the theological position of Arminius himself. It can mean some kind of protest against Calvinism. It can mean a rallying point for dissent under the banner of toleration.” And he adds, “Confusion results when these possible meanings are not clearly distinguished.”<sup>5</sup> Even more broadly, Arminianism has become a catch-all synonymous with liberalism or universalism.<sup>6</sup> With regard to Arminius himself, it is not only among Wesley specialists like Albert Outler and Remonstrant specialists like Hoenderdaal that any essential similarity of theology between Arminius and Wesley has been denied. In an article comparing the two, James Meeuwssen’s thesis was that Arminius stood with the Remonstrants rather than with Wesley.<sup>7</sup> The implication of this is that Arminius should be linked more with the later Remonstrants and hence could not be evangelical in the same soteriological sense as John Wesley.

### **Textual Awareness or Dependence**

Until recent years it has been broadly assumed that Wesley had no personal knowledge of Arminius’ writings, and that his Arminianism was one which he breathed in an Arminianized Anglicanism, or perhaps more locally in Epworth, the Epworth/Axholme region of Lincolnshire having been drained and made habitable by Dutchmen led by Cornelius Vermuyden during the reign of Charles I.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that John Wesley’s direct knowledge of the Arminian theology assessed at Dort was minimal as far as we know. A copy of Thomas Bennet’s, *Directions for*

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<sup>5</sup>Carl Bangs, “Arminius and Reformed Theology” (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1958), 249.

<sup>6</sup>See Lambertus Jacobus van Holk, “From Arminius to Arminianism in Dutch Theology,” in Gerald O. McCulloh, *Man’s Faith and Freedom. The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 27-45.

<sup>7</sup>James Meeuwssen, “Original Arminianism and Methodistic Arminianism Compared,” *Reformed Review* 14.1 (1960): 21-36.

<sup>8</sup>G. F. Nuttall, “The Influence of Arminianism in England,” in McCulloh, *The Theological Influence of Jacobus Arminius*, 55. Nuttall cites a pamphlet in the Dr. Williams’ Library, London, by A. de M. Chesterman, *Axholme Baptists* (Crowle, Lincolnshire: 1949), 15, 20.

*Studying*, was in Wesley's personal library,<sup>9</sup> which Wesley makes a note of reading in January, 1731.<sup>10</sup> Herein may be found important excerpts from Arminius' *Declaration of Sentiments* (delivered in The Hague to the States of Holland in 1608), as well as main points from Arminius' earlier public disputation "On Predestination," given at Leiden in February, 1604.<sup>11</sup> The excerpt from Arminius' *Sentiments* reproduced by Bennet is not lengthy, but it does reflect the heart of Arminius' differences with the strict Calvinists. Unlike the formal disputations at the university, Arminius composed his *Declaration of Sentiments* in Dutch; the excerpt likely read by Wesley (in Latin) is as follows in the original [ET: *Writings* I:247-48]:

I have hitherto been stating those opinions concerning the article of Predestination which are inculcated in our churches in the University of Leyden, and of which I disapprove. I have at the same time produced my own reasons, why I form such an unfavorable judgment concerning them; and I will now declare my own judgment concerning them; and I will now declare my own opinions on this subject, which are of such a

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<sup>9</sup>Information on Wesley's ownership of this volume was supplied by Professor Richard Heitzenrater in an email of March 15, 1999. My attention was initially drawn to Wesley's reading of Arminius' excerpts, one if not the only record that we have of his direct contact with Arminius' thought prior to his publications in *The Arminian Magazine* (1778 and following years), by the Rev. Dr. Herbert McGonigle's thesis, "John Wesley: Evangelical Arminian," Ph. D., Keele University (England), 1994—published as *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism* (Paternoster: Carlisle: 2001).

<sup>10</sup>Richard Heitzenrater, "Oxford Methodists," 351. In Wesley's "Oxford Diary II" we learn that he bought *Directions for Studying* after November 23, 1730, started reading it on December 1, and finished it on January 24, 1731. This information will be included in the forthcoming volume of the *Bicentennial Works of John Wesley, XXIV: Journal and Diaries, VII*, edited by Richard Heitzenrater.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas Bennet, *Directions for Studying: I. A General System or Body of Divinity. II. The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* (London: James and John Knapton, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1727), 95-98, for the excerpts from Arminius. Bennett notes that the Latin text is from *Declaratio Senten*, 119, *inter illius opera*, Lugd. Bat., 1629. The original Dutch text is reproduced in J. Arminius, *Verklaring van Jacobus Arminius, afgelegd in de vergadering van de Staten van Holland op 30 oktober 1608*. Edited with an historical introduction by G. J. Hoenderdaal (Lochem: De Tijdstroom, 1960), 44-138, esp. 104-106.

description as, according to my views, appear most conformable to the Word of God.

The first absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful man is that by which he decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest and King, who might destroy sin by his own death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue.

The second precise and absolute decree of God is that in which he decreed to receive into favor *those who repent and believe*, and, in Christ, for HIS sake and through HIM, to effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as persevered to the end; but to leave in sin, and under wrath, *all impenitent persons and unbelievers*, and to damn them as aliens from Christ.

The third divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer *in a sufficient and efficacious manner* the MEANS which were necessary for repentance and faith; and to have such administration instituted (1.) according to the *Divine Wisdom*, by which God knows what is proper and becoming both to his mercy and his severity, and (2.) according to Divine Justice, by which He is prepared to adopt whatever his wisdom may prescribe and put it in execution.

To these succeeds the fourth decree, by which God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from all eternity those individuals who *would*, through his preventing grace, *believe*, and, through his subsequent grace *would persevere*, according to the before described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and, by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who *would not believe and persevere*.

### **Election and Preventient Grace**

These paragraphs above are perhaps the most direct contact that Wesley would have had with Arminius' actual writings, but direct literary dependency is not the issue which needs to be argued. My intent is to indicate that Wesley, with or without direct literary dependence, reflects in his soteriology several foundational assumptions that can also be found

in Arminius. On the issue of election, all agree: Those who believe will be saved; those who do not believe will not be saved. Arminius takes the position that predestination to both of these classes is rooted in God's foreknowledge. Wesley gives little attention to the formal epistemological issue of foreknowledge, but he pays great attention to the *via gratiae* by which this is worked out. This is central also in Arminius' point four above with regard to "those individuals who *would*, through his preventing grace, *believe*, and, through his subsequent grace *would persevere*, according to the before described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and, by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who *would not believe and persevere*."

At work in Wesley, and I propose also in Arminius, is the notion that, however God chooses to save humanity, this must be along the lines of divine prevenience and humanity's cooperant *responsible grace*.<sup>12</sup> The contours of concern with Wesley and Arminius are similar, especially on the doctrine of sin; and if forced to choose in a debate on working out our salvation, both would side with Luther against Erasmus on the freedom of the will issue. Arminius and Wesley, however, differ with Luther on how the will is "set free" to participate in God's saving work. The key, of course, is how efficient and efficacious grace is applied and experienced. If axiomatic similarities can be demonstrated between Arminius and Wesley, then our premise can be sustained: Wesley was not an Arminian in the general Anglican sense of English Arminianism, much less was he an Arminian like the Remonstrants of Holland in the latter part of the eighteenth century, especially as reflected in the theology of Philip of Limborch;<sup>13</sup> he was, however, a faithful representative of Arminius' evangelical soteriology.

Methodologically, then, we will not compare Arminius and Wesley on the basis of their soteriology in connection with election and predestination, but rather on the salvific implication of their respective doctrines of grace. A comprehensive analysis would entail at least four dimensions of grace: (1) its necessity; (2) its nature; (3) its ground; and (4) its appropria-

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<sup>12</sup>See the comprehensive analysis of Wesley's theology by Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace. John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).

<sup>13</sup>See John Mark Hicks, "The Theology of Grace in the Thought of Jacobus Arminius and Philip van Limborch: A Study in the Development of Seventeenth-century Dutch Arminianism" (Ph. D., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985).

<sup>14</sup>This fourfold demarcation is used by Hicks, "The Theology of Grace in Arminius and Limborch," 21-22.

tion.<sup>14</sup> The necessity of grace is rooted in human need as a result of the Fall and original sin. The nature of grace as God's sovereign initiative involves a discussion of the role of "free will" and the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The ground of grace is rooted in issues related to atonement theories and forensic imputation. The appropriation issues revolve around the means of justification and the relations between faith and works. A detailed analysis of these is not possible within the scope of this article, but perhaps we will gain sufficient insight within the next few pages to give warrant to our thesis that Wesley faithfully represented Arminius in his fundamental assumptions with regard to synergistic grace.

### **Distinctive Arminian Emphases**

In accord with orthodox Protestant assumptions prevalent at the time, Arminius develops his anthropology along the lines of humanity being created in the image and likeness of God. This image consists of two parts, one described as natural and the other supra-natural. The natural image is essential and indispensable to the human *esse*. The supra-natural and accidental attributes are those which may be possessed or missed without destroying our human essence:

The image and likeness of God, after which man was created, belongs partly to the very nature of man, so that without it man cannot be man; but it partly consists in those things which concern supernatural, heavenly and spiritual things. The former class comprises the understanding, the affections, and the will, which is free; but the latter, the knowledge of God and of things divine, righteousness, true holiness, &c.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Arminius, "Certain Articles," VI.v, in *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprinted 1977), 2:486. [Hereafter cited as *Writings*.] References to the Latin text are from: *Iacobi Arminii, veteraquinatis batavi, S.S. Theologiae Doctoris eximii, Opera Theologia*. Lugundi Batavorum: Apud Godefridum Basson, 1629. [Cited as *Opera*.]: "De Creatione" in *Opera*, 952, ¶ 5: "Imago & similitudo Dei, ad quam homo conditus est, partim ad ipsam hominis naturam pertinet, adeo ut sine ea homo nequeat esse homo: partim vero constitit in illis, quae supernaturalia, caelestia, spiritualia concernunt. Illa sunt Intellectus, Affectus, Voluntas quae libera est: ista vero agnitio Dei & Divinorum, justitia, sanctitas, etc." Arminius also defends this distinction against Franciscus Junius, "Discussion with F. Junius," X, in *Writings*, 3:116-133. *Opera* (1629), "Iacobi Arminii amica cum D. Francisco Iunio de Praedestinatione per litteras habita Collatio," 458-619.

For Arminius these dimensions of the *imago* can not be separated either logically or ontologically from the *soul* of a human being, for it is in the soul that these are exhibited.<sup>16</sup> The soul comprises both intellect and will, and functionally the intellect apprehends truth by “a natural and necessary” act, whereas the will is intrinsically free to apprehend or not to apprehend. However, Arminius asserts that the will prior to the Fall is consistent with being created in God’s image and is therefore “inclined to good.”<sup>17</sup> In the primitive righteous state, human intellect and understanding (properties of the soul) were endowed with “wisdom.” At the same time, the will was endowed with righteousness and true holiness, “by which the will was fitted and ready to follow what this wisdom commanded to be done, and what it shewed it to be desired.” This was a human “original righteousness” and had there been no disobedience, these endowments would have been “communicated to his posterity.”<sup>18</sup> This means also that the will was completely free to seek an inferior good, even one which entailed condemnation. Thus, there is for Arminius a dialectic: the will was free and able to pursue either good or evil, even if it was sufficiently informed and moved by the understanding to seek the highest good.<sup>19</sup>

As one might expect, Arminius applies this concept of freedom specifically to the biblical figure Adam, and he insists that the sin of Adam was a free act on his part, with no hint of necessity in the human choice.<sup>20</sup> Adam sinned because he freely chose between equally available alternatives: “. . . by his free will, his own proper motion being allowed by God, and himself persuaded by the devil.”<sup>21</sup> The public symbol that

<sup>16</sup>Arminius, “Private Disputations,” XXVI.vii, in *Writings*, 2:64. [References to the Latin text are from: Iacobi Arminii, veteraquinatis batavi, S. Theologiae Doctoris eximii, Disputationes Magnam partem 5. Theologiae complectentes. Lugundi Batavorum: Apud Ioannem Paets & Thomam Basson, 1610. [Cited as *Disp.priv.* or *Disp.pub.*] *Disputationum privatarum*(1610), XXVI.vii, 57-58.

<sup>17</sup>“Private Disputations,” XXVI.v, in *Writings*, 2:63. *Disp.priv.* XXVI.v, 57: “Intellectus enim apprehendit Ens & verum, tum universale tum singulare naturali & necessaria....”

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVI.vi, 2:63-64. *Disp.priv.*XXVI.vi, 57.

<sup>19</sup>“Public Disputations,” XI.vi, in *Writings*, 1:525-26. *Disputationum publicarum* (1610), XI.vi, p. 117. [Hereafter cited as *Disp.pub.*]

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, VII.iv, 1:481. *Disp.pub.*, VII.iv, 75-76.

<sup>21</sup>“Private Disputations,” XXX.vi, in *Writings*, 2:75-76. *Disp.priv.*XXX.vi, 70: “Voluntate igitur libera, motu proprio à Deo permissio, à Diabolo persuaso, peccavit homo.”

reflects the repercussions of this decision is ejection from paradise;<sup>22</sup> the personal loss is reflected in the loss of “original righteousness” through fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This *privatio* is the deprivation “of that primitive righteousness and holiness, which, because they are the effects of the Holy Spirit dwelling in man, ought not to have remained in him after he had fallen from the favor of God. . . .”<sup>23</sup> The implications of this fall are both personal and racial, for sin “is common to the entire race and to all their posterity.”<sup>24</sup> The essential nature of this fallen state is the reality that each person is born void of fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit: “All men, who were to be propagated from them [Adam and Eve] in a natural way, became obnoxious to death temporal and death eternal, and devoid (*vacui*) of this gift of the Holy Spirit or original righteousness.” The end result of this is the “privation of the image of God,” or “original sin.”<sup>25</sup> The practical result of this privation is evident in every person as an “original propensity of our nature towards that which is con-

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXI.vii, 2:78. *Disp.priv.* XXXI.vii, 72: “Utriusque indicium fuit illorum ex paradiso ejectio.”

<sup>23</sup>“Public Disputations,” VII.xv, in *Writings*, 1:485. *Disp.pub.* VII.xv, 79-80: “Ex ira vero sequitur illatio poene, quae hic duplex est: . . . 2. quae quia erant effecta Spiritus Sancti inhabitantis in homine, permanere non debuerrunt in homine, qui ex favore Dei exciderat & iram incurrerat.”

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, VII.xvi, 1:486. *Disp.pub.*, VII.xvi, 80: “Totum vero hoc peccatum non est proprium primorum hominum, sed commune totius generis & omnium posterorum. . . .”

<sup>25</sup>“Private Disputations,” XXXI.ix, in *Writings*, 2:79. *Disp.priv.* XXXI.ix, 72-73: “Hinc accidit ut omnes homines qui naturaliter ex ipsis propagandi fuerint morti temporali & aeternae obnoxii evaserint, & dono isto Spiritus sancti sive justitiâ originali vacui; quae poena privatio imaginis Dei & peccatum originale appellari solet.” It is true that Arminius doubted whether the privation of original righteousness was sufficient to account for original sin or whether there was some contrary quality in man which moved him to sin, some factor in addition to the privation of original righteousness. He did not consider the issue substantive enough to make a difference, and it is clear that he preferred the alternative that there was no outside influence *causing* the disobedience. See “Private Disputations,” XXXI.x, 2:79 (*Disp.priv.* XXXI.x., 73) as well as “Certain Articles,” XII.ii, in *Writings*, 2:492 (*Opera*, “De Peccato Originis,” 955-56). Carl Bangs, *Arminius. A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 340, has argued that Arminius’ position is “not explicitly contrary to the received Lutheran and Reformed confessions of the time . . . [which] do not distinguish between the negative and positive aspects of this corruption.” Bangs refers to the Formula of Concord, Article 1, and the Belgic Confession, Article 15.

trary to the divine law, which propensity we have contracted from our first parents, through carnal generation.”<sup>26</sup>

If this is the human predicament, then what is the divine solution? Both Arminius and Wesley find it in specific notions about grace. Unlike other Reformed theologians, especially Calvinians, Arminius speaks seldom about “common grace.” Perhaps the reason for this is to be found not so much in his not believing the category helpful, but rather by the exigencies of the contexts in which he theologized. From the earliest days of his pastorate in Amsterdam through his years in Leiden, he was involved in polemics that entailed very specific questions about how the *ordo salutis* is worked out. The practical result of this is that Arminius writes almost exclusively about special or saving grace, and he chose to develop his theology of grace in the context of *vocatio*, divine calling:

[There is] a gracious act of God in Christ by which, through [God’s] word and Spirit, He calls forth sinful men, who are liable to condemnation and placed under the dominion of sin, from the condition of the animal life, and from the pollutions and corruptions of this world . . . unto “the fellowship of Jesus Christ,” and of his kingdom and its benefits; that, being united unto Him as their Head, they may derive from him life, sensation, motion, and plentitude of every spiritual blessing, to the glory of God and their own salvation.<sup>27</sup>

In public disputation sixteen, “On the Vocation of Men to Salvation,” and other correlated disputations, Arminius works his salvation logic along formal epistemological lines using Trinitarian language. God

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<sup>26</sup> “Public Disputations,” VIII.xiii, in *Writings*, 1:492. *Disp.pub.* VIII.xii, 86: “Causa . . . est propensio nostra originalis in id quod legi divinae est contrarium, quam per carnalem generationem ex primis nostris parentibus contraximus.”

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, XVI.ii, 1:570. *Disp.pub.*XVI.ii, 158: “Vocationem definimus, Gratosam actionem Dei in Christo, qua homines peccatores, reos condemnationis & sub dominio peccati constitutos ex animalis vitae conditione & mundi hujus inquinamentis & corruptelis evocat per verbum & spiritum suum ad Christi, regnique ipsius, & bonorum ejus communionem, ut cum illo tanquam capite suo uniti vitam, sensum, motum, omnisque spiritualis benedictionis plenitudinem ex ipso percipiant ad Dei gloriam & ipsorum salutem.”

the Father in the Son is the efficient cause.<sup>28</sup> Ordinarily the instrumental cause is the written Word of God made efficacious by the Holy Spirit, but the extraordinary cause is the immediate sensible work of the Spirit, if need be without the accompanying written Word.<sup>29</sup> The object of vocation on which this special saving grace operates is sinful humanity in its natural “ungraced” state.<sup>30</sup> The telos of vocation is the salvation of sinful beings, without which special grace human participation in the saving work would be impossible.<sup>31</sup> The accidental result of vocation is the rejection of grace by man.<sup>32</sup> Among interpreters of Reformed theology,

<sup>28</sup>“Private Disputations,” XLII.ii, in *Writings*, 2:104. *Disp.priv.* XLII.ii, 98: “Causa efficiens huius vocationis est Deus & Pater in Filio, qui Filius & ipse ut Mediator & Rex à Deo Patre constitutus vocat per Spiritum sanctum, qua ille Spiritus Dei est datus Mediatori, & Spiritus Christi regis & capitis Ecclesiae, per quem Pater & Filius operantur adhuc. Haec autem vocatio sic administratur per Spiritum ut & ipse Spiritus auctor eius rectè appelletur. . . .” Also, “Public Disputations,” XVI.iii, 1:571. *Disp.pub.*XVI.iii, p. 158: “Causa efficiens hujus vocationis est Deus & Pater in filio: qui filius & ipse ut Mediator & rex Ecclesiae à Patre constitutus vocat per Spiritum Sanctum, quâ ille spiritus Dei est datus Mediatori, & spiritus Christi regis & capitis Ecclesiae, per quem Pater & filius operantur adhuc.”

<sup>29</sup>“Public Disputations,” XVI.v, in *Writings*, 1:571. *Disp.pub.* XVI.v, 158-59: “Instrumentalis verò est verbum Dei sive predicatione sive scriptione administratum opera hominum: quod sit ordinarie, sive citra opera humanum, intus menti & voluntati propositum à Deo immediatè, quod est estraordinarium.”

<sup>30</sup>“Private Disputations,” XLII.v, in *Writings*, 1:105; and “Dissertation on Romans 7,” III, in *Writings*, 2:390: “But it also teaches that the grace of Christ, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit and of love, is absolutely necessary for this purpose.” *Opera*, “Cap. VII. Epistolae ad Romanos Dissertatio,” Part III.2.v., 905-06: “. . . sed gratiam Christi, nempe, donum Sp. Sancti & charitatis ad hoc esse absolute necessarium, quae gratia non detur secundum merita, qua hulla sunt sed merè sive gratuita.”

<sup>31</sup>“Letter to Hippolytus,” IV, in *Writings*, 2:472: “I affirm, therefore, that this grace is simply and absolutely necessary for the illumination of the mind, the due ordering of the affections, and the inclination of the will to that which is good.” *Opera*, “Epistola ad Hypolytum,” IV, 944: “[Libero arbitrio] sine silla nullo verum & spirituale bonum incipere aut perficere posse. Gratiam, & quidem quae Christi est & ad Regenerationem pertinet . . . doco necessarium esse simpliciter & absolutè, ad mentis illuminationem, affectuum ordinationem, & voluntatis ad bonum inclinationem illa est, quae operatur in mentem, in affectum, in voluntatem. . . .”

<sup>32</sup>“Private Disputations,” XLII.xii, in *Writings*, 2:106. *Disp.priv.* XLII.xii, 100: “Eventus vocationis per accidens, est sermonis gratiae repulsa, consilii divini contemptus, resistentia, Spiritui sancto sancta; quorum propriam causam & per habet malitiam & duritiam cordis humani. . . .”

this is one of the most contested aspects of Arminius' soteriology; and Arminius himself is aware that the crux of the issue is "the mode of [the Spirit's] operation, *whether it be resistible or not.*" To which his own reply reads simply: "With respect to which, I believe, according to the scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered."<sup>33</sup>

The issue, of course, is synergism. On this specific point we will see that Arminius and Wesley begin in agreement, with Arminius taking a turn which Wesley was unwilling to make. Arminius argues that those who resist the operation of the Spirit do so at their own peril and as a result of "malice and hardness of heart," which is itself, formally speaking, the "cause" of their rejection of the divine call to salvation. To this point, Wesley and Arminius would be together. Arminius, however, also argues that, as a result of the hardness of heart and consequent rejection of salvation, God *avenges* the "contempt shown to his word and call, and the injury done to his Holy Spirit," by removing the grace which had initially enabled them to accept the call. The withdrawal of God's gracious Spirit results in the resistant sinner being "given over to a reprobate mind" and finally delivered into "the power of Satan."<sup>34</sup> Wesley would agree that those who persevere in resisting are finally given over to Satan, but he does not make the formal move of declaring that this is because God withdraws the gracious assisting Holy Spirit, but rather because the sinner persists in rejecting the Spirit's overtures. The practical results, of course, are the same.

Before proceeding more specifically to Wesley's thought, it is important for us to look at the manner in which Arminius theologizes with regard to the internal work of the Holy Spirit when salvation is efficaciously worked out in the believer. Arminius insists that this spiritual work is direct and personal, often referring to it as a divine infusion. In his letter to Hippolytus he argues that regenerating grace "infuses good

<sup>33</sup>Hoenderdaal, ed., *Verklaring*, 114; *Writings*, "Declaration", 1:254; *Opera*, "Declaratio Sententia," IV, 122.

<sup>34</sup>"Public Disputations," XVI.xiv, in *Writings*, 1:574. *Disp.pub.* XVI.xiv, 161: After repeating verbatim the above quote from *Disp.priv.* XLII.xii, 100, Arminius adds: ". . . hunc verò eventum & alius eventus non rarò subsequitur, justum Dei verbi & vocationis suae contemptum, spirituique suo sancto sanctam injuriam vindicatis, judicium; exque eo nata mentis excaecatio & cordis obduratio, inque reprobum sensum & potestatem Sathanae traditio."

thoughts into the mind, inspires good desires into the affections, and bends the will to carry into execution good thought and good desires.”<sup>35</sup> This grace is further explicated as: 1. a gratuitous affection; 2. a divine enabling infusion; and 3. a perpetual assistance and continued aid of the Holy Spirit. Because this structure is maintained in Arminius’ most mature statement near the end of his life, seeing his wording is important.

In reference to *Divine Grace*, I believe, (1) It is a *gratuitous affection* by which God is kindly affected towards a miserable sinner, and according to which he, in the first place, gives his Son, “that whosoever believeth in him might have eternal life,” and, afterwards, he justifies him in Christ Jesus and for his sake, and adopts him into the right of sons, unto salvation. (2) It is an *infusion* (both into the human understanding and into the will and affections), of all those gifts of the Holy Spirit which appertain to the regeneration and renewing of man—such as *faith, hope, charity, etc.*; for, without these gracious gifts, man is not sufficient to think, will or do any thing that is good. (3) It is that *perpetual assistance* and continued aid of the Holy Spirit, according to which He acts upon and excites to good the man who has been already renewed, by infusing into him salutary cogitations, and by inspiring him with good desires, that he may thus actually will whatever is good; and according to which God may then will and work together with man, that man may perform whatever he wills.<sup>36</sup>

In this manner, I ascribe to *grace THE COMMENCEMENT, THE CONTINUANCE AND THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL GOOD*, and to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all, nor resist any evil temptation, *without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace*. From this statement it will clearly appear, that I by no means do injustice to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to man’s free will. For the whole controversy reduces itself to the solution of this question, “Is

<sup>35</sup>“Letter to Hippolytus,” IV, in *Writings*, 2:472. *Opera*, “Epistola ad Hypolytum,” IV, 944: “. . . quae menti infundit bonas cogitationes, affectu inspirat bona desideria fleçtit, [flectit? niet duidelijk in *Opera*; ik vermoed de ‘xsi’ als vervanging van ‘xstit’] ad exequendum bonas cogitationes & desideria bona.”

<sup>36</sup>Hoenderdaal, (ed.), *Verklaring*, 113-14. [*Declaration*, IV, “The Grace of God,” 1:253 in *Writings*]. *Opera*, “Declaratio Sententia,” 121-22.

the grace of God a certain irresistible force?" That is, the controversy does not relate to those actions or operations which may be ascribed to grace (for I acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions or operations as any man ever did,) but it relates solely to the mode of operation, *whether it be irresistible or not*. With respect to which, I believe, according to the scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered.

### Wesley's Arminianism

It now remains for us to see to what extent Arminius' understanding of creation, fall, freedom, and redemption can be found in Wesley's writings, pointing out again that there is no record of direct dependence on sources other than the likely reading of Arminius in 1731. The question before us is whether there is a discernible agreement in theological intent and defined means. Did Wesley agree with Arminius in his understanding of what is entailed in created human nature, the effects of the fall, and how original sin is defined? Also, we must attend to how redemption is carried out and what the respective roles are that divine grace and human freedom play in the redemptive process. Put succinctly, is Wesley's soteriology a faithful representation of original Arminianism?

Even though Wesley and Arminius are separated by two hundred years, this is not an unfair question to pose with regard to John Wesley's theology. In 1778 he chose *The Arminian Magazine* as title for his Methodist magazine; and his intention in doing so was to distinguish his arm of the English revival movement from that of the "Calvinian Methodists."<sup>37</sup> Wesley had not previously claimed this Arminian identity in a public way on a large scale, and as late as 1770 he had written: "To say, 'This man is an Arminian,' has the same effect on many hearers, as to say, 'This is a mad dog.'"<sup>38</sup> Wesley's reticence to appropriate the label may be understood when we remember that eighteenth-century English Arminianism was comprehensively rationalistic and had become a vague

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<sup>37</sup>For a detailed discussion of these events, see my monograph *The Limits of Love Divine* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989), 252-66.

<sup>38</sup>"The Question, 'What is an Arminian?'," in *The Works of John Wesley* (1872), edited by Thomas Jackson, 10:358. [Various reprints, Kansas City and Grand Rapids, hereafter cited as *Works* (1872).]

enough designation to refer to any anti-Calvinistic theological position from a mild Latitudinarianism to full-blown Socinianism.<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting then that, when the Methodist-Calvinist controversy broke out in the early 1770s over some loosely worded Minutes from the Methodist Annual Conference, and the Methodists were accused by the Calvinist Evangelicals of being essentially Pelagian in their notions of “free will,” and that they were teaching a works righteousness which denigrates the free grace of God for salvation, Wesley took recourse to an Arminian identity. It is clear that he did not take this step lightly, and it is also evident that he understood well the difference between English Arminianism and Arminius’ theology. Like Arminius himself, Wesley believed that his soteriology was only a “hair’s breadth” separated from Calvin; but it was a critically important breadth. When he preaches the doctrines of original sin, vicarious atonement and salvation by faith, he is preaching like a Calvinist—albeit one who does not accept the doctrines of the decrees. At the second Annual Conference of his preachers in London in 1745, it was declared that the “truth of the gospel lies very near Calvinism,” indeed, “within a hair’s breadth.”<sup>40</sup> In the context of the debate in 1770 he would declare: “We have leaned too much toward Calvinism.”<sup>41</sup> When we compare Wesley to Arminius on key points of soteriology, we can understand better how these seeming contradictory claims might be reconciled. We keep in mind that the two hundred years that separates them results in Wesley being less medieval and scholastic in his approach and categories, and clearly Wesley is also a child of the emerging Enlightenment, most clearly discerned in his emphasis on religious experience.

With regard to Arminius’ mention of two dimensions (the natural and the supra-natural) in connection with the image of God in humanity, Wesley occasionally speaks of three dimensions: the natural, the political, and the moral image of God in humanity,<sup>42</sup> but most consistently and expansively he dwells on the natural and the moral image. The natural

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<sup>39</sup>See R. N. Stromberg, *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 111.

<sup>40</sup>*Works* (1872), 8:284, Q.22.

<sup>41</sup>*Letters* (Telford), 5:262.

<sup>42</sup>See *Sermons* (Outler), “The New Birth,” ¶I.1, *The Bi-centennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984 —), 2:188. [Hereafter cited as *Works*.]

image (similar to Arminius) refers to the essential native characteristics of being human, which, if removed, would render us less than creatures in God's image and likeness. The moral image is comprised of those "characteristics" of holiness, obedience, and love which God intended for humanity to enjoy.<sup>43</sup> While it is true that they are not the only two theologians to use these categories, it is of importance for us that they are so similar in their assumptions. Randy Maddox has pointed out that Wesley was affirming the same basic concept expressed by typical Eastern theologians, distinctions between the Image and Likeness of God: "Humans were originally created capable of participating in God, and when they do so participate, they embody God's moral character and find fulfillment."<sup>44</sup> In Wesley's words, "[Adam] was a creature capable of God, capable of knowing, loving and obeying his Creator. And in fact he did know God, did unfeignedly love and uniformly obey Him. . . . From this right state, and the right use of all his faculties, his happiness naturally flowed."<sup>45</sup> For Wesley, entrance into salvation through Christ is the renewal of this participation in God.<sup>46</sup>

If Arminius and Wesley sound similar notes in their anthropological notions about humanity in the initially created order, are they also in agreement about the state of human affairs as a result of disobedience and banishment from paradise? Wesley rarely passed up the opportunity to affirm the universal problem of sinfulness. He considered any denial of this reality to be both contrary to general experience and a rejection of essential Christian teachings.<sup>47</sup> Like Arminius, Wesley often delineated the character of depravity, which he often called Inbeing Sin, to be the result of *privatio*, our being separated through disobedience from God and deprived of

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<sup>43</sup>For an explication of natural and moral image, see the sermon "The General Deliverance" (1781), ¶I.1, *Works*, 2:439, and "The End of Christ's Coming," ¶I.3-7, *Works*, 2:474-75.

<sup>44</sup>R. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 68.

<sup>45</sup>Sermon, "The General Deliverance," ¶I.2, *Works*, 2:439.

<sup>46</sup>See his *Notes on the New Testament*, 2 Peter 1:4.

<sup>47</sup>For his fullest treatment, *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, in *Works* (1872), 9:191-464; see also his sermons, "Original Sin," *Works*, 2:172-85; "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," 4:150-60; and his exclusion of preachers who deny Original Sin from the conference in the 1784 *Minutes*, Q.20, *Minutes of the Methodist Conference* (London: Mason, 1862), 170.

intimate fellowship with the Creator.<sup>48</sup> Wesley's concern in dealing with the concept of depravity or Inbeing Sin was to search out and define the source of our actual sins, which he referred to as voluntary and involuntary sins. Following 1 John 2:16, Wesley views these as flowing from the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, and the pride of life.<sup>49</sup> The relation between Inbeing Sin and actual sins is expressed also by a threefold division: sinful tempers, sinful words, and sinful acts.<sup>50</sup> As Maddox notes, "The point of this division was to emphasize that our sinful actions and words *flow from* enduring corruptions of our affections (one of our human faculties)."<sup>51</sup> Inbeing Sin is the very corruption of human faculties resulting from our separation from God's empowering Presence.<sup>52</sup>

In Arminius we do not find the implications of sin spelled out in these rather practical ways, but he emphasized how the human affections are distorted, implying a relational view of sin rather than an abstract, substantial, or metaphysical one. This emphasis allowed Arminius to describe God's saving grace as also being relational in its essence and application: ". . . to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all, nor resist any evil temptation, *without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace.*" This is precisely the emphasis that we encounter in Wesley. Whereas Arminius' untimely death did not give him time to work out in any detail his mention of prevenient grace (*voorgaende ghenade*), Wesley is careful to make this foundational to his notion that sinful humanity can and must be held personally responsible for the sinful disobedience that leads to spiritual death.

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<sup>48</sup>A fine discussion of Wesley's doctrine of sin is in Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, esp. 73-82.

<sup>49</sup>The distinction between voluntary and involuntary sin is central to Wesley's discussion of Christian perfection and sin in believers. Although believers may never be free from involuntary transgressions, the life completely dedicated to God and filled with the Holy Spirit through the indwelling Christ could be so cleansed from sin as to be consistently inclined to obedience rather than committing voluntary transgressions of known laws of God.

<sup>50</sup>See Wesley's *Notes on the N.T.*, Romans 3:23 & 6:6; *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, Pt. II, ¶III, *Works* (1872), 9:306.

<sup>51</sup>Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 81.

<sup>52</sup>See sermons, "Original Sin," *Works*, 2:172-85; "Justification by Faith," ¶I.5, *Works*, 2:177; "Sermon on the Mount I," ¶4, *Works*, 1:477; and *Notes on the N.T.*, Rom. 6:6.

It is particularly this notion about cooperant, responsible grace that made Wesley vulnerable in his soteriology to charges of transgressing Reformation orthodoxy. The Protestant theologians with whom he shared an emphasis on total depravity drew from it an emphasis on limited atonement and unconditional election with which Wesley deeply disagreed. However, Wesley also could not accept the typical way that Roman Catholicism avoided these implications by inferring that depravity was not total. To teach that some aspect of the freedom, graciously given to humans in creation, remained in fallen humanity opened the door to a brand of synergism that Wesley could not abide. Such an emphasis, Wesley believed, both underestimated the impact of Inbeing Sin and also endangered the unmerited nature of God's saving and restoring *grace*. His path to emphasizing unmerited salvation was through an "ongoing" concept of grace—a grace that always precedes us and continually accompanies us on the *via salutis*.

It is important to note that Wesley used the characterization of grace as "prevenient" in both a broad and narrow sense. In its broadest sense, Wesley meant by prevenience that each and every salutary human action or virtue, from the earliest expression of faith to the highest degree of sanctification, is grounded in the prior empowering of God's grace. The narrow use of prevenient grace, very Arminian in its emphasis, refers to the saving (awakening) work of God in the pilgrim prior to and leading to justification. It is this Arminian appropriation that Wesley makes to counteract the logical necessity with which the affirmation of total depravity seemed to lead to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.<sup>53</sup> Although the broader concept of prevenience is also present in Arminius, it is the specific relation to justification that Arminius and Wesley share. And all of this is, of course, rooted solely in the salvific work of God through Christ. In this respect both Arminius and Wesley are very much Christologically centered rather than divine decree centered.

## Conclusions

Given their respective concepts of prevenient and ongoing/continued grace, it would not then be accurate to say that either Arminius or Wesley taught a human-centered voluntarism that initiates even the slightest move apart from grace in the direction of salvation. That the human will

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<sup>53</sup>See Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, Press, 1960), 44.

is free to respond to God's overtures and offer of salvation is the result of being *set free* by the Holy Spirit. It is a 'freed will.' Wesley states specifically, "Natural free will I do not understand. . . ." <sup>54</sup> The position taken in the early days of the Revival (the 1745 London Annual Conference) is foundational to why Wesley chose *The Arminian Magazine* as his identifying periodical in 1778: "(1) Ascribing all good to the free grace of God. (2) Denying all natural free-will, and all power [for salvation] antecedent to grace, And (3) Excluding all merit from man; even what he has and does by the grace of God."<sup>55</sup> On the issue of gracious efficiency and effectiveness, Arminius and Wesley agree: "Why, the very power to 'work together with Him' [is] from God. Therefore to Him is all the glory."<sup>56</sup> Arminius' declaration is equally clear and succinct: "Free Will is unable to begin or to perfect any true and spiritual good without grace. . . . I affirm, therefore, that this grace is simply and absolutely necessary for the illumination of the mind, the due ordering of the affections, and the inclination of the will to that which is good."<sup>57</sup>

There are many dimensions of this issue that space limitations prohibit our exploring, and a dissertation would be required to sort it all out; however, perhaps the preceding has demonstrated that John Wesley chose his identity carefully and well in *The Arminian Magazine*. He was not only a faithful representative of Jacobus Arminius, he may have even been one with whom the Leiden professor would have felt a great personal affinity. Unlike the other Anglicans of his era who identified themselves as Arminian, Wesley was faithful to the soteric concerns of the Leiden professor after whom Wesley chose the name for his periodical to set out the Arminian theological distinctives of early Methodism.

<sup>54</sup>*Works* (1872), 10:229-30.

<sup>55</sup>*Works* (1872), 8:285, Q.23.

<sup>56</sup>"Predestination Calmly Considered," *Works* (1872), 8:230. Compare Arminius, *Verklaring*, 113-14; *Writings*, 1:253. *Opera*, "Declaratio Sententia," 121-22.

<sup>57</sup>"Grace and Free Will" in "Letter to Hippolytus," in *Writings*, 2:472. *Opera*, "Epistola ad Hypolytum," IV, 944.

# WESLEY, SWEDENBORG, AND THE ACCUSATION OF MADNESS

by

James G. Donat

A connection between the Methodists and Swedenborgians goes back to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to the original founders of these two religious movements—the Reverend John Wesley (1703-1791) and Baron Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).<sup>1</sup> Both of these men in their later years of life were aware of each other. They did not meet, although not without trying. John Wesley, aged 67, noted in his *Journal* for Wednesday, February 28, 1770:

I sat down to read and seriously consider some of the writings of Baron Swedenborg. I began with a huge prejudice in his favour, knowing him to be a pious man, one of a strong understanding, of much learning, and one who thoroughly believed himself. But I could not hold out long. Any one of his visions puts his real character into doubt. He is one of the most ingenious, lively, entertaining madmen that ever set pen to paper. But his waking dreams are so wild, so remote both from

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<sup>1</sup>Although Swedenborg did not personally create a church organization, followers do attribute the founding of the New Church to a vision he had on June 19, 1770. See Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion; Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church: Which was Foretold by the Lord, in Daniel, Chap. VII, 13, 14. And in the Apocalypse, Chap. XXI. 1, 2.* Translated from the Latin by John Clowes. 2 vols, London: Sold by J. Phillips, 1781, note 791.

Scripture and common sense, that one might as easily swallow the stories of Tom Thumb or Jack the Giant-killer.<sup>2</sup>

The following year, on Sunday, December 8, 1771, Wesley resumed his commentary:

I read a little more of that strange book, Baron Swedenborg's *Theologia Coelestis*.<sup>3</sup> It surely contains many excellent things. Yet I can't but think the fever he had twenty years ago, when he supposes he was "introduced to the society of angels," really introduced him into the society of lunatics. But still there is something noble even in his ravings.<sup>4</sup>

During that same month, Swedenborg, now in his 84<sup>th</sup> year, suffered a stroke from which he did not recover. In the following February, 1772, Wesley was surprised to receive a letter from the Swedish seer:

Sir—I have been informed in the world of the spirits that you have a strong desire to converse with me. I shall be happy to see you, if you will favour me with a visit. I am, Sir, Your humble Servant, Eman. Swedenborg.<sup>5</sup>

Astonished, Wesley is reported to have said to company "that he been very strongly impressed with a desire to see and converse with Swedenborg, and that he had never mentioned that desire to any one."<sup>6</sup>

In his reply, Wesley explained that he was about to begin his annual six-month visitation to the Methodist societies in Great Britain and Ire-

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<sup>2</sup>*The Works of John Wesley: Journal and Diaries*, W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, editors, vol. 22, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993, 216-217. Hereafter *WJW-JD*.

<sup>3</sup>Possibly Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*, in Latin, 8 vols, 1749-1756; later available in English translation by the Rev. John Clowes (1743-1831) in 12 vols., 1774-1806.

<sup>4</sup>*WJW-JD*, 301-302.

<sup>5</sup>Rudolph Leonhard Tafel (1831-1893), *Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg*, 2 vols., London: Swedenborg Society, 1875-1877, vol. 2, pt. 1, doc. #268, "John Wesley's Testimony Concerning Swedenborg in 1772, and 1773," 564-567. The source of this information is attributed to "Among Mr. Wesley's preachers, in the year 1772, was the late Mr. Samuel Smith, a man of great piety and integrity, who afterwards became one of the first ministers of our church (ordained June 1, 1788)." It appears in the letter of Rev. S. Noble to Mr. J. I. Hawkins, dated February 6, 1826.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 565.

land, and would grant himself the pleasure of calling upon Mr. Swedenborg soon after his return to London. Swedenborg replied that the proposed visit would be too late since he would be entering the world of the spirits on the 29<sup>th</sup> of the next month, never more to return.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the April edition of *Gentleman's Magazine* reports the passing of the "Hon. and learned Emanuel Swedenborg, famous for his mathematical works, and for his visionary."<sup>8</sup>

A seven-year silence on the subject of Swedenborg followed. Wesley ended this in his 76<sup>th</sup> year with a *Journal* entry for Thursday, April 22, 1779:

In travelling this week I looked over Baron Swedenborg's account of heaven and hell.<sup>9</sup> He was a man of piety, of a strong understanding, and most lively imagination. But he had a violent fever when he was five-and-fifty years old, which quite overturned his understanding. Nor did he ever recover it; but continued "majestic, though in ruins." . . .<sup>10</sup> His words, therefore, from that time were . . . the dreams of a disordered imagination. . . . I wish those pious men, Mr. Clowes and Cokeworthy [Cookworthy], would calmly consider these things before they usher into the world any more of this madman's dreams."<sup>11</sup>

The mention of the names John Clowes (1743-1831) and William Cookworthy (1705-1780) is noteworthy because both of these men are involved in the movement to translate the works of Swedenborg into English, and to promote his ideas in the English churches. In short, there was

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<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*; also see Cyriel Odhner Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic; The Life and Works of Emanuel Swedenborg*, London: The Swedenborg Society, 1981, 430-431.

<sup>8</sup>*The Gentleman's Magazine: An Historical Chronicle* 42 (Apr. 1772), 198.

<sup>9</sup>Swedenborg, *De Cælo et Ejus Mirabilibus, et de Inferno, ex Auditis et Visis*. Londini: [Printed by John Lewis], 1758. Wesley presumably read the recent English translation by William Cookworthy and Thomas Hartley, *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell, Containing a Relation of Many Wonderful Things Therein, as Heard and Seen by the Author*. London: Printed by James Phillips, 1778.

<sup>10</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ii.305.

<sup>11</sup> *WJW-JD*, vol. 23, 126-128.

a new spiritual competitor on the scene who was attractive to some of Wesley's followers.<sup>12</sup>

Two years later, in January, 1781, Wesley's alarm resurfaced in the form of an article published in the *Arminian Magazine*, a journal printed at the Foundery, Wesley's center for Methodist activities in the London area. It was entitled "An Account of Baron Swedenborg."<sup>13</sup> In its preface, Wesley explained his reason for writing:

The following account of a very great man was given to me by one of his own countrymen. He is now in London, as is Mr. Brockmer, and is ready to attest to every part of it. In the Baron's writings are many excellent things: but there are many likewise that are whimsical to the last degree. And some of these may do hurt even to serious persons, whose imagination is stronger than their judgment.

This article details the "fever" that Wesley alludes to in his *Journal* entry for December 8, 1771, about Swedenborg's introduction "into the society of lunatics."

An anonymous "countryman" of the Baron claimed to have gotten this information directly from the witness, John Paul Brockmer,<sup>14</sup> a gold-watch ornamentaller who had rented rooms to the Baron when he was in London in 1744. According to Brockmer, during that stay, the Baron became very strange, his hair standing on end, foaming at the mouth, barely able to speak. When Swedenborg was able, he announced that he was the Messiah come to be crucified by the Jews, and that an angel would appear, appointing him to be the Baron's spokesman. The angel did not appear as predicted, although Swedenborg did not give up his preten-

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<sup>12</sup>In addition to Mr. Samuel Smith mentioned above, the other Methodist preachers said to have become active promoters of Swedenborgian doctrine are: Mr. James Hindmarsh [father of early Swedenborgian minister, Rev. Robert Hindmarsh], Mr. Isaac Hawkins, Mr. R. Jackson, Mr. J. W. Salmon, and Mr. T. Parker. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pt 1, 571.

<sup>13</sup>*The Arminian Magazine, For the Year 1781*. Vol. 4, 46-49. Hereafter, *AM*.

<sup>14</sup>This is the same Mr. Brockmer that Wesley met with to sing, talk, or dine after his return from Georgia in the years 1738-1739, while both Wesley and Brockmer were associated with the Moravian Society on Fetter Lane, London. On July 20, 1740, Wesley withdrew from the Moravian association, "as did eighteen or nineteen of the society." *Ibid.*, 162. Brockmer, however, continued his association with the Moravians after that date. Charles Wesley also met with Brockmer, whom he identifies as Mr. Brockmar, during this period.

sion of being the Messiah, even after being medicated by Dr. Smith.<sup>15</sup> Wesley, in this article, debunks the spiritual value of Swedenborg's visions by attributing them to a lunatic. He discourages any unwitting Methodist who might be subject to Swedenborg's influence. Yet this article does not mark the end of Wesley's preoccupation with Swedenborg.

On May 9, 1782, Wesley, now in his 79<sup>th</sup> year, completed another article that did not appear until the August-December issue of the *Arminian Magazine for 1783*. It was entitled "Thoughts on the Writings of Baron Swedenborg."<sup>16</sup> It was largely a theological commentary on the first volume of Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion*, or an English translation of the Latin original, *Vera Christiana Religio*, that "the Baron himself presented me with, a little before he died."<sup>17</sup> The article names the anonymous source for the Brockmer story, presumably the same person who supplied Wesley with details for the 1781 article, "and the same information was given me by Mr. *Mathesius*, a very serious Swedish Clergyman. . . ."<sup>18</sup>

What might be described as Wesley's final commentary on Swedenborg appeared in the January-April issue of the *Arminian Magazine for 1783*, in the form of two sermons, "Of Good Angels"<sup>19</sup> and "Of Evil Angels."<sup>20</sup> Together they depict his view of angelology. Although he does not mention Swedenborg by name in these two sermons, Wesley's angelology is markedly more orthodox than that depicted by Swedenborg, as if to instruct his Methodist readers on the correct way to view the subject. Good and evil angels are said to exist, with the latter falling under the rubric of "diabolical." That is to say, they be responsible for "accidents," the "unaccountable fright or falling of horses, the overturning of carriages, the breaking or dislocating of bones, the hurt done by the

<sup>15</sup>Tafel, *ibid*, vol. 2, pt 1, 581-612.

<sup>16</sup>*AM For 1783*, vol. 6, 437-441, 495-498, 550-552, 607-614, 669-680; *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, editor, London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872, vol. 13, 4254-48.

<sup>17</sup>*AM* 6 (Aug 1783), #5, 439; *WJW* (1872), vol. 13, #5, 427. *The True Christian Religion*, 1781, *op cit*; *Vera Christiana Religio continens Universam Theologiam*. Amsterdam, 1771.

<sup>18</sup>*AM* 6 (Aug 1783), #2, 438; *WJW* (1872), vol. 13, #2, 425-426.

<sup>19</sup>*AM*, vol. 6, 6-13, 61-66, 117-121; *The Works of John Wesley*, Sermons, edited by Albert C Outler, vol. 3, 1993, 4-15. Hereafter *WJW-S*.

<sup>20</sup>*AM*, vol. 6, 173-181; *WJW-S*, vol. 3, 16-29.

falling or burning of houses, by storms or wind, snow, rain, or hail, by lightning or earthquakes.”<sup>21</sup> Likewise, they cause “many diseases . . . of the acute and chronic kind . . . particularly [those] without any discernable cause.”<sup>22</sup> And yes, in the words of a quoted physician, “Sir, I have been often inclined to think that most lunatics are demoniacs.”<sup>23</sup>

### Further Investigation Casts Doubt on Wesley’s Sources

Aside from the Baron’s own writings, Wesley’s main source of information about Swedenborg’s madness is the Rev. Mr. Aaron Mathesius (1737-1808), who was ordained as a Lutheran cleric in 1767. Afterwards he was appointed curate to Herr Pastor Arvid Ferelius (1725-1793) at the Swedish Church in Prince’s Square, London. He served in that capacity until 1792, when he succeeded Ferelius as pastor, although not without complaint from the congregation.<sup>24</sup> His relationship to Swedenborg was not friendly. The Baron, on his deathbed, refused the sacrament from Mathesius, preferring to receive it from Pastor Ferelius.<sup>25</sup>

The nature of Mathesius’ relationship to the eye-witness Brockmer is unknown, except for the story he passed to Wesley about the Baron’s violent fever, deliriousness, standing in the street stark naked proclaiming himself to be the Messiah, and rolling in mire. This story, Wesley deduced, was the foundation for the Baron’s “admission to the Society of Angels.” And “from this date we are undoubtedly to date that peculiar species of insanity which attended him, with scarce any intermission, to the day of his death.”<sup>26</sup>

Wesley’s attempt to make the Brockmer story more credible, by filtering it through “a very serious Swedish Clergyman,” was not convincing to readers who were sympathetic to Swedenborg. Not all trusted Mathesius’ version of the Brockmer story, nor Wesley’s disparagement of both Swedenborg’s spiritual and mental states. Soon after the appearance of his 1783 article, a concerned group of Swedenborg sympathizers

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<sup>21</sup> *WJW-S*, vol. 3, II, 11, 25.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, II, 12, 25.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, II, 13, 26.

<sup>24</sup> See Ormond deCharms Odhner, “The Relations Between John Wesley and Emanuel Swedenborg,” M.A. Thesis, Northwestern University, 1957, 48-49.

<sup>25</sup> See Tafel, *op cit*, vol. 2, pt 1, doc #269, “Letter from Robert Hindmarsh to William Gom, Esq., London, Nov. 28, 1786, 575-577.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

formed to investigate the facts of the case that Wesley's articles were bringing to public attention.<sup>27</sup> They began by interviewing the chief witness, Brockmer, whose testimony differed greatly from that printed by Wesley. In response to Wesley's 1781 article, Brockmer reported that

. . .to the best of his knowledge and recollection, some things in that account were true; that other things were absolutely false; and that the whole was exaggerated and unfairly stated. [He said] it is true that Swedenborg once called himself the Messiah; but not true that he always persisted in it, whenever he saw him afterwards, as Mr. Wesley insinuates. It was true that his hair stood upright, for as he wore a wig, it was necessary to keep his hair cut short, in which case any person's hair will stand upright; but it was not true that he looked frightful or wild, for he was of a most placid and serene disposition. It was true that he had an impediment in his speech, and spoke with earnestness; but not true, that he foamed at the mouth, as Mr. Wesley has represented him.<sup>28</sup>

With respect to Wesley's 1783 article, Brockmer continued:

That Baron Swedenborg was never afflicted with any illness, much less with a violent fever, while at his house; nor did he ever break from him in a delirious state, and run into the street stark naked, and there proclaim himself the Messiah. . . . He

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<sup>27</sup>The group was composed of four men, two known by name: Mr. Robert Beatson, the first secretary of the General Conference of the New Church; and the Rev. Robert Hindmarsh (1759-1835), who, as the son of a Methodist preacher (James Hindmarsh), was able to attend the Kingswood School. The results of the investigation are written-up by Beatson, along with his rebuttal to Wesley's commentary on Swedenborg's writings. Shortly after completion, Beatson died and his compilation was abridged for publication. In that form, it appeared in print as "A Vindication of Baron Swedenborg and his Writings, in Answer to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, by the late Mr. Robert Beatson," in *The New Magazine of Knowledge Concerning Heaven and Hell, and the Universal World of Nature; Or, Grand Museum of Intellectual, Rational and Scientific Truths. Particularly designed for the Use of the New Jerusalem Church*, 2 (1791): Feb., 80-85; Mar., 91-98; May, 204-210; June, 257-261; Aug., 329-331. When this "Vindication" was written, and abridged for publication in 1791, Wesley was still alive and thought to be in good health, thus a reply from Wesley had been hoped. Unfortunately, Wesley died on March 2, 1791, before the February issue was released.

<sup>28</sup>Tafel, *op cit*, vol. 2, pt 1, doc #270, 602; *The New Magazine of Knowledge*, 2 (Mar. 1791), 93-94.

had “heard a report” that Baron Swedenborg had rolled himself in the mire; but he could not be certain of the fact, because he did not see it himself, but was only told so.<sup>29</sup>

Other sources suggest that Brockmer’s slander of Swedenborg was motivated by revenge, because he did not like what the Baron had written about the Moravian Church of which he was a member at the end of his tract, called “Continuation Concerning the Spiritual World.” He had sworn he would avenge his sect for the injury inflicted upon it by Swedenborg.<sup>30</sup> He was also angry because the Baron had taken rooms with another landlord, after discovering that Brockmer had been going through his papers when he is away.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the examiners determine that Wesley based his opinion on rumors attributed to Brockmer, rumors that were largely false and contrived with a malevolent intention.

Since Brockmer denied ever speaking to Wesley about Swedenborg,<sup>32</sup> the burden of proof for the 1781 and 1783 articles passed on to Mathesius, who is “ready to attest to every part of it.” Likewise, the Beatson group attempted to investigate the Mathesius connection. Ironically, they discovered that he himself was stricken with madness in the

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<sup>29</sup>Tafel, *ibid*, vol. 2, pt 1, doc #270, 601-602; *The New Magazine of Knowledge*, 2 (Mar. 1791), 93. With respect to “foaming at the mouth,” Beatson rebuts Wesley with the following footnote: “It is well known, that the late Rev. Charles Wesley, both in speaking and preaching, used to *sputter* so much, that if any person happened to be close to him, he was sure to *spit* in his face. Yet it would be a very unjust insinuation to say that he *foamed at the mouth*; for this would be *indirectly* charging him with a degree of *madness*, to which he was never subject.”

<sup>30</sup>Tafel, *ibid*, vol. 2, pt 1, doc #270, 610. This testimony was given by Mr. Brooksbank (Brocksbank), who claimed to be well acquainted with Mr. Brockmer.

<sup>31</sup>Tafel, *ibid*, doc #266, 554-555. “Mrs. Shearsmith, teste Mrs. Shaw. 1. Swedenborg left Fetter Lane, because the persons he lodged with [Brockmer] used to meddle with his papers. ... 2. Mrs. Cartwright, a lady of property, knew Swedenborg, and he complained to her. She recommended the Shearsmith lodging. Shearsmith used to dress her hair. The other people [Brockmers] were so angry at his leaving them that they spread the report that he was mad.... These things were told me by Mrs. Shaw, who had them from Mr. Shearsmith personally. Mrs. Shearsmith was then dead. Written down by J.J.G. Wilkinson, M.D.... July 17, 1841.”

<sup>32</sup>Tafel, *ibid*, doc #270, 602; *The New Magazine of Knowledge*, 2 (Mar. 1791), 92.

summer of 1783.<sup>33</sup> He returned to Stockholm in 1784, “in the same deplorable condition.”<sup>34</sup> He was released from his ministry in London and granted a pension by the King in 1785. Apparently, his disorder was temporary since he married in 1789 and worked as a tutor until 1805, when he was able to take on another pastorate until his death in 1808.<sup>35</sup>

Denied access to Mathesius, the group could only verify from secondary sources that he was a self-proclaimed enemy of Swedenborg, at least with regard to his religious teachings.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Brockmer, Mathesius, and Wesley are all hostile witnesses on a religious level. It is a pity that Wesley did not live long enough to respond to the results of the Beatson inquiry.

### Speculation about Swedenborg’s Madness, After Wesley

The controversy over Swedenborg’s lunacy did not pass away with the deaths of Brockmer, Beatson, and Wesley. Mathesius, on August 27, 1796, wrote an expanded version of the Brockmer story. It did not surface until 1867, in William White’s biography of Emanuel Swedenborg.<sup>37</sup> There, White accepted Mathesius’ 1796 account as “plainly a straightforward and well-authenticated story.”<sup>38</sup> He quoted Wesley’s introductory paragraph to the 1781 article, then replaced the more concise 1781 Brockmer story with that of the 1796 version, without acknowledging the

<sup>33</sup>“Mr. Peter Provo, a respected member of the medical profession,” in a conversation on May 2, 1787, with Mr. Bergström, keeper of the King’s Arms Tavern, Wellclose Square, related the following: “Mr. Mathesius was an opponent of Swedenborg, and said that he was a lunatic, &c.; but it is remarkable that he went lunatic himself, which happened publicly one day when he was in the Swedish Church, and about to preach: I was there, and saw it: he has been so ever since, and sent back to Sweden, where he now is: this was about four years ago.” See Tafel, *ibid.*, vol. 1, note #118, 703.

<sup>34</sup>*The New Magazine of Knowledge*, 2 (1791), 95.

<sup>35</sup>Tafel, *op cit.*, vol. 1, note #118, 703; vol. 2, pt 2, doc #270, 610-612.

<sup>36</sup>Samuel J. Rogal, “Swedenborg and the Wesleys: Opposition or Out-growth?” in *Swedenborg and His Influence*, Bryn Athyn PA: The Academy of the New Church, 1988, 297-298. Tafel, *op cit.*, vol. 2, pt 1, doc #270, 586-612.

<sup>37</sup>William White, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Life and Writings*, 2 vols., London: Simpkin, Marshall 1867, vol. 1, 129-132. For a comparison of the Mathesius’ 1781 and 1796 versions of the Brockmer story, see Tafel, *op cit.*, vol. 2, pt 2, 592-596.

<sup>38</sup>Wilson, *Ibid.*, 132.

switch.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, he regarded the claim of Mathesius' own madness as a revenge perpetrated by the Swedenborgians for his role in publishing the Brockmer story.<sup>40</sup>

White's biography also includes excerpts from Swedenborg's recently discovered *Dream Journal* for 1743-1744, or the years surrounding the Brockmer story. The Royal Library in Stockholm acquired the original hand-written diary in 1858. When published in 1859,<sup>41</sup> it caused a stir. Shortly after, it was translated into English by James John Garth Wilkinson, M.D. (1812-1899), but not published.<sup>42</sup> However, White got a version of it from the Baron Constant Dirckinck Holmfeld (1799-1880) of Copenhagen,<sup>43</sup> the version that appears in *The Dawn: A Journal of Social and Religious Progress*, in 1861-1862.<sup>44</sup> It had been pirated from Wilkinson, touched up to the liking of Holmfeld, and again by White.<sup>45</sup> The *Dream Journal*, then, together with the Mathesius' later version of the Brockmer story, in effect, resurrected Swedenborg as an object of mental pathology, far beyond Wesley's simple reference to his "species of insanity."

When British medical psychologist Henry Maudsley, M.D. (1835-1918) read White's biography, he was greatly impressed, and rendered his

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<sup>39</sup> In the 1781 version, Mathesius is more guarded in what may be viewed as indications of Swedenborg's insanity. For example: 1. 1781, "Swedenborg foamed a little at his mouth"; 1796, "Swedenborg foamed at the mouth". 2. 1781, "Mr. Brockmer then left him with two men"; 1796, "I then went home, and left six men as guards over him." 3. 1781, "After that Mr. Brockmer continued to visit him"; 1796, "After this I continued to visit Mr. Swedenborg, who at last had only one keeper."

<sup>40</sup> White, *op cit.*, vol. 1, 128.

<sup>41</sup> Published in Stockholm, 1859, by G. E. Klemming, Royal Librarian, under the title, *Swedenborg's Drömmar, 1744, jemte andra hans anteckningar* [Swedenborg's Dreams, 1744, with some other memorabilia from his hand].

<sup>42</sup> For an incomplete version of the Wilkinson translation, see Tafel, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pt 1, doc #208 (introduction), 134-149; doc #209 (text), 149-219. The first complete Wilkinson translation is found in *Studia Swedenborgiana*, vol. 1 (#1/Jan., #2/Jun. 1974; #3/Jan., #4/Jun. 1975), edited by William Ross Woofenden. The later version then appears in a single volume as *Journal of Dreams*, NY: Swedenborg Foundation, 1977; and as *Swedenborg's Journal of Dreams; Commentary by Wilson Van Dusen*, NY: Swedenborg Foundation, 1986.

<sup>43</sup> White, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, 197.

<sup>44</sup> Published by Mr. Pitman, 20 Paternoster Row, London.

<sup>45</sup> For an analysis of the Wilkinson-Holmfeld-Wilson translation process, see Tafel, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pt 2, 1312-1315.

own interpretation of Swedenborg's malady in *The Journal of Mental Science for 1869*. Based on White's version of the Brockmer-Mathesius story and the *Dream Journal*, with some details censored by White to satisfy Victorian sensibility, Maudsley determined that in 1744 Swedenborg suffered from a bout with "acute mania," and thereafter "from the monomaniacal form of chronic mania."<sup>46</sup>

Upon reading Maudsley's interpretation in 1873, James C. Howden, M.D., raised the question, "Was the insanity of Emanuel Swedenborg accompanied by or dependent on epilepsy?" In his opinion, "The visions of Swedenborg were much like those we meet in epilepsy."<sup>47</sup> Both the "acute mania" and "epilepsy" diagnoses for Swedenborg appear in Maudsley's 1879 edition of *Pathology of Mind*, that includes the following footnote: "It has provoked violent criticisms and angry letters from some of his disciples. I am sorry to have hurt their feelings, but, until the evidence of his own *Diary* be proved false, I cannot alter my opinion."<sup>48</sup> This protest apparently had some effect since Maudsley deleted, without explanation, all references to Swedenborg in the 1895 edition of his *Pathology of Mind*.<sup>49</sup>

By the 1890s, the opinions of Maudsley and Howden had become so commonplace that John Ferguson Nisbet (1851-1899) did not find it necessary to cite his sources. It was tolerable for him to mix "acute mania" and "epilepsy" with a non-detailed "neurotic" theory from his own time:

The character of Swedenborg is a specially interesting study from the neurotic point of view. Swedenborg was not only an epileptic, but at times and irresponsible maniac who, nevertheless, in his writings exhibits much subtle philosophical insight. . . . A break in Swedenborg's diary occurred when he had an

<sup>46</sup>Maudsley, "Emanuel Swedenborg," in *The Journal of Mental Science*, 15 (July 1869), 169-196; 15 (Oct. 1869), 417-436. The reference to White's censorship appears on 190.

<sup>47</sup>James C. Howden, "The Religious Sentiment in Epileptics," in *The Journal of Mental Science*, 18 (Jan. 1873), 482-497; in particular 492-493.

<sup>48</sup>Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind. Being the Third Edition of the Second Part of the "Physiology and Pathology of Mind," Recast, Enlarged, and Rewritten*. London: Macmillan, 1879. The page numbers and footnote about Swedenborg are taken from the American printing, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1880, 416-417, 445-446.

<sup>49</sup>Maudsley, *The Pathology of Mind*. London and New York: Macmillan, 1895.

attack of acute mania. This occurred while he was lodging in Fetter Lane, London, about his fifty-sixth year. Brockner [sic], his landlord, found him foaming at the mouth and declaring that he was the Messiah in person. In the street he pulled off his clothes and rolled in the gutter. The outbreak occurred in connection with an epileptic seizure, and from this period onward Swedenborg's delusions were all of an insane character. . . . His death was due to paralysis and apoplexy.<sup>50</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts classified Swedenborg's mental disorder under a variety of labels not yet mentioned.

The British psychiatrist John Johnson found the Maudsley-Howden diagnoses too "enigmatic" as to whether Swedenborg's disorder was caused by an "acute mania" or an "epileptic seizure"; rather, more certainly, he saw it as the expression of a "messianic psychosis."<sup>51</sup> The German psychoanalyst Eduard Hirschmann (1871-1957) claimed that Swedenborg's disease was "paranoia, an undoubted regression into the infantile." He also suffers from "narcissism," and there was a "homosexual component in his love for God."<sup>52</sup> The Austrian psychoanalyst Alfred Baron von Winterstein (1885-1958) confirmed Hirschmann's diagnosis and added an "inverted Oedipus complex" to the list.<sup>53</sup> German philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) interpreted him as manifesting a "schizophrenic process" wherein he experienced both the natural world and the spiritual world—in visual and auditory forms. Most ordinary people only experience the natural world. They accept the existence of the spiritual world by faith and without personal experience.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Nisbet, *The Insanity of Genius and the General Inequality of Human Faculty Physiologically Considered*. London: Ward & Downey, 1891, 218-219.

<sup>51</sup>John Johnson, FRC Psych, "Henry Maudsley on Swedenborg's Messianic Psychosis," in *British Journal of Psychiatry* 165 (Nov. 1994, 690-691.

<sup>52</sup>See Signe Tokvig, *Emanuel Swedenborg; Scientist and Mystic* [1948], Swedenborg Foundation, 1983, 162; cited from Rolf Lagerborg, *Finsk Tidskrift* (1923), 281.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 163; cited from H. D. Spoerl, in *New Christianity*, Winter 1937, 14.

<sup>54</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Strindberg und Van Gogh: Versuch einer pathographischen Analyse unter vergleichender Heranziehung von Swedenborg und Hölderlin*. Bremen: Storm, 1949, 109-118; *Strindberg and Van Gogh; An Attempt at a Pathologic Analysis With Reference to Parallel Cases of and Hölderlin*, translated by Oskar Grunow David Woloshin, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1977, 113-126.

The notion of mental unbalance falls under the rubric of pathology, whether the charge is made by Wesley—the former Oxford University don, Brockmer—the gold-watch engraver, or medical professionals—from any century. Pathological descriptions are intended to be natural, apart from the claim of religious significance. But these natural concepts of pathology are also subject to historical flux, and more noticeable when they are projected back in time, or applied *ex post facto* to an historical figure like Swedenborg, who was never institutionalized, yet judged in absentia.

If one removes the hostile bias against heretical religion, these pathological labels are less alarming. One can believe in spirits without being “psychotic.” A “schizophrenic” can also be “psychic.” A “disassociation” can produce “inspiration.” One can “disassociate oneself from the external world in order to “converse with spirits.” “Telepathy,” “clairvoyance,” “extrasensory perception,” and “precognition” about the future are also sympathetic descriptions. “Hallucinations” can contain correct information not available by other means.<sup>55</sup>

### **What Goes Around Comes Around**

So far this analysis has focused on the madness charges leveled against Swedenborg. Missing from this picture is the fact that charges of mental pathology were also once leveled against John Wesley by the leadership of the Church of England. We are talking about the difference of a generation in the life of a new religious movement. Swedenborg’s initial visions date back to 1743-1744, while Wesley’s conversion experience took place in May, 1738. The difference lies chiefly in the amount of time that their respective religious movements took to get started. Wesley’s Methodist movement was building momentum in the 1740s, while Swedenborg’s followers were still struggling to get his works translated in the 1780s. By the 1780s there are numerous Methodist meeting houses throughout Great Britain and Ireland, while those interested in Swedenborg were quietly gathering in cell groups. As one early Swedenborgian described it, “They meet once a week in order to converse upon the subject of his Writings; they are of different Denominations, but united in

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<sup>55</sup>Toksvig, *op. cit.*, 157-216.

promoting the translating and sale of his Books.”<sup>56</sup> Eventually these groups would come together to form congregations, the first worship service of which was on January 27, 1788, in London.<sup>57</sup>

By the time Wesley was calling Swedenborg a lunatic, he himself was being socially recognized as the effective leader of a large working class religious movement, with numerous publications, some schools, and medical dispensaries for the poor. Succinctly stated—Wesley had become a national icon. But that was not the case in the 1740s when he was publicly associated with George Whitefield and the revival movement. Forbidden to preach in most existing churches, the Whitefield-Wesley revivals moved outdoors to accommodate the large crowds. Field preaching was loud, as are the some of the emotional reactions of people undergoing conversion experiences. The size of the crowds and the noise of the proceedings brought down the wrath of the established church, wrapping the revivals in the contemptuous charge of “religious enthusiasm.”

A typical high-church response was that of Bishop George Lavington (1684-1762), whose three-volume book *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared* was published in London in 1754. His opening lines set the tone: “These Preachers and Mendicants for some time rambled uncontrolled, taking upon them to confess and preach wherever they came, without the consent of the bishop, utterly despising all canons and ecclesiastical rules.”<sup>58</sup> These volumes condemn certain new religious movements that have appeared over the centuries, usually originating with some visionary individual whose influence brought out strong emotions on the part of followers. Such movements were typically viewed as beyond the pale and out of the control of established churches, of which Methodist revivalism was the most recent example. Since the chief source of Lavington’s information about Wesley came from his published sermons and journals, there was little that he could point to as madness *per se* on the part of Wesley. However, that did not stop him from alluding to

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<sup>56</sup>See Clarke Garrett, “Swedenborg and the Mystical Enlightenment in Late Eighteenth-Century England,” in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (Jan.-Mar. 1984), 73. The quotation is by Elizabeth, wife of the Anglican clergyman, Jacob Duché (1738-1798), Chaplain of the Asylum for Female Orphans, after departing from Philadelphia.

<sup>57</sup> Rev. James Hindmarsh preaching. See Sigstedt, *op. cit.*, 439.

<sup>58</sup>Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, 1754, vol. 1, pt 1, title page.

Wesley's influence in bringing about the madness of others. The few cases of madness that do appear in the journals allowed Lavington to draw an historical parallel between Wesley and others perceived as heretics in the past.

### Conclusion

With respect to the established churches of their time, Swedenborg and Wesley were both virtual heretics, with Swedenborg being more visionary and Wesley more orthodox. But by the time Wesley was writing about Swedenborg's lunacy, Methodism's own period of disturbing revivalism had passed. He now was an orthodox religious figure in his own right, with direct influence over numerous Methodist societies, organized with his rules, with him selecting the clergy to attend the annual conferences. Moreover, he had something of a "my way or the highway" attitude toward dissent. The fact that a few Methodist members were attracted to Swedenborg's writings put Wesley on the defensive. In spite of Wesley's public declaration of Swedenborg's madness, he could not stop the founding of the first Swedenborgian congregation in London in 1788.

All of this is now history. Both Methodists and Swedenborgians have become orthodoxies with their own traditions, although the Swedenborgians are far less numerous. Both Methodists and Swedenborgians have conservative and liberal congregations. It is not likely that modern Methodists will ever offer a conference on angels, nor Swedenborgians stage a religious revival with field preaching. There are now commonalities, with both churches currently using psychological testing for their ministerial candidates, maybe to disqualify them if they exhibit signs of "madness"!<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Madness today is rarely associated with religious heresy, mainly because professional psychologists do the testing. Rather, these psychologists are looking for signs of potential personality disorders. If those potential disorders are allowed to manifest themselves, the candidate may be unfit for the social responsibilities of congregational life, or initiate a costly lawsuit against the church. Church organizations typically accept that these psychologically defined disorders exist, along with the predictable results. Madness in this context, then, is more accurately defined as a social heresy, a bio-pathology in place of a religious heresy.

# THE BIBLICAL SOURCES OF JOHN FLETCHER'S PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY

by

Laurence Wood

The writings of John Fletcher significantly shaped Methodist theology in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. He was John Wesley's hand-picked successor. In a weakened condition from tuberculosis, he died in 1785 at age 55 from a fever epidemic which swept through his parish. His theology was contained in the four volumes known as *Checks to Antinomianism*, which were edited, corrected, published, and promoted by Wesley as representing an authentic interpretation of Methodist theology.<sup>1</sup> Wesley chose him to be his successor because of his "clear understanding" of "Methodist doctrine."<sup>2</sup>

No other Wesley scholar has been privileged to get Wesley's endorsement. Nor has any other Wesley scholar been so privileged as to receive Wesley's critical suggestions as did Fletcher, who regularly met with Wesley, who corrected Fletcher's writings when they were still in manuscript form. When Wesley was 58 years old and John Fletcher was 32 years old, Wesley said to him: "You would do more good and gain more benefit from being among us. Come, then, and if you do not wish to

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<sup>1</sup>For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between Fletcher and John Wesley, see *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism, Rediscovering John Fletcher As Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup>*The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978): 12:163-164, Letter to John Fletcher (January 1773).

be an equal partner with me, I will be ready to serve under you.”<sup>3</sup> On two other occasions (1773 and 1776)<sup>4</sup> Wesley pleaded with him to take over the leadership of Methodism, but he declined because he felt unworthy to assume that responsibility.

Fletcher's *Treatise on Christian Perfection* (an abridgement of *The Last Check to Antinomianism*) was published in America in 1796 and served as the standard of Methodist belief on sanctification. Bishop Francis Asbury placed the *Checks to Antinomianism* in the ministerial course of study, but in 1876 they were removed as theological liberalism was sweeping its way through the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>5</sup> Fletcher is now the largely forgotten theologian of Methodism. Nonetheless, it is clear that, if he had not pentecostalized Wesley's theology of perfection in this particular treatise, the concept of the baptism with the Spirit would not have been prominently featured in early Methodism and in the Wesleyan-Holiness movement.

The Pentecostal motif is not something that John Fletcher freely invented and superimposed on the Wesleyan tradition. As Melvin Dieter has noted, “The adoption of Pentecostal and Baptism of the Holy Ghost paradigms as the major vehicle for the expression of Holiness thought. . . was no introduction of an unnatural or unWesleyan element in the holiness tradition; rather, it was a natural outgrowth of a weighted factor in Wesley's own teaching.”<sup>6</sup> To be sure, Fletcher nuanced this theme in a particular way, with Wesley's approval, but Fletcher drew from a number of sources (including the Anglican rite of confirmation, the Puritanism of Richard Baxter and John Goodwin, and the Early Church Fathers, particularly Pseudo-Macarius). The concept of the baptism with the Spirit was

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<sup>3</sup>Cited from Fletcher's original, handwritten letter to Charles Wesley, reporting John Wesley's offer, in Patrick Streiff, *Reluctant Saint? A Theological Biography of Fletcher of Madeley*, trans. G. W. S Knowles (Peterborough: Epworth, 2001), 133.

<sup>4</sup>Wesley, *Works* [Jackson], 12:163-164, Letter to John Fletcher (January 1773); cf. John Fletcher's letter to John Wesley on January 9, 1776, contained in the “Fletcher Volume” (103) of the Fletcher-Tooth Archival Collection in the John Rylands Library of Manchester University.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. J. F. Hurst, *The History of Methodism* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902) 2:868; Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism* (New York: University Press of America, 1983), 33-34.

<sup>6</sup>Melvin Dieter, “The Development of Nineteenth Century Holiness Theology,” *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (Spring 1985): 67.

also linked to sanctification in the radical pietism of Tersteegen in the Rhineland, which was close to Fletcher's birthplace.

More recently, in 1982 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Lima, Peru, introduced a pneumatological addition into the baptism liturgy that previously was dominated by a Christological interpretation. The Lima Text (as it is known) makes a clear distinction between water baptism and baptism with the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> Gerard Austin believes this development represented a newly emerging consensus on the importance of confirmation.<sup>8</sup> This recent development is consistent with Fletcher's view on the importance of confirmation as the liturgical rite of Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification.<sup>9</sup>

One noticeable influence of the liturgical renewal movement can be seen in Barth's distinction between baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit. So striking was this contrast that even his editors highlighted this new development in Barth's thinking, calling it "a sharp distinction."<sup>10</sup> Barth argued that baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit were two events with a distinct meaning of their own. Baptism with water symbolized the beginning of the Christian life in regeneration and was the rite of Easter, whereas baptism with the Spirit (Pentecost) symbolized the perfection and sanctification of the Christian life.<sup>11</sup> This accords well with Fletcher, except, of course, that Barth understood the baptism with the Spirit in progressive terms and finally realized only in heaven.

My purpose here is to focus on Fletcher's biblical sources which he used to construct his doctrine of Pentecostal sanctification. Fletcher saw the church born on the day of Pentecost as the *restoration* of the kingdom of Israel that was prophesied by Moses and the Old Testament prophets.

<sup>7</sup>*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper no. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Gerard Austin, *Anointing with the Spirit, The Rite of Confirmation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1985), 92.

<sup>9</sup>For an extensive discussion of Fletcher's interpretation of entire sanctification as the core meaning of the rite of confirmation, see *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism, Rediscovering John Fletcher As Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 337-379.

<sup>10</sup>*Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969, IV, 4, v).

<sup>11</sup>*Church Dogmatics*, 4:4, 30. Cf Laurence Wood, *Pentecostal Grace*, 52-56, for a discussion on Barth's view of the salvific significance of Easter and Pentecost.

He believed Pentecost meant that the kingdom of God had been established within the hearts of believers, enabling them to love God with a pure heart. I will conclude with brief comments about Fletcher's influence in early Methodism.

### Fletcher's Biblical Sources

Instead of relying on individual proof texts, Fletcher's hermeneutical method was to explain the progressive stages of salvation history from (1) Noah (Gentilism) to (2) Abraham and Moses and the prophets (Judaism), to (3) John the Baptist and the disciples of the earthly Jesus (which he called infant and imperfect Christianity), culminating in (4) Jesus sending the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (perfect Christianity).<sup>12</sup> This is known as the doctrine of dispensations. The theme of dispensations (with a variety of nuances) is found in the Early Church Fathers and has no connection with the modern dispensationalism of John Darby.<sup>13</sup> Today we would refer to this theme as narrative theology. Its core meaning is that the history of Israel is typologically recapitulated in the history of Jesus and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The general consensus of New Testament scholarship is that Luke, the author of Luke-Acts, was also Paul's traveling companion and fellow-worker.<sup>14</sup> Whatever differences existed between them was due to the fact that Luke wrote as a narrative theologian and Paul as a pastoral theologian. Luke narrated the day of Pentecost and put it in its salvation-historical context. A word often used by Luke to describe the history of salvation is "narrative" (Luke 1:1; Acts 9:27). Luke included Paul as part of his Pentecost narrative by reporting in Acts 19:1-3 that Paul introduced Pentecost to the Ephesians. In Rom. 5:5 Paul made a direct pastoral application of the theological significance of the outpouring of the Spirit by showing that divine love was poured out in the hearts of believers on the day of Pentecost. Paul wrote: "God's love *has been poured* [a Pentecost

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<sup>12</sup>Fletcher calls his doctrine of dispensations "my key and my sword." *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher* (New York: W. Waugh and T. Mason, 1833): 2:15-16, "A Prefatory Epistle."

<sup>13</sup>Cf. *A Bibliographic History of Dispensationalism*, compiled by Arnold D. Ehlert (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965).

<sup>14</sup>Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).

word] into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which *has been given* [a Pentecost phrase] to us” (Rom. 5:5).<sup>15</sup>

It has been said in recent years that there is a substantive difference between the theology of Luke and Paul. To be sure, there are substantive differences in their style and focus, but not in their theology of salvation history [cf. Paul’s sermons which Luke reported in Acts 13:16-47, sermons steeped in the salvation-historical perspective]. Was Luke interested in the *power* of the Spirit and Paul in the *love* of the Spirit? To be sure, Luke was interested in showing that, through the power of the Spirit, the restored kingdom of God would conquer the world, and Paul was concerned to show the pastoral implications of life in the Spirit. But does Luke’s focus on the power of the Spirit exclude Paul’s pastoral emphasis on the love of the Spirit?

If love represents the core meaning of Pentecost in Acts 2, this will, of course, need to be shown, and I believe Fletcher’s exposition of the restoration theme will show that it is. I will weave together a reconstructed narrative drawn from Fletcher’s biblical references to show how a theology of the baptism with the Holy Spirit has love as its essential meaning.<sup>16</sup>

Paul says, “when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son . . . and . . . God sent the Spirit of his Son” (Gal. 4:4-6). Here Paul described the history of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit as the two decisive events which fulfilled God’s promise to Abraham that through his seed the world would be blessed (Gal. 3:14). If the coming of the Spirit on the

<sup>15</sup>James Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1970), 139, 151. Dunn shows that Paul is here referring to “the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit.” Fletcher shows that the various Pentecostal phrases are used interchangeably: “For in the language of the Scriptures the *giving*—the *pouring out*—the *shedding forth*—and the *baptism of the Holy Ghost* are phrases of the same import. And *to receive the Holy Ghost*—*to be sealed with the Spirit of promise*—*to be baptized with the Holy Ghost*—and *to have the Holy Ghost falling upon one*—and *to be endued with* (Pentecostal) *power from on high*, are expressions which convey the same meaning.” Fletcher, *New Birth*, cited in *The Asbury Theological Journal* 50.1 (Spring, 1998), 45. Cf. James Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1970), 56 ff.

<sup>16</sup>Fletcher succinctly packs together the numerous biblical sources for his argument. Cf. Fletcher, *Works* (New York: T Mason and G. Lane, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1837), 2:627-634, “Last Check to Antinomianism.” Cf. also Fletcher, *The Portrait of St. Paul* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1884), 166-173.

day of Pentecost was the climax of salvation history, the story begins with God's call to Abraham to leave his home and go "to the land of Canaan" (Gen. 12:1). Noting that Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness, Paul saw this initial act of faith as prefiguring the meaning of justification by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

Fifteen years after he had first believed in God, the Lord appeared to Abraham again and said to him: "Walk before me, and be perfect [blameless in heart]" (Gen. 17:1). In exchange for being perfect in heart, the Lord promised Abraham that he and his descendants would occupy the land of Canaan. As a sign of this everlasting covenant, the Lord said to him: "You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins" (Gen. 17:11). Genesis 17:23 says that on "that very day" when God told Abraham to be perfect, "every male among the men of Abraham's house" was circumcised. The removal of the inherited and impure flesh in the rite of circumcision thus symbolized perfection of love (Gen. 17:1) and purity of heart (Dt. 10:17). Canaan represented the "abode, the sanctuary" of the Lord (Ex. 15:17). In order for Abraham's descendants to live there in the presence of a holy God, they had to be a "holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). Circumcision was the sign of the covenant that they would be a holy nation, and in return for their faithfulness God would give them Canaan as their inheritance where they would be established as an unending kingdom.

This promise to Abraham had its initial fulfillment through Moses who prefigured Christ because he was God's chosen leader to guide them out of Egyptian bondage into the land of Canaan (Acts 3:22). This exodus event from bondage and the conquest of Canaan were the two decisive events that established the nation of Israel as the people of God. They were brought out of the bondage of Egypt and led into the abundance of Canaan where God dwelt with his people: "He brought us out from there [exodus theme] that he might bring us in and give us the land [conquest theme] which he swore to give to our fathers" (Dt. 6:23).

Moses told them that the condition for living in the land was a perfect love and worship of God alone: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Dt. 6:4-5). This requirement of perfect love was often repeated by Moses in his instructions as they prepared to enter the Promised Land (Dt. 7:9, 12; 10:12; 11:1, 13; 13:3).

Moses also told the Israelites that, when they came into the land of Canaan, these two events—exodus and conquest—were to be a part of the

liturgy of their worshiping congregation as they remembered their saving history (Dt. 26:5). The recitation of this liturgy permitted each succeeding generation of Israelites to participate in a personal way with their forefathers in the saving history of God: “A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt. . . . And the Egyptians treated us harshly. . . . And we cried to the Lord. . . . And the Lord heard our voice. . . . And the Lord brought us out of Egypt . . . with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place” (Dt. 26:5f).

How shocking it must have been to the Israelites, as they were preparing to cross over the Jordan River into the land of Canaan, to be told by Moses that the Lord would “uproot them from their land” (Dt. 29:28) because they would not live up to the terms of the covenant made with Abraham to be perfect in heart. He explained the reason for their future backsliding. It was that the rite of physical circumcision was inadequate. What they needed was an inner circumcision (Dt. 30:6). Although they would be taken into captivity again, Moses said that they would be brought back through a new exodus and they would experience a new conquest (Dt. 30:6; cf. Jer. 31:40). This time they would remain forever in Canaan, never to be driven out again. “Then the Lord will *restore* your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again [a new exodus] from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. . . . And the Lord your God will bring you into the land [a new conquest] which your fathers possessed” (Dt. 30:4-5). Here they would enjoy the everlasting covenant made with Abraham and delight in the “fruit” of the land and be “abundantly prosperous” (Dt. 30:9).

The difference, Moses said, between the old conquest and the new conquest was that God would circumcise their hearts so that now they could love God with all their hearts: “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (Dt. 30:6). This *restoration* theme became the message of the prophets. The original exodus and conquest would be followed up with a new exodus and conquest, which would restore the kingdom of Israel. Physical circumcision was no longer of any use because it did not empower the Israelites to walk perfectly in heart before God. It needed to be replaced with an inner circumcision.

Jeremiah proclaimed: “Circumcise yourself to the Lord, remove the foreskins of your hearts” (Jer. 4:4). The Old Testament prophets replaced

the language of physical circumcision with the language of cleanness.<sup>17</sup> This cleansing was not something that they were able to do for themselves. Rather, it was to be done by the Spirit of God. Ezekiel prophesied:

I will take you from the nations [a new exodus], and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land [a new conquest]. I will sprinkle clear water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. . . . You shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:24-28).

Ezekiel also described this new conquest as meaning that Israel would be made holy, not by their own efforts and good works, but by God alone: "Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 37:28). This future restoration of the fortunes of Israel will occur, Ezekiel says, "when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel" (Ezek. 39:29).

Jeremiah said: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not like the [old] covenant. . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts" (31:31-34). Joel prophesied that God "will pour out my spirit on all flesh" (Joel 2:28) and that God "will restore the fortunes of Judah" (Joel 3:1). This means that "my people shall never again be put to shame" (Joel 2:27) because "I am the Lord your God, who dwell in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy" (Joel 3:17).

Peter proclaimed that Joel's prophecy of the coming of the Spirit during the last days had occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). His very choice of words to describe Jesus' resurrection from the dead was exodus language: "With mighty works and wonders and signs . . . God raised him up" (Acts 2:22-24). This phrase ("mighty works and wonders and signs") in the Old Testament was traditionally used as an allusion to the original exodus event (cf. Dt. 6:20-24; 26:5-10; Joshua 24:17; Dt. 4:34; 7:19; 11:3; 29:3; Jer. 32:20-21; Acts 7:36), and Peter used this

<sup>17</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy, A Commentary*, trans. Dorothea Barton (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 183-184.

phrase as an allusion to Jesus' resurrection. The phrase "having freed him from death" (Acts 2:24) is also exodus language. "Loosed" is the root word for "ransom" and is used in the Septuagint for Israel's deliverance from Egypt. It is also used in Rev. 1:5-6 as an allusion to the exodus and served as a paradigm of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is thus the new exodus.

Peter also used conquest language to describe Jesus' ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus went to heaven to sit on the "throne" and was "exalted at the right hand of God" and sent "from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" which "he poured out" on us "which you see and hear" (Acts 2:29-32). Peter's Jewish hearers would have immediately caught the nuances of his choice of words. Peter was saying that the new exodus was Jesus' resurrection and the new conquest was Jesus' exaltation and the pouring out of the Spirit upon his people, as the Old Testament prophets had predicted regarding the restored Israel.<sup>18</sup>

When the people asked, "What shall we do?" Peter's response was for them to have their own personal exodus and conquest event: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins [the exodus event]; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [the conquest event]. For the promise [made by the prophets that the fortunes of Israel would be restored] is to you and to your children and to all who are far off [i.e., the Gentiles]" (Acts 2:38-39; cf. Acts 22:21; Eph. 2:13, 17).<sup>19</sup> Here Peter is saying that the gift of the Spirit makes you a member of the restored kingdom, not physical circumcision.

Luke shows that the original Pentecostal event happened suddenly and was not by human effort. The prophets repeatedly said: God will sanctify you (Ezek. 28:25; 36:23, 37:28, 38:16; 39:27); God will circumcise your heart so that you may love him perfectly (Dt. 30:6); God will bring you back to this place (Jer. 30:3); God will restore your fortunes (Ezek. 29:14); God will pour out His Spirit (Ezek. 39:29). As the background for understanding the meaning of Pentecost, Luke says that the disciples were expecting the restoration of the new kingdom to occur at any time. Jesus appeared to the disciples for forty days, "speaking of the

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<sup>18</sup>Cf. Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 191-193.

<sup>19</sup>G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 63.

kingdom of God” and instructing them “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:3-5). The disciples then asked: “Lord, will you at this time *restore* the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). This question shows that the disciples believed that the new conquest was about to happen.

Jesus encouraged his disciples to be patient with God’s timing, assuring them that this would happen according to what “the Father has fixed by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). Jesus then told them that they would receive “power.” During his earthly ministry, Jesus had promised his disciples that they would see “the kingdom of God . . . come with power” (Mark 9:1) and they would be “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). This “power from on high” would give them the ability to be faithful citizens of the new kingdom, unlike the weak and fickle loyalty of the ancient Israelites whose hearts were uncircumcised and rebellious toward God. The terrified and timid group of 120 believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire, and suddenly they were “more than conquerors” (to use a favorite phrase of Wesley and Fletcher to describe perfection of love). Beginning with Jerusalem, center of the old kingdom, this restored kingdom would spread to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) through the power of the Spirit until there would be “a grand Pentecost”<sup>20</sup> (as Wesley put it in his sermon on “The General Spread of the Gospel”) when righteousness will cover the earth as waters cover the sea.

Pentecost celebrated the fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 30. Pentecost meant that “the law of God was written on the heart” (Jer. 31:33) because God’s Spirit had been poured out (Ezek. 36:27). Pentecost was an infusion of pure love for God and each other as they lived in “one accord” (Acts 1:14) and in fellowship (*koinonia*) together (Acts 2:42). The sign of this new reality was the restoration of spiritual gifts—prophecies, visions, dreams, wonders, and tongues (Acts 2:5-20). What connects the Old Testament and the New Testament writers is their theology of salvation history, and the goal of this history is for

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<sup>20</sup>John Wesley, *Sermons*, ed. Albert C. Outler, 2:494, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” in *The Works of John Wesley*; begun as “The Oxford Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*” (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975-1983); continued as “The Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*” (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984).

God's people to live in loving fellowship with God and each other. To think of the display of power on the day of Pentecost as intending to emphasize primarily supernatural phenomena would contradict the purpose of salvation history and Jesus's condemnation of the Pharisees who were obsessed with the sensational need for miracles rather than with the worship of God (Matt. 12:38-42). Miraculous phenomena are confirmations of the work of God and play a supporting role, but they are not the essence of God's revelation.

To think that Pentecost was only about "power" misses the message of the prophets about what would happen when the Kingdom was restored. The language of Acts 1-2 is the language of restoration and embodies this prophetic message, the essence of which is that the restored Israel would be empowered to serve the Lord because the law of God would be written upon their hearts, enabling them to love God perfectly. If we cannot see this because the word love does not appear in the text, it is because of modern literalism, along with the modernist demand that truth must measure up to the Cartesian ideal of "the clear and distinct idea." Simply because a certain word, such as love, does not appear in the text does not mean the concept is missing. The word Trinity is not used here, but it expresses the most important concept we have about God. With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, God was revealed as Tri-personal. This meant that God is a social being whose essence is love.

In his *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, Richard Hays argues that love cannot be used as a primary ethical motif because he did not find the word "love" very often in the New Testament.<sup>21</sup> James Barr warned against using a lexical study as the basis of doing theology. There is something methodologically flawed in a word-study approach because it confuses words with concepts.<sup>22</sup> Meaning is determined by context, not by word analysis. This confusion between word and concept is apparently why Hays says the Book of Acts is about power, not about love.<sup>23</sup> This view contradicts the consensus of Christian interpretation throughout the

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<sup>21</sup>*The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 200-201.

<sup>22</sup>*The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), 210, 233, 269.

<sup>23</sup>*The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 201.

history of the church and misses the essential message of Luke about the significance of Pentecost.<sup>24</sup>

Luke focused on the external phenomena of Pentecost to emphasize that the new reality had come in an unmistakable way, but the decisive thing about Pentecost was the work of grace newly available to believers. The promise was to “you and to your children and to all who are afar off” [uncircumcised Gentiles], and the essence of this promise was that their hearts would be circumcised by the Spirit so that they could love God with all their hearts (Dt. 30:6).

This circumcision of heart, as Peter reported to the Jerusalem Council, took place on the day of Pentecost as “the Holy Spirit . . . cleansed [=circumcised] their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9). James and the Jerusalem Council thus concluded that it was unnecessary for physical circumcision to be imposed on Cornelius or other Gentiles (Acts 15:14, 19). Consistent with this is Paul’s view that “a real Jew” is one who has been circumcised by the Spirit (Rom. 2:28-29).

When Paul alluded to Pentecost in Rom 5:5 as signifying the pouring out of love, this is perfectly consistent with Peter’s Pentecost sermon in which he quoted from Joel to show that the gift of the Spirit would be poured out when the kingdom was restored. Joel specifically said that this restoration meant “Jerusalem shall be holy,” as noted above. Peter’s sermon also included the uncircumcised Gentiles (“to all who are afar off”) as recipients of the gift of the Spirit because the Holy Spirit could do for them what physical circumcision failed to do. Luke’s account of Pentecost, including the original Pentecost (Acts 2) as well as the Gentile Pentecost (Acts 10), is perfectly consistent with Paul’s pastoral application of Pentecost as the pouring out of love.

Assuming the Protestant principle of the unity of Scripture, Fletcher also argued for the continuity between Acts 2 and the Johannine expecta-

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<sup>24</sup>Gregory Dix has shown that the original meaning of the laying on of hands (baptism with the Spirit) in the history of the church denoted “deification” (=being made God-like, sealed or imprinted with the Spirit, sanctification). He shows that “baptism with the Spirit” was treated as the rite of Pentecost which followed the rite of water baptism. The “sealing” constituted the completion and perfection of the Christian life. *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1946), 25. James Dunn also acknowledges that the baptism with the Spirit as subsequent in time to water baptism was the consensus of the church until the Protestant Reformation. Cf. Dunn, “Spirit-Baptism and Pentecostalism,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (November 1970): 397.

tion of the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-14), which meant that “the disciples would be perfected in one” (John 17:2) and would be “sanctified” (John 17:17).<sup>25</sup> To be sure, Fletcher and Wesley were pre-critical in their use of the Scriptures, but their theological exegesis allowed them to catch the significance of texts, something often missed by an exclusive reliance on the historical-critical method.

### Fletcher’s Influence on Methodist Theology

Was Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations accepted into Methodism? Yes, and it is found in Wesley’s leading preachers. It also received Wesley’s praise and approval,<sup>26</sup> although at first Wesley was more than a little suspicious of it until he began to edit and correct Fletcher’s manuscripts.<sup>27</sup> Fletcher preached a sermon on Pentecost sanctification in 1781

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Fletcher, *A Treatise on Christian Perfection* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837; originally published by Francis Asbury in 1796), 24.

<sup>26</sup>Telford, *Letters* 6:136-137. Letter to Elizabeth Ritchie (January 17, 1775). Wesley published an abridged edition of Fletcher’s *Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism* (London: G. Paramore, 1795, third edition) so that it would have a wider reading audience. Wesley’s abridged edition prominently features the four dispensations of the Spirit (108-111). Wesley placed his approving asterisk in front of two paragraphs where Fletcher used the “baptism with the Spirit” as the meaning of perfection (vii, 169). Wesley also placed his approving asterisk in front of the last paragraph in Fletcher’s “Essay on Truth” where Fletcher explained that Pentecost was the basis of Christian perfection (p. 173). Interestingly, Wesley changed Fletcher’s wording from “daily baptized with the Spirit” to “duly baptized with the Spirit” (p. 144). John Miley, professor of theology at Drew Theological Seminary in the second half of the 19th century, says that, on the question regarding Christian perfection, “we place Mr. Fletcher next to Mr. Wesley.” He cites two paragraphs from Fletcher which he calls a “classical” picture of Christian perfection. These paragraphs describe Fletcher’s dispensational understanding of grace, noting that, in the Christian dispensation of the Spirit, one is able to experience the perfect love of Christ. Miley further notes: “The life in Christian holiness, as here portrayed [by Fletcher], is the same as in the citations from Mr. Wesley.” Interestingly, Miley notes that the difference between Wesley and Fletcher is that Wesley stressed the instantaneous moment of entire sanctification, whereas Fletcher allowed more clearly the element of time and the gradual development in the attainment of Christian perfection, carefully allowing for the different stages of growth. It is possible that this slight change from “daily” to “duly” might reflect Wesley’s concern to emphasize the instantaneous moment. John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1894), 2:375.

<sup>27</sup>For a discussion of Wesley’s initial reaction to the doctrine of dispensations, see Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, 35ff.

at Wesley's annual conference.<sup>28</sup> Wesley praised this sermon, noting that "the power of God attends both his preaching and prayer."<sup>29</sup> Shortly after this conference in the same year, Wesley published an essay by Joseph Benson, titled "Thoughts on Perfection," in *The Arminian Magazine*. Benson wrote: "God *may*, and that he often *does*, *instantaneously* so baptize a soul with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, as to purify it from all dross, and refine it like gold, so that it is *renewed in love*, in *pure and perfect love*, as it never was before."<sup>30</sup> Wesley, of course, did not accept the Zinzendorffian view that one was "often" justified and entirely sanctified at the same moment. He once noted that he did not know of a single instance where this had happened.<sup>31</sup>

In this essay on Christian perfection, Benson (with Wesley's approval) linked the baptism with the Spirit and perfection as a post-justification experience. Two years later, Wesley preached on "the baptism with the Holy Ghost" at his annual conference in 1783.<sup>32</sup> By this time, Fletcher's main treatise on Christian perfection, *The Last Check to Antinomianism*, had been widely read and embraced by Methodist preachers. Wesley had corrected one incidental phrase in this treatise in 1775 in an early draft of it. Fletcher had equated "receiving the Spirit" with perfection. Wesley noted that this represented a "slight difference" between them, and so Fletcher corrected it before the manuscript was published. Wesley subsequently reported back to Fletcher that now there was no longer "any difference between us."<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Fletcher in over 30 instances linked "the baptism with the Spirit" with Christian perfection without a word of censure from Wesley. It is thus understandable that the baptism with the Spirit became a common term for the doctrine of perfect love.

A typical representation of this motif is contained in the preaching of Richard Watson (1781-1833), the first *systematic* theologian of Method-

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<sup>28</sup>Letter from John Pescod to his wife, printed in *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 8 (August 1829): 528.

<sup>29</sup>Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), 4:213, Journal (August 8, 1781).

<sup>30</sup>"Thoughts on Perfection," *The Arminian Magazine* 4 (October 1781): 553.

<sup>31</sup>Wesley, *Works* (Jackson edition): 11:380.

<sup>32</sup>*An Account of the Infancy, Religious, and Literary Life of Adam Clarke* (autobiography), edited J. B. B. Clarke (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1833), 1:110.

<sup>33</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 6:174-175 (to John Fletcher, August 18, 1775).

ism. Watson wrote: “The entire sanctification of the soul from sin is held forth, both as necessary to qualify us for heaven, and as the result of that *baptism of the Spirit* which we receive in answer to prayer, and through faith in Christ.”<sup>34</sup> He showed that this Pentecostal event was not just for the disciples. Every believer can “now” experience “a constant, though secret, Pentecost.”<sup>35</sup> He exhorted his hearers: “Christ now baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”<sup>36</sup> This personal Pentecost means that one can have “purged from the heart of man all its stains of sin.”<sup>37</sup> In his sermon on “Qualifications for the Ministry,” preached at the ordination service of ministers held at the British conference in Manchester in 1827, Watson encouraged the new preachers to experience the “Spirit of love”<sup>38</sup> which was first given to the disciples by “the baptism by the Spirit.”<sup>39</sup> This Spirit of love “came down with the pentecostal fire, and then kindled a zeal to fulfil their Lord’s commission.”<sup>40</sup>

When Watson said that “the pentecostal fire . . . kindled a zeal to fulfil their Lord’s commission,” he was repeating a theme found in one of Wesley’s later sermons, “On Zeal.” In this sermon, Wesley said: “This is that religion which our Lord has established upon earth, ever since the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost . . . love enthroned in the heart [=Christian perfection].”<sup>41</sup> Watson went on to say to these new preachers that a “baptism by the Spirit” similar to what the disciples experienced would instill “this heavenly affection in you,” empowering them to engage in sacrificial service as faithful ministers of the gospel.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, if Benson and Watson believed that perfect love was instilled in the believer’s heart through the baptism with the Spirit, this conclusion was based on Fletcher’s theological exegesis. It was also based

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<sup>34</sup>“Conversations for the Young,” *The Works of the Rev. Richard Watson* (London: John Mason, 1857), 6:263. Italics mine.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 2:168.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 2:175.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 2:174.

<sup>41</sup>Outler, *Sermons* 3:314, “On Zeal.”

<sup>42</sup>*The Works of the Rev. Richard Watson*, 2:175.

on the perception that it is consistent with John Wesley's thought. In Wesley's abridged edition of Fletcher's *Equal Check* (1774), Wesley placed his approving starred symbol in the paragraph immediately following Fletcher's interpretation of Acts 2, where he argued that "the baptism with the Spirit" and being "filled with the Spirit" endowed the disciples with "an uncommon degree of sanctifying grace." Ironically, Fletcher concluded his theological exegesis of Acts 2 by appealing to Wesley's own words in the sermon on "Scriptural Christianity" (1744), based on Acts 4:31 where Wesley said that being "filled with the Holy Spirit" was for the purpose of giving to the disciples "the mind which was in Christ" and "to fill them with love."<sup>43</sup> Wesley's approving starred symbol shows that he agreed with Fletcher's interpretation of his own words on this subject.

Wesley's view in his sermon "On Zeal" (1781) that "the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost" entailed "love enthroned in the heart" also corresponds with Fletcher's interpretation, and it was probably influenced by his close supervision of Fletcher's writings and his assessment of Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations, which Wesley expressed in a letter to one of his class leaders: "Mr. Fletcher has given us a wonderful view of the different dispensations which we are under. I believe that difficult subject was never placed in so clear a light before. It seems God has raised him up for this very thing."<sup>44</sup> Whether or not this interpretation is right depends upon the theological exegesis of the prophetic expectation of the coming of the Spirit when Israel would be restored (Acts 2:16). Fletcher also believed Paul's claim that love was poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given on the day of Pentecost (Rom. 5:5). This is consistent with Luke's narrative of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is also consistent with Luke's narrative in Acts 15:8-9 that the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost meant circumcision of heart.

If Fletcher's theology of Pentecost was accepted in early Methodism, it was because his theological exegesis of Acts 2 was compelling, and because it received Wesley's personal approval.

<sup>43</sup> Wesley's abridged edition of Fletcher, *Equal Check*, 174.

<sup>44</sup> *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 6:136-137. Letter to Elizabeth Ritchie (January 17, 1775).

**“THE UNION HEAVEN GAVE US”:  
THE DOCTRINAL PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN  
UNITY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD (ANDERSON)**

by

**Merle D. Strege**

More than twenty-five years ago, John W. V. Smith rightly described the Church of God movement as a people on a quest for holiness and unity, a phrase that captures the heart of the movement’s mission.<sup>1</sup> Early Church of God people fervently believed that God had called the movement into being to witness to the world of its need for salvation *and* to witness to the divided body of Christ on behalf of the crucial need of unity. Moreover, they saw this mission as two sides of one coin: to remove or diminish either was to render the accomplishment of its partner much more difficult. Unity without evangelism is to no purpose; evangelism without unity is highly problematic.

The Church of God is a non-creedal tradition. Three implications of this statement deserve special emphasis. First, to say that we are non-creedal means not that we have no convictions, but that we have “no creed but the Bible,” and thus prefer to test doctrinal practice directly against the Scriptures. However, unless we are content to be a collection of ecclesiological cowboys, this conviction commits the church to careful, communal biblical study. Second, that we are non-creedal does not necessarily imply theological disagreement with the contents of Christendom’s great doctrinal statements—e.g., the Apostles and the Nicene Creeds.

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<sup>1</sup>John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1980).

Indeed, writers from Charles E. Brown to Gilbert W. Stafford have observed that the Church of God does not teach or practice a doctrine alien to these statements. Third, our non-creedal position commits us to a practical approach to Christian doctrine, i. e., practice trumps belief statements. Thus, the Bible is certainly a book to be believed, but, even more, it is to be performed, practiced, lived. Life is acting as well as being.

Within the theological perspective of the Church of God, dialogical life aims to address the questions: (1) What kind of people is God calling us to be? and (2) How are we to be and act in the world and toward Christendom with respect to the practice of Christian unity? In ecclesial traditions like the Church of God, formal beliefs must be practiced, and the latter is the proof of the former. In a real sense, the practice is the doctrine. So, we aim at more than propositional understanding; we hope to form the church's practice.

To gain a purchase on this task, we must first attend to two formative influences on our common life. At the outset we must consider our narratives, consulting our ancestors' and contemporaries' ideas and practices about Christian unity. This is a consultation, not a search for preemptive or definitive statements. To grasp the presumed definitive would be to lend to it the kind of creedal stature that our forefathers and foremothers opposed. Rather, we will consult our formative narratives by respectfully listening to the living faith of the dead, and so let them cast a vote on answers to our question. Secondly, not in order of theological importance but only in sequence, we will consult some salient biblical texts.

Concerning the topic of unity, early Church of God preachers frequently resorted to John 17, and so will we. Lena Shofner's sermon on Ephesians 2:14-22 proved a memorable extension of the practice of unity, and Galatians 3:28-29 is another oft-quoted text. What are the implications of these passages for the contemporary doctrinal practice of Christian unity in the Church of God movement? After working with the biblical text in light of our narratives, hopefully we will finally come to a proposal for our own ecclesial life.

### **An Historical Overview of Theological Statements and Practice**

It could be said of the Church of God reformation movement that it is an extended practice of the church. Historically, a particular vision of the church as one body has gripped our attention. Scratch the surface of

many theological debates and you will find that what we are really discussing is the church. For example, although Herbert M. Riggle wrote several books attacking premillennialist eschatology, the theological issue fundamentally at stake was the doctrine of the church. If premillennialist interpretation of the Book of Revelation was correct, then Riggle and other early church-historical interpreters were wrong; and if that were so, much if not all of what they taught about the church would necessarily be thrown into question. The doctrine of the church and, derivatively, Christian unity, is at the heart of the life and thought of the Church of God movement, and we can think of the movement as an extended discussion—sometimes a debate or even an argument—about what it means to be the church.

Daniel S. Warner (1842-1895) inaugurated a discussion and practice of the church that attempted to restore her to the model found in the New Testament. This is a form of Christian primitivism, a mindset that finds norms or patterns in the ancient Christian past and urges believers to restore or return to those norms. Other primitivist traditions include the Christian Churches and the early Friends, as illustrated in George Fox's slogan: "Primitive Christianity revived." Warner discussed his theology of the church in a small pamphlet entitled *The Church of God: What the Church of God is and What it is Not*. The booklet covers a range of topics, including the subjects of Christian unity and the problems associated with what Warner called "sectism."

Scholars in religion often use the term "sect" to refer to voluntary Christian bodies over against the established church, but Warner used the term in a much more pejorative sense. He defined sect from the Latin meaning "to cut," and from which we get such English words as "section" or "dissect." According to Warner, all the churches of Christendom (in the United States they are called denominations) were nothing other than sects because they divide or cut up the body of Christ. However, the church must contain all the redeemed, and from this premise Warner concluded, "No sect contains all of the body of Christ, therefore no sect is the church of God. Then, as honest men, who expect to be judged by the Word of God, let us never call anything the church but the body of Christ; i. e., all the saved, either universally or in any given locality."<sup>2</sup> That the

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<sup>2</sup>*The Church of God: What the Church of God is and What it is Not*, reprint edition (Guthrie, Oklahoma: Faith Publishing House, n. d.), 1.

sects were not the true church was also evidenced by their use of creeds, formal rules of membership, and bureaucratic forms of organization or “man-rule.” Warner asserted that the true church trusted only in the Bible, was comprised of all the saved, and was governed by Christ through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Warner’s theology of the church and his criticism of American Christianity’s denominational structure pressed him to a strong appeal for unity. Christ, the one head of the church, could have but one body, even as her bridegroom could have but one bride.<sup>3</sup> Warner and other early preachers offered several New Testament texts in support of this claim, but none was cited more frequently than Jesus’ explicit plea for his disciples’ unity in John 17. Galatians 3:28 declares that all are one in Christ, and Ephesians 2:14-22 refers to the collapse of the dividing wall of hostility through his work. But John 17 records Jesus’ prayer for his disciples in the hours just before his Passion began. The moment’s sheer drama would be enough to lend his words heightened significance, but the prayer also specifies the means by which Jesus’ disciples will be united. Jesus prays here that his disciples and all who might believe through their witness “may be sanctified in truth . . . that they all may be one.”<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the union of all Christians could not be achieved through any form of bureaucratic organization. Warner concluded from John 17 that only through the work of the sanctifying Spirit could Christian unity be accomplished. The chorus of his gospel song “The Bond of Perfectness” expressed this insight in its chorus:

Oh brethren! How this perfect love  
Unites us all in Jesus;  
One heart and mind and soul we prove  
The union heaven gave us.

The phrase “perfect love” is, of course, a synonym for Christian perfection, the experience of entire sanctification, or Christian holiness. In

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<sup>3</sup>Early Church of God writers and preachers often employed the latter notion in a piece of rough and ready logic against a divided church. If denominations were each a church, Christ would necessarily be the husband of more than one bride. The suggestion of a morally compromised Christ as bigamist or worse was offered as proof positive that multiple churches or denominations could not possibly be the true church.

<sup>4</sup>John 17:17-21, *passim*.

the late 1870s, Warner had adopted this theology through his connection with the Holiness Movement that emphasized entire sanctification as a second work of grace. Wesleyan soteriology thought of salvation as a “double cure.” As Charles Wesley had written, Christ “breaks the power of canceled sin.” On this view, salvation comprised first of all *justification*—what God does in us—or the cancellation of sin, and secondly *sanctification*—what God does in us—namely, breaking sin’s hold over the believer. Camp meeting revivalism was the natural home of holiness preachers, and in that context the instantaneous reception of sanctification after justification became the standard view. To this view Warner was no exception. However, to use his phrase, “Bible salvation” brought more than freedom from sin. It also bound the redeemed and sanctified together in all-sufficient love.

Warner thus articulated an experience of harmony often the subject of testimonies from those who attended holiness camp meetings even before 1880. The experience of unity to which they testified Warner explained theologically, and it became a fundamental rallying point for the little group gathered about the *Gospel Trumpet* publication of the young Church of God movement. No creeds, rules of fellowship, or other artificial tests were required among those who lived on the plane of Bible holiness. As the true foundation of Christian unity, as in Warner’s ecclesiology, holiness yielded a pervasive harmony in fellowship, worship, and ethical life; the early Church of God movement attempted to practice this understanding of the true church and its unity.

Through the Church of God movement’s first fifty years, the message of Christian unity through the sanctification of believers remained fairly constant. Herbert M. Riggle’s 1913 work *The Christian Church, Its Rise and Progress*<sup>5</sup> illustrates this consistency. Riggle (1872-1952) explicitly extended the primitivist conception of the church implicit in Warner’s earlier work. However, during the years between Warner’s pamphlet and Riggle’s book, the church-historical interpretation of biblical apocalyptic writing had emerged first in the work of W. G. Schell and later with F. G. Smith.<sup>6</sup> The full title of Schell’s work illustrates the connection to ecclesiology established by church-historical exegetes: *The*

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<sup>5</sup>Anderson, Ind.: The Gospel Trumpet Company, 1913.

<sup>6</sup>W. G. Schell, *The Biblical Trace of the Church* (Grand Junction, Mich.: Gospel Trumpet Publishing Company, 1893); F. G. Smith, *The Revelation Explained* (Anderson: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1908).

*Biblical Trace of the Church, from her Birth to the End of Time: Showing the Origin and Termination of Sectism and Proving We are Near the End of the World.* Riggle himself had helped to establish this connection, having edited and completed Warner's unfinished typological reading of Daniel and the Revelation, *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary*.<sup>7</sup> Thus, he opened his study of the church with this description:

As we stand on the summit of the present truth and point our telescope back over the mists and clouds that move along at our feet, and over the twelve hundred and sixty years of utter darkness that extend far beyond, even into the third century, we behold, on the mountains of God's own holiness, the temple of God, resplendent with the morning light of his own glory. With admiration we view her and behold, she is "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." She is "all fair," the city of the great king. That golden city is *the primitive church*.<sup>8</sup>

Riggle's explicit primitivism meant that the "golden city" of the ancient New Testament church provided the standard by which the authenticity of all subsequent churches was to be assessed. Among the distinguishing criteria of the New Testament church were oneness and unity. Riggle repeated the logic that required one body for the church's one head, Christ. Never one to mince words, Riggle sharpened the rhetoric used to describe "the sects," asserting that the call to join one of these various bodies "must proceed from antichrist."<sup>9</sup>

As the primitive church, so also the latter-day restored church must exhibit a complete unity that replicates the New Testament model. Accordingly, the saved members of this church must: (1) not be of this world but shun its "popular amusements and abominations; (2) abide in Christ alone and refuse to join any human substitute for the church; (3) take for themselves the only New Testament name for the church and abjure any and all modifiers; (4) accept the one and only proper discipline for the church, the Bible; and (5) be sanctified, for "sanctifying grace removes all carnality, which is the cause of division, and the all-pervading love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, brings all hearts

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<sup>7</sup>Moundsville, W.V.: Gospel Trumpet Publishing Company, 1903.

<sup>8</sup>Riggle, *loc cit.*, 33; Riggle's emphasis.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 44.

into the same harmony that reigns in heaven, into perfect unity, as the Father and Son are one.”<sup>10</sup>

H. M. Riggle and the second generation of Church of God leadership generally repeated Warner’s connection between holiness and unity. However, the church-historical exegesis sharpened these themes and gave them a harder edge. To name some Christians “daughters of Babylon the great harlot” gave new force to the call to come out of sectism. In point of fact, ever since Warner (d. 1895), Church of God people had been urging believers to quit the false churches of the denominations and enter the true New Testament body of Christ. Nevertheless, the apocalyptically grounded self-understanding of Schell, Smith, the early Riggle, and those they influenced deepened the gulf separating the Church of God from other believers. If the essence of the sectarian mentality is to refuse legitimacy to any other groups, then, despite protestations to the contrary, the Church of God shaped by the church-historical exegesis threatened to make of itself the very thing it had originally opposed—a divisive sect. Thus, by the decade of the 1920s, the Church of God may very well have been more isolated from other Christians than at any other time in its history.

Not all members of the Church of God subscribed to the apocalyptically grounded view of the church. During the 1920s, opponents of this view began to express themselves in published statements and sermons. In their view, the church-historical exegesis and insistence that others “come out of Babylon” was closing the movement off from fellowship with other believers. Even before 1920, George P. Tasker challenged Smith’s apocalypticism and practiced a Christian unity that took him into YMCA lecture halls and Presbyterian pulpits in Lahore, India, where Tasker served as a missionary of the Church of God. By the end of the decade, E. A. Reardon and Russell Byrum had publicly repudiated the narrow sectarianism into which they believed the Church of God was descending. The details of their opposition are well known.<sup>11</sup> Reardon

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<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 69-84; quotation, 84.

<sup>11</sup>For an extended discussion, see Robert H. Reardon, *The Early Morning Light* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1979), and my *I Saw the Church* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 2002), especially chapter 9, “Challenging the Apocalyptic Identity.” Cf. also excerpts from E. A. Reardon’s 1929 Anderson Camp Meeting sermon, in Barry L. Callen, ed., *Following the Light* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 134-136; see also Russell Byrum’s 1929 paper read to the Indiana State Ministers’ Meeting, *ibid.*, 127-133.

was voted off many of his board assignments. Tasker was deprived of his missionary appointment; Byrum resigned his faculty position. These developments illustrate the intellectual honesty of the three, as well as the strength of the apocalyptic mindset's influence on much of the Church of God ministry at the time.

Into this highly charged atmosphere stepped Charles E. Brown (1883-1971), newly ratified as Editor in Chief of the Gospel Trumpet Company in 1930. While many knew his reputation as a thinking minister, few could have predicted the ecclesiological revolution that would flow from this man's prolific typewriter. Brown possessed a knowledge of Christian history more comprehensive than any of his predecessors or contemporaries, and this broad knowledge served as a basis by which Brown assessed the life and thought of Christians in other times and places. This historical awareness and knowledge also steered him away from the apocalypticism of the preceding Editor, F. G. Smith. At the same time, these intellectual characteristics moved Brown toward embracing what he termed, in one of his book titles, *A New Approach to Christian Unity*.<sup>12</sup>

Within a year of succeeding Smith, Brown had developed a new position on Christian unity even as he perpetuated some of the previous generation's ideals. On one hand, Brown continued the earlier judgment that divisions within Christianity constituted both a problem and a reproach on those content to live in disunity. In so doing, he also disputed a widespread notion that Christians enjoyed a spiritual unity that transcended denominational walls. Spiritual unity was important, wrote Brown, but Christ also prayed for "organic unity."<sup>13</sup> Like Warner, Riggle, and Smith, Brown took the primitive church of the New Testament as the standard for contemporary church life. Eschewing apocalyptic language, however, he preferred to describe ideal Christian life and thought as "radical" in the sense of getting to the root of the matter. While he agreed that the post-New Testament church had lost its radical nature and pursued ineffective means of unity, Brown did not reach that conclusion by employing church-historical exegesis. He remained consistent with the ideals of earlier Church of God primitivism; however, his proposal for a return to the unity of the New Testament church departed from earlier discussions.

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<sup>12</sup>Anderson: The Warner Press, 1931.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

Brown believed that the apostolic church enjoyed a profound unity and that it was incumbent on the contemporary church to recover that relationship. He proposed three steps to this recovery in a program he labeled “spiritual disarmament.” The first step was to “drop all official creeds insofar as they are official and authoritative definitions of denominational belief.”<sup>14</sup> Brown was not demonizing creeds or those who use them. Quite the contrary, he regarded creeds as useful for theological students, and for him any reasonably founded belief in a creed was unobjectionable. Nevertheless, he also appreciated the divisive role that creeds have played in separating Christians.<sup>15</sup> Such divisiveness is a characteristic that he applied to unwritten creeds as well. Written or unwritten, Brown regarded as a pernicious evil creeds that exclude some faithful Christians from the fellowship of other believers. However, ideally speaking, an unwritten creed possesses the virtue of a vitality that renders it “capable of responding to the divine guidance of the living Christ in the church. It can broaden with the increase of knowledge.”<sup>16</sup>

Brown’s second step to the recovery of New Testament unity was the abolition of all formal denominational structures. He proposed not merger but abolition. Here we see at work Brown’s appreciation for radical Christianity. He reminded his readers that, in the long view of Christian history, denominations were a fairly recent phenomenon. In what today may be considered a moment of astute prescience, Brown declared, “All signs point to their eventual abolition and the gathering of God’s people once again into the blessed peace and unity of the ancient church.”<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that Brown saw in most denominations positive qualities that they would contribute to this church beyond division, e.g., Quaker “inner light,” Baptist democracy, Presbyterian fidelity to the truth, and Methodist evangelistic fervor.

Third and most important, Christians of today can recover their lost visible unity only by committing themselves to Christ, the Lord of the church. Here Brown gave expression to the Pietist heritage of the Church of God movement:

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.* One of Brown’s favorite examples of the divisive effects of creeds was the *filioque* controversy that played an instrumental role in opening a ninth-century doctrinal schism that contributed to the eventual division of Christendom into the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in 1054.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

Doctrine is very important; but more important it is to get back to the supreme Person, who is the source of all true doctrine. He has said, "I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE." When all Christendom gets back to him it will be one. There will be plenty of time to compare and study doctrines, when the clamor of debate has given place to the silence of the humble and earnest pupils in the school of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

Ultimately, the unity of the church rests, not on loyalty to a creed, nor even to a book, but to a Person. From this position, Brown concluded that all who are saved in Christ are already members of the body of Christ regardless of their denominational affiliation. This view could not but legitimize any church where faithful disciples were found. Once such legitimacy was granted, the sectarian posture and mindset of the Church of God movement had to begin eroding. No longer could the movement be so determined in its withdrawal to the isolation from which it called others to come out of Babylon. The view that all who are saved in Christ are members of the "church of God" is thus a crucial step in the development of the movement's doctrinal practice of Christian unity. More than any other single voice, it was C. E. Brown who articulated the ecclesiology and vision of unity that permitted, even encouraged the Church of God to cross-denominational borders formerly regarded as sealed. By the early 1940s, a growing number of ministers were critical of "come-outism," contending that functionally it underwrote the unity only of the movement and not all Christians.<sup>19</sup>

### **The History of a Doctrinal Practice**

Earlier I stated that, for non-creedal groups like the Church of God doctrine is better conceived as a set of practices than a collection of propositions or a belief statement.<sup>20</sup> One may conveniently refer to published theological statements as a way of getting a handle on "doctrine," but it is more important to ask, "How were Church of God people *prac-*

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<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>19</sup>The views of some of these ministers are reported in Robert H. Reardon's unpublished S. T. M. thesis, Oberlin Graduate School of Theology, 1943.

<sup>20</sup>I tried to establish this position in *I Saw the Church*, x-xiv. For supportive viewpoints, see James W. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, *Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), Dorothy Bass, *Practicing Our Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.

ting the church and, specifically, Christian unity?" I have already identified "come-outism" as a pervasive doctrinal practice of unity in the Church of God in the years before 1930. What other versions, if any, of Christian unity were also in practice?

The twentieth century was the great age of ecumenism. The Federal Council of Churches was founded in America in 1908 and the World Council of Churches in 1948. Church of God people were either aware of or attended each of the latter's two great precursors. In 1925 C. J. Blewitt of the New York missionary home attended the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm, Sweden. Blewitt approvingly described "so many great men and women showing such humility and earnestly seeking to get the world to understand the meaning of love in domestic and public relations."<sup>21</sup> Two years later the other parent of the World Council of Churches, the World Conference on Faith and Order, convened in Lausanne, Switzerland. The Church of God sent no official observers to this meeting, but R. L. Berry, Managing Editor of the *Gospel Trumpet*, kept a watchful eye on its proceedings. More skeptical than Blewitt, Berry expected the conference to fail because it pursued what he supposed to be the path of federated unity. He concluded that the devil would likely be in attendance. However, Berry added, "But God will also be there if any of his people are, and we cannot doubt that. So we believe God will be there to inspire his people to real unity such as the Bible demands and inspires."<sup>22</sup>

Even before Blewitt and Berry offered their observations about world ecumenism, Church of God folk had joined cooperative Christian ventures in the United States. In 1918 the Missionary Board affiliated with the Foreign Missions Conference. Shortly afterward, the Board of Christian Education and the Gospel Trumpet Company adopted the use of International Sunday School Outlines for the preparation of Church of God curriculum. Christian educators reached across conventional lines more than others. In 1928 they joined the International Council of Christian Education; a few years later they joined the World Council of Christian Education, as well as committees responsible for the preparation of Sunday school lesson outlines.

As a body, the Church of God did not join the American Council of Churches or its successor, the National Council. However, individuals

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<sup>21</sup>*Gospel Trumpet*, September 24, 1925, 4-5.

<sup>22</sup>*Gospel Trumpet*, July 14, 1927, inside front cover.

from the Church of God have participated with or served as members of individual program units. The first Executive Secretary of the Executive Council, C. W. Hatch, was a longstanding member of the Federal Council's Commission on Stewardship, serving as chairperson for a term. Otto F. Linn joined a sub-committee working on the National Council's translation project, *The Revised Standard Version* of the Bible. Church of God youth programs, the women's organization, and the Board of Church Extension associated with cooperative Christian ventures as early as 1930.

One clear ecumenical example is the fact that Barry L. Callen has functioned as Editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* since the early 1990s, guiding this scholarly forum for the exploration of doctrine and practice in many denominations with which the Church of God movement has much natural affinity. Perhaps the most striking example of commitment to an ecumenical approach to Christian unity has been the movement's membership on the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council. Through the participation of John W. V. Smith and Gilbert W. Stafford, the Church of God has enjoyed uninterrupted membership in Faith and Order since its inception in 1957. Stafford in particular has proved an eloquent and longstanding spokesperson for Christian unity. Never an advocate of merger or formalized unions, he has exemplified the dialogical approach to Christian unity characteristic of the American conciliar movement.<sup>23</sup> These examples illustrate that at least one alternate practice of unity was alive and well alongside the apocalyptic mindset of "come-outism."

More recently, under the auspices of the former Executive Council and now the Ministries Council of the Church of God, people of the Church of God have engaged in bi- or multi-lateral conversations with representatives of other Christian communions. In the 1960s the movement entered into a series of discussions with representatives from the Churches of God of North America, the Church of the Brethren, and the Brethren Church. In 1968 the Church of God joined the Evangelical

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<sup>23</sup>In this connection, see the volume recently edited by Stafford, Ted A. Campbell, and Ann K. Riggs, *Ancient Faith and American Born Churches: Dialogues Between Christian Traditions*, Faith and Order Commission Theological Series (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2006). Stafford's dialogues with Catholic and Orthodox scholars on holiness and worship, respectively, illumine what is described as a dialogical approach.

Covenant Church in a similar series of bi-lateral discussions. Although feared by some, formal church unions were never the goal of any of these conversations. They were advanced in the warm ecumenical atmosphere that enveloped American Christianity during that decade and were committed simply to an honest search for points of commonality.<sup>24</sup>

The spirit of honest searching has also characterized the longest running bi-lateral conversation, a series of meetings with the Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ beginning in 1989. In a forum held that year at Trader's Point Christian Church at Indianapolis, representatives of both groups met to discuss theological topics ranging from history and theology to church practice and the ordinances. Participants from both groups recognized many points of commonality, and there has ensued a series of occasional meetings, the most recent of which occurred in the spring of 2006. The enduring discussion topic of these meetings has been, "In what ways can these two movements join in common work for the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth?"<sup>25</sup>

In conversations bi-lateral or quadrilateral, in associations with cooperative Christian ventures to assist and enrich the ongoing life of the church, and in the memberships of boards or individuals in program units of ecumenical bodies, people of the Church of God have practiced forms of Christian unity different from the isolationist posture of the apocalyptic self-understanding. These alternate practices have not gone un-noticed or without occasional rebuke. In 1985 the General Assembly adopted a resolution encouraging efforts "to seek intentional interchurch relationships through which its own ministries are enriched and which provide opportunity for the Church of God reformation movement to live out its message of Christian unity through enriching the entire Body of Christ."<sup>26</sup> However, in 1987 both the National and World Councils of Churches received stinging criticism from the floor of the Assembly, and questions were raised concerning the propriety of agency membership in program units of either body. At the same time, former Executive-Secretaries Paul Tanner and Edward Foggs have served in leadership positions within the

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<sup>24</sup>For a summary of these conversations, see *Christian Unity and Ecumenical Trends* (Anderson, Ind.: Executive Council of the Church of God, n. d.).

<sup>25</sup>The question is quoted from a comprehensive summary of this conversation through 1997, Barry Callen and James North, *Coming Together in Christ* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Callen, ed., *Following the Light*, 187.

National Association of Evangelicals without strong vocal criticism, all of which serves to illustrate the diversity of the movement's practice of unity.

In this connection, it is perhaps worth noting the fate of the Commission on Christian Unity, a program unit within the movement that was born in the midst of this diverse practice. It took the Church of God some eighty-four years to officially create this commission, whose purpose was the advancement of one of the movement's cardinal doctrines. Scarcely more than a generation later, the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a restructuring plan that called for the elimination of all divisions and commissions—including the Commission on Christian Unity. This was not a move against cooperation unity, but restructuring for purposes of organizational efficiency and dollar savings.

The apocalyptic self-understanding of come-outism and what might be broadly termed the practice of ecumenical cooperation share an important feature. Although widely variant practices, both think of Christian unity in theological terms; both approach the subject ecclesologically. Christian unity so conceived addresses the topic as the problem of Christians who are separated individually and by group. In the 1970s and 1980s new voices in the movement raised questions about the nature of Christian unity that were constructed in very different terms.

Given the strident call for the racial integration of American society in the 1950s and 1960s it was unavoidable that African-American clergy would raise questions concerning the practice of Christian unity. They cast the movement's earlier rhetoric in a new light. Where Galatians 3:28 had once been quoted to reinforce a call to *church* unity, now the same text was applied to the racism that divided even a movement that historically has declared unity to be its reason for being. In 1970 the Caucus of Black Churchmen in the Church of God met in Cleveland, Ohio, to "share the burden of the Black church and to share the concerns it feels under God to be imperative if the church is to be the salt of the earth."<sup>27</sup> The Caucus exposed a raw wound in that part of the body of Christ known as the Church of God. The ministers gathered in Cleveland asserted that racism was an ugly fact calling into question the movement's commitment to Christian unity.

No person challenged racism more than the late Samuel G. Hines, native of Jamaica and long-term pastor of Third Street Church of God in

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<sup>27</sup>*The Church of God in Black Perspective* (n. p., n. d.), i.

Washington, D. C. Hines was fond of saying that the Church of God deserved an “A” for its message of unity, but an “F” for its practice. He and the Rev. Louis Evans, pastor of National Presbyterian Church, overcame this tendency by forging a friendship that brought their two congregations into close bonds of Christian fellowship. Hines understood doctrine to be a set of practices that must be lived out in the church’s life. If the Church of God was to faithfully live out its call as a movement of Christian unity, racial reconciliation had to be more than a claim; it had to be at the heart of the movement’s doctrinal practice.

Hines’ theological and pastoral legacy has been extended at Third Street church by Cheryl Sanders, also a professor at Howard University. Sanders has pointedly connected the issue of racial reconciliation to what she calls an ethic of holiness and unity. In an essay contributed to an anthology titled *Called to Ministry, Empowered to Serve*,<sup>28</sup> she developed a foundation for Church of God ethics on which she built a connection between sanctification and social change. In Sanders’ view, the call to holiness necessarily involves the dismantling of division based on race or sex.<sup>29</sup> The movement’s traditional theological theme that holiness brings unity was thus applied to aspects of the movement’s internal life; Christian unity was no longer merely a matter concerning the many churches. By the 1980s, people in the Church of God were increasingly reflecting on the practice of unity *within* the movement as social and theological fissures either were exposed or opened wide enough so as not to be ignored. What had begun as a criticism of and concern for a divided Christendom had also become an instrument for self-examination and critique.<sup>30</sup>

### **Consulting Scripture on the Topic of Unity**

H. M. Riggle believed that no sincere Christian could ignore or otherwise set aside Jesus’ prayer in John 17. A scriptural consideration of

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<sup>28</sup>“Ethics of Holiness and Unity in the Church of God,” in Juanita Evans Leonard, ed., *Called to Ministry, Empowered to Serve: Women in Ministry* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1989).

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>30</sup>In response to issues raised by the Anderson College controversy in 1980, the Board of Directors of the Executive Council convened two dialogues in 1981 under the theme of “internal unity.” The first dialogue (January) considered biblical, structural, and relationship issues. The second (December) discussed leadership development in higher education, the priesthood of believers, and movement stances on world affairs. Cf. Barry L. Callen, ed., *Following the Light*, 291-295.

Christian unity appropriately begins with and rests upon the text to which Church of God preachers and writers have referred so often in the course of 125 years.

Jesus' prayer for his disciples is part of a lengthy section of John's gospel beginning at chapter 13 and focusing around the Last Supper. Jesus has already washed the feet of his disciples, shared the meal with them, and identified Judas as his betrayer. Chapters 14 through 16 comprise a lengthy discourse followed by 17:1, "These things Jesus spoke; and lifting his eyes to heaven he said. . . ." For our purposes, the relevant verses are vv. 16-21:

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou didst send Me into the world, I have also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth. I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send me. (NASB)

Three elements and their interrelationship in this text are noteworthy. Jesus prays for the *sanctification* of his followers, their *unity*, and the *fruitful evangelism* of the world. Neither the disciples' unity nor holiness is an end in itself, nor is it likely that the world will recognize Jesus as God's Christ in the face of a divided body of believers. Holiness leads to unity, and unity encourages the world's belief in Jesus. How are we to interpret this text, at once so simple and yet so profoundly demanding of the church?

To be holy is to be sanctified. The Greek *hagiazō*, "sanctify," carries the dual understanding of being purified and being set apart. Ben Witherington opts for the latter interpretation, citing Jer. 1:5 and Exod. 28:41 as precedents: "The disciples are to be set aside in the truth, just as Jesus sets himself apart, or consecrates himself in the truth."<sup>31</sup> Otto F. Linn concurs, "Holiness is not always thought of as the opposite of impurity, but often, as here, it is a dedication to a sacred purpose over against the common

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<sup>31</sup>Ben Witherington, III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 270.

use of life for selfish ends. . . . Holiness in this sense demands an inward conformity of heart and will to the will and purpose of God.”<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, Rudolf Bultmann does not think that purity is a notion to be ruled out of the interpretation of this text, and in fact makes it central to the dynamic separating church and world:

If it is true that the existence of the community depends upon maintaining its purity, i. e., on receiving and preserving its *raison d’être* and nature not from the world but from beyond it, then unity is an essential part of that nature. Accordingly, the prayer for the oneness of the community is joined to the prayer for the preservation of purity. . . .”<sup>33</sup>

Purity here is not to be narrowly defined with the holiness codes of nineteenth and early twentieth-century American Protestantism. Rather, to be holy, in the sense Bultmann takes, is to be marked off from the world, which we may take in John for a symbol for anything that refuses to acknowledge Yahweh and his way. Such a view aligns with the idea of sanctification as separation. To be set apart for the service of God, to be conformed to the will and purpose of God, is to be set over against the world and thus, in Bultmann’s sense, to be pure.

Sanctification in the word of truth is the means by which the disciples will be made one. They are made one through their sanctification by God. The church is joined to Christ and through their sanctification share Christ’s complete devotion to the world’s redemption. Thus, the union of the church rests in its union with Christ and Christ with God.<sup>34</sup> The implications of this unity are world-annulling and commit the church to a counter-cultural way of life. Commenting on John 17 more than a decade before *Brown v. Board of Education*, Otto Linn wrote, “There can be no racial, social, economic, or intellectual differences great enough to justify separation between those who have experienced the unity of the divine life through faith in Christ.”<sup>35</sup>

Commentators agree that the unity of the church is the work of God and not the product of their own making. Several also agree that the rejec-

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<sup>32</sup>Otto F. Linn, *The Gospel of John* (Anderson, Ind.: The Gospel Trumpet Company, 1942), 133.

<sup>33</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 503.

<sup>34</sup>Linn, *loc cit.*, 134; Witherington, *loc cit.*, 270-271.

<sup>35</sup>Linn, *ibid.*

tion of creeds and other human institutions is not *ipso facto* grounds for unity. It cannot be achieved either through the use or rejection of creeds or other human inventions:

But such unity has the unity of the Father and Son as its basis. Jesus is the Revealer by reason of this unity of Father and Son; and the oneness of the community is to be based on this fact. That means it is not founded on natural or purely historical data; nor can it be manufactured by organisation, institutions, dogma; these can at best only bear witness to the real unity, as on the other hand they can also give a false impression of unity. And even if the proclamation of the word in the world requires institutions and dogmas, these cannot guarantee the unity of true proclamation. On the other hand, the actual disunion of the church, which is, in passing, precisely the result of its institutions and dogmas, does not necessarily frustrate the unity of the proclamation. The word can resound authentically, wherever the tradition is maintained.<sup>36</sup>

The word may resound authentically, but the disciples' unity renders its proclamation more effective. According to John 17:21, it is through the disciples' unity that the world will know that God sent Christ into the world. Such unity may be evidenced through the fellowship of worship and/or service. In the hour of prayer, differences melt before God. Christians joining together on Habitat for Humanity construction sites and in cooperation for disaster relief projects from Hurricane Katrina to the Indian Ocean tsunami manifest the church's unity. Such moments are crucial to the church's witness to the world, for in them the world is made aware that it is the world and not the church. None other than one of the favorite whipping boys of the Church of God, John Calvin, saw this connection:

[John] again lays down the end of our happiness as consisting in unity, and justly; for the ruin of the human race is, that, having been alienated from God, it is also broken and scattered in itself. The restoration of it, therefore, on the contrary, consists in its being properly united in one body, as Paul declares the perfection of the Church to consist in believers joined together in one spirit. . . . Wherefore, whenever Christ speaks about unity, let us remember how basely and shockingly, when sepa-

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<sup>36</sup> Bultmann, *loc cit*, 513.

rated from him, the world is scattered; and, next, let us learn that the commencement of a blessed life is, that we all be governed, and that we all live, by the Spirit of Christ alone.<sup>37</sup>

The church is sanctified through the word of truth, in John's gospel Christ, and made one with him and the Father. This unity transcends and overcomes all of the categories and differences the world customarily uses to rank and divide people, and by which we often polarize ourselves. Paul's declaration, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28a, NASB) does not describe a church built on mutual respect for fundamental differences or an agreement to disagree. No, "You are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28b, NASB). We are not all alike, but that is not the issue, for uniformity is not Christian unity. Says Bultmann, "It is not personal sympathies or common aims that constitute the unity, but the word that is alive in them all and that gives the community its foundation; and each member represents the demand and gift of the word over against his fellow believer, in that he is for him."<sup>38</sup>

### **The Church as the Restoration of Babel**

In some senses, discussions of Christian unity today may seem a joke. Denominational loyalty in the United States is declining rapidly, and, although most precipitous among mainline Protestant groups, this decline is experienced by a wide range of evangelicals. Religious special interest groups compete with established traditions for the time and dollars of faithful disciples of Jesus. Alternatives to conventional denominational affiliation such as the new monasticism and the emergent church also are attracting the attention of earnest Christians. Even more broadly, the growing preference for spirituality over against religion, where religion is often misunderstood as church rules and regulations, also poses serious questions for the future of conventional church life in the United States.<sup>39</sup> In the face of so many alternatives, why do we bother to continue discussing this particular topic?

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<sup>37</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 183.

<sup>38</sup>Bultmann, *loc cit.*, 513.

<sup>39</sup>Researcher George Barna predicted that by 2025 no more than 30-35% of Americans would experience and/or express their faith through affiliation with a local church, a figure which would be down from 70% in 2000. Cf. *Revolution* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 49.

The simplest answer to this question is that we aim to be conformed to Scripture. The New Testament cannot envision Christian faith and discipleship apart from the church. The church is, as Cyprian declared, the sole ark of salvation, at least in the sense that all the redeemed are her passengers, but also because our characters are in the process of being made whole as we are joined to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Most of them are not much like us, and thank God for that! The church is a company of strangers, rightly described by Bill and Gloria Gaither as a family. Unlike friends, we do not get to choose our family members; we are stuck with them. But, because blood is thicker than water, we find a way to go on. Likewise, we do not get to choose the membership of the church; all of us are thrown in with each other, but here too blood is thicker than water—only it is not our own blood that joins us. Cyprian may not have meant it precisely in this way, but the church is crucial to the moral formation of individual Christians. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, “there is no salvation outside the church.” The continuing doctrinal practice of Christian unity is part of the lifeblood of any individual congregation, denomination, or movement, and, because the New Testament envisions cooperation among far-flung congregations and different cultures, ultimately it is the ideal for all who take the name of Christ. Speaking parochially for those of us associated with the Church of God movement, unless we believe God has released us from our original reason for being, we have no choice but to continue thinking, talking, and practicing Christian unity.

Viewed though the lens of church-historical exegesis, the terms “Babel” and “Babylon” held powerful symbolic value in the Church of God. The former was taken to refer to religious confusion, from the linguistic confusion sown among Nimrod and his subjects. The latter was taken as a symbol of the confusion of competing and contradictory denominational voices. Religious confusion would eventually be overcome “as the evening light doth shine.” I suggest that the church remains the answer to the problem of confusion and disunity, but that Babel and Babylon should be interpreted more broadly.

The story of the Tower of Babel is an aetiological narrative that explains the emergence of different languages and ultimately people groups. Linguistic and cultural barriers, with their resultant misunderstandings and tension, have ever since threatened the possibility of peace among the peoples of the world. Babel is a problem, but it is larger than religious division and confusion. Historical-critical scholars like Otto

Linn take Babylon in Book of Revelation more commonly to refer to the Roman Empire than to denominations or Roman Catholicism, and I follow their lead. Rome boasted that she was the “Eternal City,” but Christians believed otherwise. In this sense, Babylon is an apocalyptic symbol that refers to any worldly powers of sufficient arrogance and self-absorption as to usurp the place of God. Such empires have troubled the people of God from the Assyrians to Babylonians to Persians to the Selucids to Romans, etc.

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann has noted the threat that empire poses for the people of God.<sup>40</sup> The books of Daniel and Isaiah both address the empire’s invitation to settle down and become comfortably domesticated and accept an empire that is not and cannot ever be home. Thus, in Brueggemann’s view, the church, like the Israelites living in Babylon, must decide between accommodating to the culture and continuing to understand that they are exiles. “‘Exile’ is not simply a geographical fact, but also a theological decision.”<sup>41</sup> Like Babel, therefore, “Babylon” also remains a problem, but its scope is larger than divided Christendom.

Acts 2 narrates the story of Pentecost, which is not the revival of the church but the account of its birth. Filled with the Spirit, the soul of the church and the source of its bond of union, the disciples testified in their own Galilean-accented Aramaic. Much to everyone’s amazement, people in the large crowd—Egyptians, Parthians, Medes, Mesopotamians, Libyans, Cyrenes, Romans, Arabs and many others, each heard the disciples speaking Aramaic, but understood in their own respective language. What had been done at Babel was undone in Jerusalem at Pentecost. In this view, the church is, as Stanley Hauerwas observes, “God’s new language.”<sup>42</sup> But this language aims at more than the unity of all Christians; unity is not the goal of the Spirit’s sanctifying work.

Although not particularly cognizant of Church of God ecclesiology, Hauerwas helps us understand more completely the implications of our theology of the church: “Salvation cannot be limited to changed self-

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<sup>40</sup>Cf. *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), esp. 89-130.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>42</sup>“The Church as God’s New Language,” in *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living In Between* (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1988), 47-65.

understanding or to insuring meaningful existence for the individual. Salvation is God's creation of a new society which invites each person to become part of a time that the nations cannot provide."<sup>43</sup> The name of that society is "church." Since 1881, Church of God people have stated that salvation makes one a member of the church, but we have not been as clear in our understanding of the church's purpose. Of course, we understand that the church is to witness to the world and to the broken body of Christ. But the church itself, in its daily practice, also has a function.

The church stands and properly lives as God's alternative to the world, the world out of which Jesus' disciples are called. Through the sanctifying Spirit, all disciples are purified of worldly ways of doing business, worldly arrangements of power, worldly patterns of division and segregation. Pentecost and the formation of the church thus overturn Babel and Babylonian pretensions of power. The church stands as God's alternative to human confusion and power arrangements. If the world is to understand that its orders can bring neither peace nor salvation, then the unity of all Christians cannot be simply an ongoing discussion topic, but a key practice in the life of a church through which the world comes to believe that God has sent Christ to be its savior.

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<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

# **HEALING FIRE FROM HEAVEN: A WESLEYAN-PENTECOSTAL APPROACH TO INTERFAITH FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION**

by

**Tony Richie<sup>1</sup>**

An especially fruitful interfaith dialogue I recently participated in released a cooperative statement containing several descriptive suggestions about the nature of religion and the religions. It admitted that “religion has often been used, rather misused, to shed blood, spread bigotry, and defend divisive and discriminatory socio-political practices.” This is sad, but all too true. It also insisted, however, on the “necessity and usefulness” of inter-religious dialogue “for promoting peace, harmony and conflict-transformation” in our world today.<sup>2</sup> This, I think, is also true. I

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<sup>2</sup>“Report from Inter-Religious Consultation on ‘Conversion—Assessing the Reality’,” Lariano, Italy, May 12-16, 2006. This important dialogue event was organized by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City, and the Interreligious Relations & Dialogue of the World Council of Churches, Geneva.

am therefore both challenged and encouraged at the present opportunity to wrestle through these issues with religious others by focusing on themes of forgiveness and reconciliation among the religions. I do this from my perspective as a Wesleyan/Pentecostal Christian.

### Exploring Pentecostal Values

Pentecostal Christians share much with most other Christians, but we also have some unique perspectives that inform our views on forgiveness and reconciliation among the religions. Understanding Pentecostal values may help others understand our perspectives better, even as examining ourselves may help us develop our beliefs and practices more deeply. A selection of our unique perspectives follows.

**1. Extinguishing the Forbidden Fire of Sectarian Strife.** In the context of sectarian strife, really full-blown religious and racial prejudice and tension was seen between Jews and Samaritans. Two of Jesus' disciples desired to call fire down from heaven to consume their competitors. Jesus firmly forbade them. Some ancient manuscripts add an explanatory comment from Jesus that "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56, NIV margin). Biblical exegete Craig Evans opines that, while the addition "is probably inauthentic," "it certainly captures the essential point of the passage." According to Evans, the episode "portrays a loving and gracious Lord who does not seek vengeance."<sup>3</sup> In other words, Jesus wills forgiveness and reconciliation among rival religions, and the Spirit he has given his disciples wills us in the same way. With its appreciation for pneumatological nuances, Pentecostalism's theology and spirituality ought to guide us in the same direction.

Assessing the Spirit's person and work as counter to inter-religious conflict is consistent with the Johannine connection between Jesus' breathing of the Spirit upon his disciples and his commissioning of them for the ministry of forgiveness (John 20:21-23). While Pentecostals tend to focus on how this biblical symbol fits with our focus on distinct works of the Spirit, pneumatological intimacy with the ministry of forgiveness is nonetheless affirmed.<sup>4</sup> Those who receive the Spirit are empowered for

<sup>3</sup> Craig A. Evans, *New International Biblical Commentary: Luke* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1990), 162.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. John Christopher Thomas, *The Spirit of the New Testament* (Leiderdorp, Netherlands: Deo, 2005), 171-73.

forgiveness and reconciliation in fulfillment of the atoning work of Christ. The “kind of Spirit” Christ gives is the Spirit who works to facilitate forgiveness both with God and between all human beings. Thus, Pentecostal accent on pneumatology should lead us to become agents of forgiveness operating under the Spirit’s anointing. Though John 20:21-23 has been traditionally, and no doubt correctly, interpreted in the context of Christian evangelistic witness, I see no reason to restrict it from inter-religious relations as well. Is not the Spirit who empowers for forgiveness pleased whenever and wherever the virtue of forgiveness is honestly applied?

Pentecostals, as Harvey Cox has aptly described us, are concerned with “fire from heaven.”<sup>5</sup> Following Scripture, Pentecostals themselves speak of baptism with the Spirit and with fire, and also frequently use fire as a metaphor for intense spiritual experience and fervor (cf. Matt. 3:11-12). The destructive fire of sectarian strife is forbidden. Unfortunately, as Pentecostal ecumenist and historian Mel Robeck sadly shows, after the religiously ecumenical and racially open age of the first few years of the modern Pentecostal movement, that understanding has been apparently deliberately discarded in a grave act of disobedience to the Spirit’s leading.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, members of the modern Pentecostal movement desiring to return to its authentic and original biblical and historical ethos must address relations among the religions with more openness and understanding than has all-too-often been the case since.

I call upon Pentecostals, therefore, to overtly identify religious aggression and/or violence of any kind, by any party, as incontrovertibly inconsistent with the Spirit of Christ and of Pentecost, which we claim as our ecclesial heritage in the Christian family of faith. I also call upon Pentecostals to actively promote procedures or programs of justice and peace among the religions with the same kind of faith and fervor that we pursue Christian evangelism and Pentecostal experience. Only then can we cor-

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<sup>5</sup>Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

<sup>6</sup>Cecil M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission & Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006). Cf. 313-25. I have argued elsewhere that Pentecostalism has an inherent ecumenical and inclusivist impulse that has been artificially stifled. See my “‘The Unity of the Spirit’: Are Pentecostals Inherently Ecumenicists and Inclusivists?” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theology Association* (2006), 21-37.

rectly answer the question based on Jesus' descriptive statement: "What kind of Spirit are we of?"

## 2. Taking Divine Healing and Deliverance a Few Steps Farther.

Divine healing for the body and deliverance from the oppressive demonic realm are important, intrinsic values of the Pentecostal faith. I have experienced what I can only describe as miraculous physical healing and spiritual deliverance. Lately, I have learned that divine healing and deliverance are not less than but more than individual and physical or even spiritual. They can and ought to be emotional and mental as well as institutional. More specifically, I have come to believe God wills to heal inter-religious pain and deliver the religions from roadblocks to wellness and wholeness in their reciprocal relationships. This welds well with Latino Pentecostal theologian Juan Sepuëlveda's description of the Pentecostal community of faith as a place of "enormous curative or healing efficacy."<sup>7</sup> The context clearly suggests that he perceives this "curative or healing" power to extend beyond the physical to emotional and social realms. I infer that it includes relations among the world religions as well.

Pentecostal educator and scholar Cheryl Johns concludes that Pentecostalism is not only capable of but actually conducive to "conscientization" among marginalized masses of oppressed peoples. Conscientization is "a process whereby persons become aware of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and their ability to transform that reality." She adds that the term implies action joined with awareness.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, Pentecostals are becoming more aware of and more actively involved in social and institutional areas of concern as an authentic extension and application of individual religious concerns. As Johns says,

Despite its tendencies toward emphasizing personal experience over social witness, there is potential within Pentecostal-charismatic circles for a radical witness of the meaning of Pentecost for the world in which there is exhibited justice,

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<sup>7</sup>Juan Sepuëlveda, "Reflections on the Pentecostal Contribution to the Mission of the Church in Latin America," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (October 1992), 93-108 (p. 102).

<sup>8</sup>Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed* JPTSup 2 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, 1998), 13. Cf. 62-110.

peace, dialogue and authentic self-giving love and in which there is no oppressed-oppressor distinction.<sup>9</sup>

The time has come that those social and institutional concerns more directly include our relations with other religions.

Pentecostal theologian of religions Amos Yong argues that a distinguishing characteristic of Pentecostalism is its multidimensional or holistic view of salvation. Personal, familial, ecclesial, material, social, cosmic, and eschatological facets of salvation are therefore included in a full-orbed Pentecostal soteriology.<sup>10</sup> Again, this view advances considerably beyond traditional fascination (or fetish) with merely individual experience among many Pentecostals; but it is clearly consistent with the classic emphases of the mainline Pentecostal movement from its inception. Accordingly, relations among religions ought to be understood as an authentic and essential extension of salvific efficacy by Pentecostals and their peers. In Pentecostal parlance, this implies that “full gospel” believers ought to grapple with how our relations with religious others are affected by our relationship with God in Christ and the Holy Spirit. No area of our lives ought to be untouched by the Spirit’s presence and power made available to us in Christ and expressed toward all others through us as his witnesses to the world of God’s grace, love, and mercy. That, I think, includes attitudes and expressions of forgiveness and reconciliation among the religions.

### **Possible Directions for Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

Since I have repeatedly affirmed that Pentecostal involvement in institutional and social areas is authentic and appropriate extensions or applications of our Pentecostal theology and spirituality, I think the most profitable approach at this juncture is the further juxtaposition of personal salvation and social salvation with specific attention to inter-religious relations. In other words, I wish to apply institutionally what we Pentecostals already endeavor to put into practice individually.

My own understanding of contemporary theology of religions is shaped by the thought of John Wesley and the subsequent Wesleyan theo-

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>10</sup>Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 91-98. I am deeply indebted to Amos for reading and reflecting on an earlier draft of this present paper, and for his friendship and partnership in inter-religious work.

logical tradition.<sup>11</sup> Applying a distinctively Pentecostalized Wesleyan soteriology, Pentecostal New Testament scholar and theologian Hollis Gause speaks of the way of salvation (*via salutis vis-à-vis ordo salutis*) as a journey involving justification from sin and adoption into the divine family, repentance for sin, regeneration, and sanctification—all issuing in a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life of love toward God and others. He particularly stresses “the unity of redemptive experiences.”<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, individual salvation cannot be complete without relational and social application. Experiencing God’s love for each of us overflows into our love for each other. This, of course, must now be understood to include relations with religious others. The sense in which I wish to be understood is not in some soteriological universalism, but in the unilateral application of Christian themes of forgiveness and reconciliation to interpersonal and institutional relationships.

Christians, including Pentecostals, who expect justification or forgiveness from all sin for Christ’s sake, ought also to be forgiving of others’ sins. In other words, the forgiven ought to be forgiving. While we have no responsibility or right to pronounce whether or upon whom God’s forgiveness finally falls, we can say that, as we ourselves experience forgiveness, we also are enabled to forgive others their sins against ourselves (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Furthermore, the height of arrogance and ignorance would be assuming that we Christians do not also need forgiveness from others for our sins against them. This applies not only individually but institutionally. Christianity, out of the overflow of its own understanding of its redemptive experience of God’s justifying grace in Christ, ought to extend forgiveness to Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism for real or perceived transgressions against its rights or interests. Forgiveness necessitates a release from further culpability into restoration of conciliatory relationship. Forgiveness is an entry point into peaceful coexistence, into a reconciled relationship, both between God and Christians (Rom. 5:1) and therefore between Christians and others, including other religions. Christianity is called to be a peacemaker (cf. Matt. 5:9). Christianity, to be consistent with its own inherent ethos, is

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<sup>11</sup>See my “John Wesley and Mohammed: A Contemporary Inquiry Concerning Islam,” *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 58:2 (Fall 2003), 79-99.

<sup>12</sup>R. Hollis Gause, *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1980), “Introduction” and 125-36.

responsible for promoting peace with and among others. The Christian message and ministry of reconciliation, though firmly focused in evangelistic outreach through the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 5:11-21), ought never to exclude any part of a process that promotes peace between all peoples (Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14).

Such forgiveness and reconciliation among the religions will at the least hinder and eventually halt the use of aggression and violence by religious extremists who are intent on furthering their own radical agendas. More optimistically, inter-religious forgiveness and reconciliation may allow cooperative efforts on humanitarian causes to proceed more effectively. World religions can become partners for good rather than “partners in crime,” so to speak. And even more hopefully, the religions may one day learn to live in mutual respect and appreciation for one another. While discerning disagreement may not pass away among us, dialogue and dedication may help us to recognize the valuable contributions of each religious faith when it is true to its own innermost impulse. However, for the sake of honesty and transparency, I stress that Pentecostals will undoubtedly always sense a strong need to maintain our own distinctiveness in relations with both other Christians and non-Christians. Nonetheless, I am optimistic that Pentecostal commitments can be maintained in an amicable environment.

Significantly, Pentecostals stress the importance of forgiveness in the context of repentance. My own Wesleyan-Pentecostal denomination, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN USA), states in its formal “Declaration of Faith” that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.”<sup>13</sup> Its original “Teachings” also stressed “Restitution where possible.”<sup>14</sup> These two statements say much. A doctrine of sin excepting none from culpability and responsibility is assumed. The reality of the possibility of forgiveness for all is proclaimed with the necessity of repentance. Underscored is the importance of penitents acting practically to make wrongs right as an expression of true repentance. However, limitations of completely making up for whatever wrong has been done are conceded. Deeds done cannot be undone. Repentance is an essential part

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<sup>13</sup>Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1996), 337.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 139.

of the original message of Jesus Christ regarding the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:15) that has universal application (Luke 13:5). I, therefore, feel obligated to insist that forgiveness and reconciliation in inter-religious relationships requires repentance on the part of all parties implicated (i.e., everyone!). “Repentance” (*metanoia*) implies not only an awareness of wrongdoing and regret for it, but also a willingness to make radical changes in one’s behavior. In fact, the test for genuine repentance is demonstrated in transformation of behavior (Matt. 3:8).<sup>15</sup> I reject as inadequate and impotent any version of interfaith forgiveness and inter-religious reconciliation that does not give appropriate attention to the importance of repentance.

We cannot reasonably expect non-Christians to repent in the Christian sense before offering them forgiveness and entering reconciled relations with them. That is not at all the reason for my remarks. Rather, I suggest that we all—they and we—may repent in a practical and relational way for the wrong we have done each other; in fact, I insist that it is necessary for forgiveness and reconciliation between us. To be real and lasting, forgiveness and reconciliation must be much more than simply saying, “I’m sorry” and “Let’s be friends.” Actions must be attached to the words, otherwise they are artificial and superficial. At the very least, this requires cessation of sinful behavior. Even better, it leads to benevolent and positive actions toward the religious other. As to what constitutes “sinful behavior” or “benevolent and positive actions,” I am confident that true dialogue in the best tradition of each religion can find common ground when economical and political agendas are interpreted in the light of the values of faith rather than the converse. I am sure that themes of justice and peace will be in the forefront of each faith’s value system. I am personally persuaded that religion can and should be a force for peace rather than a weapon of war.

From a Wesleyan-Pentecostal perspective, discussing forgiveness and reconciliation among the religions is a process in which reconciliation occurs as a fruit of forgiveness, and forgiveness occurs as a result of repentance. I also add that forgiveness and reconciliation ought always to be pictured against a backdrop of grace and faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Faith, of course, ultimately has God as its object. However, faith is bi-directional; that is, it is not only divine-vertical but also human-horizontal. In

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. French L. Arrington, *Christian Doctrine: A Pentecostal Perspective*, vol. two (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1993), 202.

inter-religious forgiveness and reconciliation both directions are applicable. Without intending at all to impose Christian convictions on religious others, I maintain that forgiveness and reconciliation occur in a context of faith that the Divine or Ultimate is actively involved in the process. A Power greater than us or our organizations is at work, bringing about the inter-religious reconciliation for which we yet yearn. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the work of God, and will be successfully wrought between us only when we willingly allow God to so work.

In addition to faith in God, faith in our fellow human beings is also absolutely essential. An attitude of trust must replace the politics of suspicion if we are to really experience together genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. This inter-religious trust may eventually be broadened and deepened through probationary trial and error encounters over a prolonged length of time; that is, hopefully we will eventually prove ourselves trustworthy to one another. Yet, its initiation must begin out of an affirmation of free grace that extends at least a tentative trust to those with whom and for whom the results are risky. Trust is a worthwhile risk; but, though we often carnally declare “trust is earned not given,” the truth is faith is a free gift.

I therefore urge Christians in general and Pentecostal Christians in particular to apply our tradition of grace and faith to the field of inter-religious forgiveness and reconciliation. Let us lead the way in freely offering to religious others forgiveness, even as we lead the way in frankly asking forgiveness of them. Let us not build our hope on human merit, but on faith in divine grace. This does not at all negate the importance of relational faithfulness on the part of all religious partners. Pentecostals tend to stress the essentiality of perseverance in God’s grace for enduring enjoyment of eternal salvific benefits and status. Accordingly, to extend a gracious gift of forgiveness to religious others will in no wise diminish the significance of integrity and sincerity in ongoing inter-religious relationships based on mutual reconciliation. Real reciprocity all around is essential for interfaith forgiveness and inter-religious reconciliation to continue and grow.

### **Engaging Ecumenical Voices**

A desire to develop a distinctively Wesleyan-Pentecostal approach to forgiveness and reconciliation among the religions does not turn us inward only but outward also. Hearing what others think and speak about

forgiveness and reconciliation among the religions is essential if Pentecostals are to effectively engage and be engaged by religious others.

**1. Integrating Apparently Competing Commitments.** A major monograph focusing on inter-religious forgiveness and reconciliation came into being as a result of a conference of public policymakers and theologians at the very close of the twentieth century. It is titled simply *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*.<sup>16</sup> Starting strong with a “Foreword” by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, it proceeds to address theological, political, practical, societal or sociological, and anthropological and psychological aspects of forgiveness and reconciliation. A wide-ranging array of authors provides a particularly high caliber of discussions. Although I will focus on the more intentionally theological section in Part One (the first three chapters), the remainder of this book makes an excellent case for the complex inter-relatedness and importance of the role of religion and themes of forgiveness and reconciliation, even beyond traditional areas of religion *per se* and into other sectors of contemporary life.

Rodney L. Petersen seeks to locate the ontological foundation for forgiveness in Christian theology, look at its language within the context of the church, and to sketch ways by which it can cross confessional boundaries.<sup>17</sup> He skillfully surveys the theological history, ideology, and terminology of Christian forgiveness, pushing beyond talk to show how forgiveness looks in the real-life practical experience of human relations. I wish to lift up out of Petersen’s broader discussion a few points for further dialogue.

Petersen argues that presumed in biblical religion are perspectives on forgiveness reaching deeper than a shallow “transactional relation.” The distortion of the divine image in humanity requires that “each of us individually and corporately is in need of forgiveness and restoration.”<sup>18</sup> Petersen particularly stresses the necessity and reality of Christ’s mediation as “the paradigmatic solution to the pervasive nature of violence” and the ultimate refutation of any attempts to arrive at inexpensive and therefore valueless forgiveness. Christ demonstrates the kind of power that

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<sup>16</sup>*Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, edited by Raymond Helmick, S. J., and Rodney L. Petersen (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation, 2001).

<sup>17</sup>Petersen, “A Theology of Forgiveness: Terminology, Rhetoric, & the Dialectic of Interfaith Relationships,” *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 3-25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

decisively “breaks the cycle of violence”; and, the power of the Holy Spirit is “God’s power in us and to us” making forgiveness and reconciliation efficacious in reality.<sup>19</sup>

Petersen helps us avoid the degeneration of forgiveness and reconciliation into mere conflict management or conflict resolution techniques. Christian forgiveness must always be forgiveness by means of and because of *Christ*. Even so, he candidly confesses that “forgiveness certainly takes place outside of Christian circles.” He does not hesitate to affirm the “universal significance” of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth for forgiveness. But human identity also displays universality regarding the virtue of forgiveness in the religions. Petersen suggests that in some mysterious way those of other religions “correspond to the true Light” of Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup> In this way, he opens the door for genuine interfaith forgiveness. Forgiveness without correspondence to Christ of some kind would fail to have ultimate value for a Christian.

As a Wesleyan/Pentecostal Christian, I find myself unable to experience or even understand forgiveness apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet I am fully persuaded that the Spirit of Christ and of Pentecost propels me toward interfaith forgiveness. Accordingly, I inescapably must come to the conclusion that the Spirit of Christ is working in both Christians and non-Christians to affect forgiveness. This opens me up to all kinds of claims and counterclaims. Some Christians will think that I am compromising Christ. Other Christians will think that I am holding on to too much traditional Christology. Worst of all, some non-Christians may be understandably offended at the subtle suggestion that Christ is somehow secretly at work in them.

None of these claims or charges moves me because interfaith forgiveness and reconciliation are worth risking them. Furthermore, they are not well founded. A position that recognizes Christ at work among all to affect forgiveness enlarges the lordship of Christ rather than limiting it. By the same token, a position that sells out Christ’s absoluteness and uniqueness in favor of interfaith coziness is left with something considerably less than the Christian faith. Most of all, when Pentecostal Christians look for signs of Christ’s Spirit among religious others, they are maximizing not minimizing appreciation of the reality of divine encounter, insight,

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 21-22.

and experience that religion contextualizes in contrasting, sometimes competing, conflicting, or even contradictory, but sometimes in compatible or even complementary constructs.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, as a Pentecostal Christian I can concur that forgiveness is inseparable from Christ and his Spirit, but still contend that “Christian” forgiveness potentially exists and actually occurs outside of Christianity. This is especially easy when I understand *Christian* in reference to *Christ* rather than to *Christianity*. Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others practicing forgiveness are certainly not closet Christians; they may indeed, however, in some sense be secret disciples of Jesus. Just as the Apostle Paul was willing to identify as Jewish those Gentiles who observed the spirit of the Jewish law, I am willing to identify as belonging to Jesus those of other religions who observe the spirit of Christian forgiveness and virtue (Rom. 2:28-29).<sup>22</sup>

**2. Deeply Practicing Real Religion.** Mirolav Volf demonstrates decisively that the Christian religion, when “deeply practiced,” does not foster violence. He insightfully examines the intricacies of forgiveness and justice to arrive at a view in which forgiveness and reconciliation embrace the other. He bases his thoroughly Christian theology of forgiveness, reconciliation, and justice squarely on the model of God’s action in the cross of Christ.<sup>23</sup> The major thrust of Volf’s essay, which I wish to explore and extend further, is that the Christian religion, when “practiced deeply,” does not foster violence, but rather promotes a realistic experience of justice and peace in the present age as it moves toward an idealistic realization in the eschaton. Only a shallow exercise of Christian religion, in which Christianity is stripped of its transcendent values and made subservient to some political or economic ideology, is a weapon of war. Therefore, contra contemporary secularizing systems, Volf calls for more

<sup>21</sup>Amos Yong’s *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology of Religions* (JPT Supplement Series; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) is the premier example of a Pentecostal approach to signs of the Spirit (or spirits) in the religions.

<sup>22</sup>Though his terminology was admittedly unfortunate and his argument obviously complex, I suppose this is the heart and soul of what Karl Rahner was really saying with his doctrine of “anonymous Christians.” See his *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978, 2002), 311-21.

<sup>23</sup>Volf, “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Justice: A Christian Contribution to a More Peaceful Social Environment,” *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 27-49.

not less religion as the antidote to inter-religious acrimony inherent in so much of today's global violence.

Volf does not directly address the applicability of his argument to religions other than Christianity. He does, however, at times indirectly assume a degree of mutual applicability. I agree with Volf's overall argument and apply it to Christian relations with other religions in the context of this discussion of inter-religious forgiveness and reconciliation. First, I think Volf is right about Christianity. Though it has indeed been an instrument of atrocities, even a casual observer familiar with the values of the faith can see that in such cases Christianity has betrayed its own bedrock foundations and would have been better served by a deeper practice of its own faith.

Second, I think his argument does apply to some other religions. I will not deny that some religions are by nature warlike. However, the major world religions have inherent in them a humanitarian regard that really is inconsistent with a bald perpetration of violence. At this point, I am making three closely interlocking moves. First, as I have said already I am extending Volf's arguments for the peaceful nature of the practice of real Christian religion to all real religion. Second, I am relying on the general history and testimony of the world religions themselves regarding their values of compassion and peace. Thirdly, I am remembering my own encounters with adherents of other religions in which they have personally expressed antipathy toward terrorism, violence, and war perpetrated in the name of their own or some other religious faith, and their personal expressions of sympathy for justice and peace. Some might question the applicability of Volf's argument. However, I doubt any argument can be raised that would not equally apply to Christians too and which we would reject outright if done so. In all fairness, then, the benefit of the doubt is due to religious others as well.

Assuming, therefore, that all the major faiths, at least when "practiced deeply," foster justice and peace rather than violence, then it is possible for me as a Pentecostal, because of a robust pneumatology, to recognize the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit throughout all realms of reality. Accordingly, I have three questions I wish to consider. First, how does shared sympathy for justice and peace (and antipathy for injustice and violence) affect relations among the world religions? Second, how does it affect relations with extremists who deviate radically from the respective religion's views by misusing religion to promote bloodshed?

Third, how does it affect the relations of the world religions with the surrounding secular society in the context of today's global problems with violence perpetrated in the name of religion? My contention is that considering these questions together through cooperative interfaith endeavors can help the religions counter the influence of violence in the name of religion and contribute to fostering justice and peace through forgiveness and reconciliation.

### **Fellowship, Censorship, and Partnership**

In consideration of these questions, I will utilize three terms: fellowship, censorship, and partnership. On *fellowship* let me note a point from C. S. Lewis. He believed that "in the present state of divided Christendom, those who are at the heart of each division are all closer to one another than those who are at the fringes." More importantly for our discussion, he carried this magnanimous sentiment "beyond the borders of Christianity." Lewis exclaimed, "[H]ow much more one has in common with a *real* Jew or Muslim than with a wretched liberalising, occidentalised specimen of the same categories."<sup>24</sup> At the heart of all shared devotion and piety is a commonality or connectedness that extends beyond any divisions of sectarianism. Accordingly, the truly devout of other faiths enjoy genuine fellowship together.

"Fellowship" (*koinonia*) is a strong term for Christians. It means much more than friendship. It means sharing together or jointly participating in divine reality and unity at a profound level. Such fellowship may not be the same as that which the most devout adherents within a religion experience together; but it is authentic and is more than that which the deeply and truly devout within a religion experience with adherents of their own religion who are shallow or insincere. For me, this suggests that, when those of other faiths come together for the cause of justice and peace, they may become more than representatives of different faiths who happen to be sitting at the same table talking about the same subject. In a special sense, participants in the same devout and pious impulse toward forgiveness and reconciliation share in what God has placed within them all alike.

On *censorship*, let me relate a pastoral encounter of mine with the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK is widely known as a violent fringe group

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<sup>24</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, 1998), Nov. 10, 1952. Italics are original.

embracing an explosive politics of intense racism and offbeat religion. It is infamous in the South (USA). At one church of which I was pastor in Tennessee, my own home state, I had a parishioner who was a former member and local leader in the Klan. When I knew him he was a committed Christian country gentleman who had renounced his previous place in the Klan. Yet he sometimes tried to convince me that the Klan had not been all bad, that it did a lot of good, even helping people no one else would help. During these conversations, I always felt like my pastoral responsibility included not allowing the slightest possible approbation of such an evil organization to be in any way plausibly drawn from my comments. I had to uncompromisingly contest any implicit affirmation of an evil empire of hate. Any acquiescence at all on my part opened a door for certain of this man's family or friends to follow in his footsteps with tacit pastoral approval.

I imagine a parallel with the world religions and their relations with radical groups within their own ranks. We who share a desire for justice and peace must not give the slightest hint of even implicit approval of the very existence of terrorist groups or their tactics. Even silence is insufficient. We must publicly come out courageously in clear condemnation of everything they are or do. The slightest suggestion from us that we in any way empathize opens the door for recruits to their cause. As in Pauline theology, we should not "give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:27).

On *partnership* I am reminded of Archbishop's Desmond Tutu's role in the political and societal reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa. His struggle working in the political arena is obvious, yet still it was not unfruitful.<sup>25</sup> In the United States someone probably would have started screaming about "separation of church and state." But I disagree. I see the relationship between religion and the state as embracing a partnership. I do indeed affirm the American Constitution's declaration regarding the doctrine of the separation of church and state. I do not wish to have either religion-run government or government-run religion. But I see two extremes that are to be avoided in church-state relations that are not adequately spelled out. They are identification and isolation.

*Identification* is a tendency to equate a religious sect with the ideology of a political party and its agenda. Many conservative Evangelicals and Pentecostals are known as the "Religious Right" because of equation

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<sup>25</sup> See Tutu, "Foreword," *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, ix-xiii.

with the Republican Party. Conversely, most liberal Protestants are devoted Democrats. Yet any political party is admittedly an uneven mixture of good and evil and should never be considered synonymous with any religion of truly transcendent values. Religions should rise above petty political squabbles.

*Isolation* is the extreme secularist view locating religion in some private closet and denying people of faith any collective voice in the public square. Discrimination against religion in the public square should halt immediately. It is based on irrational and unfair prejudice. Balance between identification and isolation is *cooperation*. World religions and political organizations committed to justice and peace should work together through sharing tasks moving toward shared goals. We should inform and reform each other as we work in this world on behalf of the world to come. However, world religions should work together in working with non-religious others. The secular world needs to see that a degree of harmony and unity among the religions is possible, and that it is an essential component in the pursuit of world peace.

### **Dimensioning Dynamics of the Holy Spirit**

Stanley S. Harakas argues for a sense of mystery and paradox in theology that carefully sustains apparently opposite poles of truth. Applying this model enables him to artfully articulate a dynamic theology of multi-dimensional forgiveness and reconciliation extending to venues beyond his own denominational tradition or even other ecclesial boundaries.<sup>26</sup> I am addressing an area where a Pentecostal can perhaps best engage his thought. It is the Holy Spirit.

First, I appreciate Harakas for stressing that “the redemptive work of Jesus is realized, increases, and bears fruit in the Holy Spirit.” He avoids the error of so many who view the Holy Spirit as some sort of extra or “add on,” almost a divine afterthought, rather than an essential agent in Christian redemption (2 Thess. 2:13-14). Secondly, I heartily agree with him that “the forgiving action of the Holy Spirit appears not to be limited to sacramental and pastoral practice.” He generously expands pneumatology beyond the borders of cult control by a priestly caste into the worshipping community. The Holy Spirit works freely and fully in all willing saints because the Spirit is poured out on all people (Acts 2:17). Thirdly, I

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<sup>26</sup>Harakas, “Forgiveness and Reconciliation: An Orthodox Perspective,” *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 51-78.

affirm Harakas' insistence that the Holy Spirit makes the present dimension of forgiveness real, "concretely and specifically in the Sacrament of Holy Confession, and in a more diffused manner in the whole of life" (Rom. 8:2).<sup>27</sup> I wish to affirm and expand on the last point especially, particularly in regard to "the present dimension" of the Holy Spirit's work "in a more diffused manner in the whole of life."

Harakas' model of the Spirit's work in the present age and also in all of life posits a dynamic approach to forgiveness made vital personally and corporately by the Holy Spirit. Comparably, Yong proposes that the Pentecostal doctrine of baptism in the Spirit presupposes salvation in dynamic terms. The process and crisis experience work together in dynamic and multi-dimensional redemption.<sup>28</sup> Salvation, including forgiveness and reconciliation, has several levels of reality and verity. Therefore, Christians may without contradiction consider the church the divinely ordained and ordered community of God's saving-forgiving-reconciling activity along with religious others on a journey of joint participation. Pentecostal theologian Frank D. Macchia says that the church is still the central locus of the Kingdom, but also exists as "a loving fellow traveler with the world's religions," even "while pointing them to the superiority of Christ."<sup>29</sup>

If forgiveness and reconciliation are dynamic and multi-dimensional, what does this mean for inter-religious relations? First, note what it does *not* mean. It does not mean that we should lose respect for the radical differences of the religions. The religions hold vastly different world views that cannot and should not be minimized. They do not understand or experience God/Ultimate Reality the same. Any relations among the religions must face forthrightly their differences. Anything less is condescending to religious others and compromising to our religious selves. Second, it *does* mean that we should learn respect for the possibility that religious others genuinely encounter God or Ultimate Reality on some plane. If forgiveness and reconciliation are pneumatologically dynamic and multi-dimensional, we should not be surprised to discover that at least on some level the Holy Spirit is working to bring all people to the fullness of the human-

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 63, 64, and 67.

<sup>28</sup>Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 98-109.

<sup>29</sup>Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 188.

ity they are created to enjoy, all to the exhibition of God's glory. Nevertheless, the fullness of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ doubtless tends to the conclusion that Christ is the eventual and eternal goal of all human faith and devotion (cf. John 1:14, 18; Eph. 1:10).

If the above is accurate, then one very positive and practical result follows. Forgiveness and reconciliation between the religions is not something that one or the other of the religions grants to others out of arrogant superiority or benevolent humility, but out of a joint participation in the same Gracious Goodness that is worshiped as God. Forgiveness and reconciliation are always from, of, and for God. Human reflections of really reconciling forgiveness are but mirrors of the divine majesty. Relationally, religious others are lifted above diplomacy into intimacy. Forgiveness and reconciliation between the religions is not about politics, however elevated, but is fundamentally and ultimately about spirituality. Jesus' profound statement on worship and worshipers "in spirit and in truth," so precious to the Pentecostal tradition, occurred in a context of inter-religious dialogue (John 4:23-24). Offering and receiving forgiveness and reconciliation with religious others is an exalted act of worship.

## **Conclusion**

As a Wesleyan-Pentecostal Christian desirous of inter-religious forgiveness and reconciliation, I am pleased that, at its most recent biennial International General Assembly, my denomination published a "Resolution" regarding war and violence in the Middle East. Though it may not yet go far enough, it is certainly a step in the right direction. I will close with its inclusion. Before reading, please note that, in spite of a history of strong support for Israel, which is indeed undiminished, a move is also made to recognize others and offer humanitarian aid to all. I am hopeful that this indicates a broadening of the horizon of concern for all peoples. If so, this would suggest interfaith forgiveness and inter-religious reconciliation are in order. Perhaps most importantly, the entire document is set in the context of prayer for peace. Perhaps the most important act for peace may indeed be persevering prayer to "the God of peace" to be with us all (Rom. 15:33).

### **Resolution of Prayer for the Current Crisis in the Middle East**

WHEREAS "Proclaiming the Power of Pentecost" is the theme chosen for the 71st Church of God International General Assembly; and

WHEREAS during this, the 71st International General Assembly, we are witnessing an escalation of conflict and acts of terrorism in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS the unfortunate nature of war involves the loss of innocent life; and

WHEREAS the call to pray for the peace of Jerusalem is explicitly stated in God's Word (Psalm 122:6); and

WHEREAS as prayer was timely and appropriate at the time of the Scriptural injunction, it is more necessary now as we observe the carnage and destruction of human life and property, and the suffering of women and children of both Jews and other peoples; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the international family of the Church of God reaffirms the previous resolutions on prayer for the peace of Jerusalem; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Church of God around the world pray that this conflict will end, and peace will come to Israel and the Middle East; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that humanitarian support be given to those suffering on all sides of the conflict, where possible.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Resolution of the 71<sup>st</sup> International General Assembly of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN USA), July 24-28, 2006.

**“A BEAUTIFUL VIRGIN COUNTRY READY  
FOR A REVIVAL OF BIBLE HOLINESS”:  
EARLY HOLINESS EVANGELISTS  
IN AUSTRALIA**

by

**Glen O’Brien**

It is a long way from God’s Bible School in Cincinnati, Ohio, to the twisted gums and red tile roofs of Australia. When E. E. Shellhamer made the journey in 1936, he reported that he had found “a sincere and hungry set of people. Already I have more calls than I can fill. O, that some of our holiness evangelists would come this way, instead of huddling together and trying to create a blaze on burnt-over territory. This is a beautiful virgin country ready for a revival of Bible Holiness.”<sup>1</sup>

As things turned out, Australia was not quite ready to be ravished. The first representatives of the North American holiness movement would not be warmly received. In the first half of the twentieth century, visiting holiness evangelists from North America often were looked upon by other evangelicals as “holy rollers” and “sinless perfectionists,” purveyors of a brand of religion thought to be populist, coarse, and theologically suspect. The doctrine of “entire sanctification,” understood as a second work of grace to be received in a special “baptism” of “perfect love,” was viewed as theologically heterodox and destructive to the peace of the church.

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<sup>1</sup>Kingsley M. Ridgway, *In Search of God: An Account of Ministerial Labours in Australia and the Islands of the Sea* (Brockville, Ontario: Standard Publishing House, n.d., c.1937), 122.

Australian evangelicalism has its colonial roots in English Calvinism, mediated through the likes of Samuel Marsden and Richard Johnson. Although this eighteenth-century Anglican evangelicalism was “Methodistical” (that is, “evangelical”) in its piety, its theology was decidedly anti-Methodist. Its stress on human depravity and inability made the Wesleyan claim to “Christian perfection” seem a hopeless pipe dream, even a dangerous heresy.

In the 1940s the Melbourne Bible Institute (now the Bible College of Victoria) took a public stand of opposition to Wesleyan teaching. A number of students were expelled because they assisted the despised Wesleyan Methodists in tent meetings.<sup>2</sup> Members of the Church of the Nazarene were not permitted to serve as counselors at the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade because they were considered a dangerous sect of “sinless perfectionists.”<sup>3</sup> Nazarenes have needed to publicly identify themselves as “a Church in the Methodist tradition” in order to overcome the ambiguity of a name well known in the United States, but not in Australia.

The North American holiness groups began their existence in Australia very much as “outsiders.” The doctrine of entire sanctification was still adhered to by Australian Methodists in the 1920s, but an affirmation of entire sanctification as a distinctive doctrine to be treasured and an experience to be entered into by the faithful was beginning to fade. By the time the North American Wesleyan-Holiness churches were formally organized in Australia in the years following World War II, such an emphasis had all but disappeared in Australian Methodism.

### **Holiness Conventions in Australia**

The Keswick Convention movement began in England, when a tent was erected on the grounds of St. John’s Vicarage, Keswick, in 1875 in order to hold meetings for the “deepening of the spiritual life.”<sup>4</sup> A British

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<sup>2</sup>Don Hardgrave, *For Such A Time: A History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia* (Brisbane: A Pleasant Surprise, 1988), 68.

<sup>3</sup>Glen O’Brien, *Pioneer with a Passion: Kingsley Ridgway, Principal Catalyst and Founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia* (Melbourne: Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1996), 83-4.

<sup>4</sup>Herbert F. Stevenson, ed., *Keswick’s Authentic Voice: Sixty-five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention 1875-1957* (London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1959), 13. See also J. C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story: The Authorised History of the Keswick Convention* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964).

expression of American holiness movement teaching, the terminology was adapted to Reformed convictions, although its spirituality and ethos were very similar to the holiness movement in North America. Instead of the “eradication” and “destruction” of sin, Keswickians preferred to speak of its “counteraction” and “suppression.” The leading Keswick teacher, Robert Pearsall Smith, was an American visitor to Keswick whose teaching bordered on antinomianism, as he seemed to teach a victory over all sin as a result of the Holy Spirit’s infilling. He was caught in an immoral act with a young woman during the conference at Brighton, England, in May, 1875, after which he fell out of favor with the Keswick crowd.

As Keswick developed in England, and later also in Australia, the American emphasis on sin’s eradication was further toned down. B. B. Warfield’s influential critique of Wesleyan perfectionism was based on the erroneous assumption that Pearsall Smith’s teachings were a sample of Wesleyan perfectionism.<sup>5</sup> However, such typically Wesleyan teachings as the profound depth of human inability, necessitating an absolute dependence on God’s grace, and the need for practicing rigorous self denial, while availing oneself of all of the appointed means of grace, were conspicuously absent from Pearsall Smith’s “higher life” teaching.

In 1869 the prominent Baptist minister, Silas Mead, influenced by Pearsall Smith, was leading a holiness movement in Adelaide, South Australia.<sup>6</sup> A holiness rally was held in Melbourne in January, 1875, under the leadership of Hussey Burgh Macartney of St. Mary’s Church of England in Caulfield, a Keswick advocate who had traveled to England to speak at the convention in 1878.<sup>7</sup> The paper he established in 1873, *The Missionary at Home and Abroad*, had a holiness emphasis. Methodists held holiness conventions in the 1880s and formed a Methodist Holiness Association in the middle part of that decade.<sup>8</sup> Methodists in New South Wales

<sup>5</sup>Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Studies in Perfectionism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1958), 247-311.

<sup>6</sup>*Truth and Progress* (Aug. 1874), 90-91; *Spectator* (16 Oct., 1875), 280, cited in Hugh Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860-1930* (Wellington: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 63.

<sup>7</sup>*Southern Cross* (30 Jan., 1875), 1; *The Missionary at Home and Abroad* (Sept. 1878), 134-135, cited in Jackson, 63.

<sup>8</sup>Walter Phillips, *Defending “A Christian Country”: Churchmen and Society in NSW in the 1880s and After* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 80-81.

published a holiness paper, as did the Salvation Army, who had held holiness meetings as their main Sunday morning service since their first establishment in Australia in 1880.<sup>9</sup>

The Geelong “Christian Convention” was organized by Macartney along Keswick lines in 1891, followed by another in Sydney which drew nearly 2,500 people to a meeting at the Centenary Hall, and another thousand in “overflow meetings.” An equally successful convention was held in Launceston, attracting another 2,500 people.<sup>10</sup> According to Jackson, “Thereafter hopes of a national revival with holiness conventions as the chief instrument began to fade. Holiness conventions that continued to be held into this century . . . maintained a Keswick piety in an evangelical pocket. But there was no significant outreach to the bulk of churchgoers, much less the unchurched.”<sup>11</sup> Periodically, there were pentecostal-type behaviours at these conventions, such as “tongues speaking” at the Belgrave, Victoria, convention in 1910, and some emphasis on faith healing through the laying on of hands.<sup>12</sup> However, these were exceptional and often caused controversy. According to Breward, the convention movement in Melbourne, and especially the teaching of C. H. Nash “widened the appeal of Evangelicalism [as] every year hundreds gathered to hear the Bible expounded . . . and calls to discipleship and holiness [were] made. Similar conventions in Katoomba in the Blue Mountains were influential in sustaining Sydney’s evangelical networks.”<sup>13</sup>

### **The Holiness Impetus in Australian Methodism**

According to Stuart Piggin, “no gap in the history of Australian revivalism is as vast as the half century before the 1959 Billy Graham Crusades.”<sup>14</sup> One aspect of this forgotten history is the Holiness impetus

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<sup>9</sup>Phillips, 81.

<sup>10</sup>Jackson, 64.

<sup>11</sup>Jackson, 64.

<sup>12</sup>Jackson, 65.

<sup>13</sup>Ian Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 257.

<sup>14</sup>Stuart Piggin, “Introduction: Revival, Revivalism, and Australian Christianity,” in Mark Hutchinson, Edmund Campion and Stuart Piggin, eds., *Reviving Australia: Essays on the History and Experience of Revival and Revivalism in Australian Christianity* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994), 10.

within Australian Methodism. How did Australian Methodists of the 1920s understand the doctrine of holiness and what was the style of holiness preaching with which they were familiar? This was the period which saw Kingsley Ridgway, who would go on to be the founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia in 1945, leave his theological training at Queen's College and the Methodist Church to link with the Canadian Holiness evangelist A. B. Carson.<sup>15</sup> Ridgway's autobiography recounts his own version of the bemused response to holiness religion on the part of Methodists.<sup>16</sup>

**A. The 1928 Norman Dunning Campaign.** Norman Dunning's campaign opened in Perth on March 11th, 1928. It serves as a sample case of the type of "holiness evangelism" with which Australian Methodists of the 1920s felt comfortable. Dunning came from England with the warm recommendation of holiness preacher Samuel Chadwick of Cliff College. "He preaches," said Chadwick, "the Old Gospel of the grace in Christ . . . which saves to the uttermost all them that come to God by Him. Above all, it is manifest that the power is not of Norman G. Dunning, but of God."<sup>17</sup> A glowing telegram from the Home Mission Secretary of Western Australia reported, "Dunning Captured Conference. Crusade Commenced Yesterday. One Hundred Decisions."<sup>18</sup> The idea of referring to such an event as a "crusade" was apparently a novelty. A letter from the Rev. Eric Nye, secretary of Dunning's Western Australian campaign, gives the interesting aside, "By the way, he likes his mission to be called a 'Crusade'; he uses the word constantly."<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that the Australian Methodists of the period favored rational sobriety over emotional excitement. One gets the feeling of a sigh of relief from the Rev. Eric Nye's report of the Perth crusade, the inaugural event of the whole campaign.

<sup>15</sup> Glen O'Brien, "Old Time Methodists in a New World: Kingsley Ridgway and A. B. Carson," Lucas: *An Evangelical History Review*, Special Issue, "His Dominions: Explorations in Canadian-Australian Religious and Cultural Identity," no. 29 (June 2001), 63-83; O'Brien, *Pioneer with a Passion*, 15-39.

<sup>16</sup> Ridgway, *In Search of God*, 48-49.

<sup>17</sup> *The Spectator and Methodist Chronicle*, vol. LIV, no. 9 (29 February, 1928), 207.

<sup>18</sup> Sent to the Rev. A. T. Holden, *Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 11 (14 March, 1928), 253.

<sup>19</sup> *Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 12 (21 March, 1928), 287.

Those who are making decisions in this Crusade will know exactly what they are doing. They will certainly not be able to say they were swept into decision on a wave of popular sentiment. . . . Not that there is lack of emotion in his presentation of Christian truth.<sup>20</sup>

An anonymous "Hearer" at the Kent Town, Adelaide, crusade was similarly impressed. "The [Sunday] evening service was not characterised by any appeal through the emotions. Throughout, the appeal was reasoned out, and . . . there was no play on the emotional side of the members of the audience."<sup>21</sup> The Adelaide campaign was held from 23 June to 3 July, with meetings in over fifty churches. The final meeting at the Exhibition Hall drew 3,200 people.

Dunning was certainly a crowd pleaser. In Adelaide, he led fifty preachers through the city streets in a procession led by a brass band and banner. He introduced his fifty preachers to the crowd as "fifty of the happiest men in Adelaide," and then told them to take off their hats, face their audience and prove it to them. They did so, with beaming smiles and faces that blushed red when Dunning challenged the crowd "to find fifty men in Adelaide of greater intelligence."<sup>22</sup> When a policeman saw a crowd of Dunning's Christian men processing through Adelaide, he declared that at first he thought it was the unemployed, but smilingly added, "I found out it was the idle rich."<sup>23</sup>

Dunning moved to the eastern states of Victoria and Tasmania for an extended series of meetings. After the Bendigo Crusade, H. G. Secomb, who, by his own admission, was cautious in regard to the evangelistic methods in vogue at the time, found himself able to say, "I have nothing but the most cordial approval of the lines upon which Mr. Dunning proceeds, and the spirit of his service is beautiful beyond my powers to record . . . God . . . will use this cultured and devoted Crusader in bringing the breath of a new life to our Church."<sup>24</sup> Dunning doubtless won further support from Methodist traditionalists through his use of the Hymn Book. He made it clear that he had a decided preference for the use of the

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<sup>20</sup>*Spectator* (21 March, 1928), 287.

<sup>21</sup>"Sunday at Kent Town, Adelaide, with Norman Dunning by a Hearer," *Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 18 (2 May, 1928), 419.

<sup>22</sup>*The Spectator*, vol. LVI, no. 28 (11 July, 1928), 665.

<sup>23</sup>*The Spectator*, vol. LVI, no. 29 (18 July, 1928), 688.

<sup>24</sup>*Spectator* (18 July, 1928), 688.

*Methodist Hymn Book*, followed by the *Crusader Hymnal* and the *Abridged Hymn Sheet*, and in that order. H. G. Secomb reported approvingly on the Bendigo Crusade, "We have used the Hymn Book at all services and meetings conducted by Mr. Dunning."<sup>25</sup>

Referring to earlier evangelists such as Torrey, Alexander, Chapman, and Gipsy Smith, Rev. R. B. McConchie saw Dunning as "cast in a different mold." He "resorts to no artifices or devices in order to secure an unfair advantage" and "he resorts to no pulpit pyrotechnics or thunderous roar to compel a verdict. . . . He is a splendid example of the truth of the utterance that it is not necessary to shout and roar in order to be heard in the largest building."<sup>26</sup> It is clear that Australian Methodists of the period favored a type of evangelistic effort which was clear and rational, rather than emotionally persuasive. This contrasted to some extent with North American varieties of revivalism, given to more emotional expression.

**B. Methodist Holiness Conventions.** The most significant forum for the preaching of a distinctive holiness message in the Australian Methodism of the 1920s was the "Holiness Convention" designed specifically for that purpose and held annually by the Methodist Local Preachers' Association. The 1928 Convention was held at the Brunswick Street Methodist Mission in Fitzroy. Some fourteen hundred people sat down to the free meal provided at the Fitzroy Town Hall. "Our convention stands for holiness," read the report on the proceedings. "Because God commands us to be holy, and sanctification means instantaneous deliverance from depravity (see John Wesley), our Convention messages are vibrant with such teachings."<sup>27</sup>

There was no "gradualism" being set forth. "Boys and girls, young men and young women experienced the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and received a perfect pardon written in blood. We are praying that they may go on to perfection. . . . We thank God for the precious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. To many it was pentecostal."<sup>28</sup> On the first

<sup>25</sup>H. G. Secomb, "The Norman Dunning Crusade: The Bendigo Crusade," *Spectator*, vol. LVI, no.30 (25 July, 1928), 712.

<sup>26</sup>Rev. R. B. McConchie, "Norman Dunning Crusade in Bendigo: Impressions and Appreciations," *Spectator*, vol. LVI, no.31 (1 August, 1928), 734.

<sup>27</sup>"Local Preachers Holiness Convention," *Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 24 (13 June, 1928), 567.

<sup>28</sup>"Local Preachers Holiness Convention," *Spectator*, 567.

Wednesday night of his Perth campaign, Norman Dunning had preached on the topic, "Assurance of the Possibility of Christian Perfection,"<sup>29</sup> and on the same topic in Bendigo.<sup>30</sup> In reporting on this sermon, H. G. Secomb referred to entire sanctification as the "distinctive doctrine of Methodism."<sup>31</sup>

*The Spectator* published an article on entire sanctification by the respected British Methodist, H. Maldwyn Hughes. After reminding readers that "perfect love" was John Wesley's favorite term for entire sanctification, he went on to complain of some abuses. "It is very unfortunate that this doctrine has so often been perverted by well-meaning people. It cannot be stated more clearly that neither in the New Testament nor in Wesley's exposition of it is it ever taught or implied that Christians can attain to a state of absolute perfection in this present life." He recounts how once, while a probationer, he had preached on the help that Christ gives in temptation. A man approached him afterwards and declared that he had no need of such help as he had already been made perfect. "I told him," quipped Hughes, "that I should like to hear what his wife had to say on the question."<sup>32</sup>

Much of this contrasts with Kingsley Ridgway's account of Australian Methodism in the 1920s. Ridgway had come out of Gippsland to offer himself as a candidate for the Methodist ministry. After passing through a profound religious crisis, under the influence of visiting Canadian evangelist, Alfred Benson Carson, he withdrew from the Methodist Church. For Ridgway, Methodism was entirely devoid of the original emphases of John Wesley. His autobiographical account, *In Search of God*, gives the impression of Methodism as an apostate church that could offer him no spiritual help as he sought the assurance of salvation. In his own account, Ridgway's Methodist Church of Australasia was Wesley's Church of England, closed to the message of the new birth and considering Christian perfection an "enthusiast's" delusion.

Contemporary documents, such as the *Spectator*, do not reveal a church quite that apostate. When representatives of the Wesleyan-Holi-

<sup>29</sup>*Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 12 (21 March, 1928), 287.

<sup>30</sup>H. G. Secomb, "The Norman Dunning Crusade: The Bendigo Crusade," *Spectator*, vol. LVI, no.30 (25 July, 1928), 711.

<sup>31</sup>Secomb, "The Norman Dunning Crusade," 711.

<sup>32</sup>H. Maldwyn Hughes, "The Living Witness of Methodism," in *Spectator*, vol. LVI, no. 30 (25 July, 1928), 711.

ness churches began to arrive in the early part of the twentieth century, they encountered a Methodist Church still open to the old style revivalism, yet beginning to be somewhat apologetic, or even embarrassed about its revivalist past, and feeling the impact of theological modernism in its academies. However, by the time holiness denominations such as the Church of the Nazarene and the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia were officially organized in the mid-1940s, the religious landscape had become significantly different. Holiness-style Christianity had become a marginalized pocket of the evangelical movement.

The Annual Holiness Convention for 1944, then in its 29<sup>th</sup> year, was held at South Richmond Methodist Church. Run, as were those throughout the 1920s and 30s, by the Methodist Local Preachers Association, it was advertised as a time for “withdrawal from the incessant strain of modern life, and for heart searching and prayer in a congenial environment.” A. C. Chesson of the Sydney Free Evangelical Fellowship (later a Nazarene pastor) was one of the speakers. The lead article in the *Spectator* for 22 July, 1944, speaks of “the essential need of holiness,” as one of the “notes” of Methodism. However, holiness is defined rather vaguely as “a man’s faith issuing in good works and pure life” and as involving a “moral” and “disciplined” life.<sup>33</sup> No second blessing holiness here!

In a commentary on Charles Wesley’s hymn *All Things Are Possible*, the term “Christian progress” is suggested as a replacement for “Christian perfection.” Using a series of rhetorical questions the author suggests that the doctrine of holiness is not very often sung about, spoken about, or taught, and that the older language connected with it is “outworn . . . not understood and not appreciated.”<sup>34</sup> A correspondent sets out to “clarify the distinction between justification and entire sanctification” by means of early Methodist testimonies to the experience.<sup>35</sup> It is notable that, while these historic examples were given, there were no current testimonies, such as would be found in *The Australian Nazarene*, *The Australian Wesleyan* or *The Wesleyan Messenger* from the same period.

In the 20 years between Kingsley Ridgway’s departure from the Methodist Church and his formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church,

<sup>33</sup>“The Methodist Witness,” *Spectator*, vol. LXX, no. 30 (26 July, 1944), front page.

<sup>34</sup>AHW, “Hymns for Congregational Worship: All Things are Possible MHB 548,” *Spectator*, vol. LXXI, no. 4 (24 January, 1945), 53.

<sup>35</sup>Brother Dan’l, “Christian Perfection: The Word of Testimony,” *Spectator*, vol. LXXI, no. 47 (21 November, 1945), 751.

the holiness witness in Victorian Methodism seems to have waned significantly. *The Spectator* of the 1920s ran several articles explicitly expounding entire sanctification as a distinctive doctrine of Methodism. By 1945, only a handful of enthusiasts, such as Walter Betts and Gilbert McLaren, through the agency of the Methodist Local Preacher's Holiness Convention, were continuing to teach holiness in the old fashioned Methodist way. It was holiness diehards such as these who would join with the Wesleyans (McLaren was briefly President of the Wesleyan Conference) or Nazarenes (as did Chesson) or form their own independent churches (Betts would form the Melbourne Evangelical Fellowship, soon renamed, the People's Church, at Kew in 1954).<sup>36</sup> These men had become old-time Methodists in a new world.

### **Revivalism Gives Way to “Evangelical Liberalism”**

What kind of piety existed at Queen's College in the 1920s when Kingsley Ridgway was a ministerial student there? What was the religious scene to which he was exposed, and which he apparently found so unsatisfying? Queen's College had been established as the central theological institution of Australian Wesleyan Methodism in 1897. Its first Master, Edward Sugden, established the foundation for what Owen Parnaby calls a creative partnership between “the Christian evangelism of John Wesley and the liberal humanist tradition of a university.”<sup>37</sup> Sugden was an evangelical liberal who was profoundly influenced by his father's “glowing evangelical zeal for the salvation of souls.” Believing it to be the preacher's first business “to bring men to a definite decision for Christ,” he considered himself to be “at heart, first and foremost, a Methodist preacher.”<sup>38</sup> His broad-ranging interests are indicated by his two passionate loves, “John Wesley and the history of Methodism, and the Elizabethan and early seventeenth-century dramatists, especially

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<sup>36</sup>Dallas Clarnette, *Fifty Years On Fire for God: The Story of Walter Betts* (Melbourne: The People's Church, 1967).

<sup>37</sup>Owen Parnaby, *Queen's College, University of Melbourne: A Centenary History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990), 36.

<sup>38</sup>E. H. Sugden, “Some Reminiscences of My Life,” *The Magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church*, vol. CXLV (London, October 1922), 727. Cited in Parnaby, *Queen's College*, 29.

Shakespeare.”<sup>39</sup> The Wesleyan class meeting was at the core of his spirituality. He first joined a Methodist class meeting when he was converted at the age of 11, and he never gave up the practice of meeting together with like-minded believers for mutual encouragement and accountability. Upon coming to Australia from England, however, he found the practice of the class meeting to be in a state of decline.

The term “evangelical liberal” may sound like an oxymoron. In the early 1920s, however, many were appropriating the findings of the higher criticism, without jettisoning their evangelical convictions. They thought it possible to accept the canons of biblical criticism while preserving a passion for soul winning. A. E. Albiston was appointed principal of the Theological Hall and professor of theology in 1920. He had graduated with honors in natural sciences in 1888, the year that Queen’s College opened. His appointment as principal of the Theological Hall came after serving 27 years in active circuit ministry, and in 1919 as President of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference. A description of him as “a liberal Protestant, a humanist, and an evangelical,” reflects his closeness to the spirit of Sugden.<sup>40</sup>

Some considered the liberal humanism of Queen’s College to be a threat to the evangelical vitality of Methodism. Certain delegates at the Conference of 1898 launched an attack on Sugden’s “latitudinarianism.” His students quickly rose to his defense, but after the Conference “a concerned Methodist” from Fitzroy wrote to the President of the Council, William Quick, that “some of the young men that go in there [Queen’s] are full of love and zeal for the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom, but when they leave they have lost all ardour and become mere talking machines. . . .”<sup>41</sup>

Sugden was often attacked for holding to the “higher criticism” of the Bible, and for his liberal views on social questions, such as dancing on church property, which Methodist law forbade. But in 1923 Sugden had gained enough respect to be elected President of the General Confer-

<sup>39</sup> Parnaby, 32. Sugden was a collector of early editions of Wesley’s *Works* and he donated his collection to the College. When to this was added by W. H. Fitchett, T. E. Brigden’s early collection, the Queen’s collection became “one of the four best collections in the world.” Parnaby, 102.

<sup>40</sup> Minutes, Queen’s College Council (15 June, 1900), in Parnaby, 147.

<sup>41</sup> Letter to W. A. Quick (8 April 1898), from 56 Rose St., Fitzroy, signature illegible, *The Sugden Papers*, cited in Parnaby, 99.

ence. When the Sports and Social Club approached the Master in that same year for permission to hold a dance, he gave permission “with a twinkle in his eye,” by declaring the common room, for this occasion, not to be deemed church property.<sup>42</sup>

As President of the Conference, Sugden had the power to authorize such a legal ruling, but it was a decision not likely to meet with approval if placed before the Conference. At the 1926 Conference in Brisbane, a motion was made to forbid dancing on church property, and Sugden spoke against it. He had no particular desire to champion dancing as such, but saw no reason why it should be prohibited any more than any other activity involving “the mingling of the sexes.” Card playing, theatre going, and attendance at the cinema held such risks, but then so did the Sunday School picnic.<sup>43</sup> A member of the Bendigo synod raised the issue again in 1929. The chair of the Synod, the Rev. W. H. Frederick, spoke in defense of the practice, reminding delegates that not all the students were Methodists and that the Master was “put in a difficult position when the students asked, ‘Can we have a hop?’”<sup>44</sup> The common room dances finally gained acceptance and were held once or twice a term as determined by the general meeting. Such behaviour was held to be a sign almost of apostasy to “old time Methodists” such as Carson and those he gathered around him.

A storm of controversy broke out at Queens over the use of Arthur S. Peake’s *Commentary on the Bible*, first published in 1919. Peake was a layman, the “doyen” of Primitive Methodist theologians in England, and held primary responsibility for that church’s ministerial training. He championed the new “historical-critical” approach to Scripture and was committed to what he considered a more “scientific” doctrine of inspiration than the church traditionally held.<sup>45</sup> The Victorian Conference placed

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<sup>42</sup>Parnaby, 136.

<sup>43</sup>Newspaper cutting, *The Sugden Papers*, in Parnaby, 137.

<sup>44</sup>*Scrap Book*, vol. 4, 58, in Parnaby, 137.

<sup>45</sup>In spite of his reputation as a modernist, Peake accepted the historicity of both the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus. See William Strawson, “Methodist Theology 1850-1950,” in Rupert Davies, A Raymond George, and Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain: Volume Three* (London: Epworth Press, 1983), 197-231. An appealing portrait of Peake as a humble, devoted Methodist is found in John T. Wilkinson, ed., *Arthur Samuel Peake 1865-1929: Essays in Commemoration and Selections from His Writings* (London: Epworth Press, n.d.).

his *Commentary* on the list of books used for the training of probationers, and this was to become the eye of a storm of controversy. In 1922, W. H. Fitchett, a respected leader in the Methodist Church, published at his own expense a booklet entitled *A Tattered Bible and a Mutilated Christ*. Fitchett, the founder and principal of Methodist Ladies College, had also founded an evangelical paper, *The Southern Cross*, which contained "some of the most judicious writing on controversial issues."<sup>46</sup> Fitchett moved that the Victorian Conference remove Peake's *Commentary* from use.

Here is a fact only half known and less than half understood: that for the past four years all the probationers in the ministry of this church have been required to study both Christ and the Bible from a book that presents the spectacle of a Bible robbed of its certainty and of quite another Christ than that of the great ages of the great creeds that lie behind us. And if that view of the Bible and of Christ gets into the pulpit and saturates its teaching, gets into the Sunday Schools and is filtered into the minds of its children, gets into the religious experience of its members, that will be for the Methodist Church a disaster, deep, far reaching and enduring, which it will scarcely survive.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of such appeals, Peake's *Commentary* was retained. Ian Beward gives a good summary of the ethos that prevailed in Melbourne at this time.

[L]iberal clergy were . . . influential . . . among a considerable body of Presbyterians and Methodists. . . . Principal Arthur Albiston [at Queen's] and Sir Irving Benson of Wesley Church, Melbourne, were interesting combinations of evangelical heritage and modernizing tendencies. Liberal impact was moderated by the warm-hearted piety which was still dominant. It was possible to sing Wesley's hymns and still appreciate their spiritual power, while being open to the restatement of theological ideas, when there was no confessional heritage enforced to act as a yardstick of orthodoxy.

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<sup>46</sup> Beward, 196.

<sup>47</sup> Rev. W. F. Betts, *The Drift: Tracing the Drift in Modern Methodism, Leading Up to My Resignation in 1954* (Melbourne: People's Church Publishers, n.d.), 1-3.

The attempts of Dr. Fitchett to uphold the historic doctrine of Methodism in the 1920s failed, and Principal Albiston's revisionist liberalism dominated the Victorian Conference.<sup>48</sup>

It was in the midst of this combative atmosphere that Ridgway withdrew to join Carson's Holiness tabernacle at Coburg. He did so, much to the consternation of his peers at the theological college who considered Carson to be a fool and a fanatic. The report circulated that Ridgway had been hypnotized by Carson and become a spiritualist. No other explanation could be provided for such strange behaviour. After all, who in his or her right mind, would leave the security of the Methodist Church to join Carson's "obscure congregation . . . who could offer . . . nothing but poverty."<sup>49</sup>

North American Wesleyan-Holiness evangelists struck a note of "definiteness" in their preaching, which was often interpreted as a kind of American "brashness" by Australians used to a more muted sort of piety.<sup>50</sup> Such a note of certainty about things religious was often absent from the Methodist piety of the day. The influence of the Cliff College brand of holiness teaching is evident in the testimony of William C. H. Brenton, given at the Annual Conference of 1928: "I have known no great moment of conversion [but] I was intensified by a period in Cliff College. . . . The Revs. Thos. Cook and Samuel Chadwick had a great influence on my life."<sup>51</sup> But it is the first part of this testimony, more than the second, which strikes the interest of the historian of Methodist piety. The admission of having known "no great moment of conversion" was typical of the published testimonies from the Conference, which appear in *The Methodist Spectator*. For Edwin Gordon Harris it was "the earliest influences of [his] home [which] made for a real belief in Christ." Ralph G. Hunt could speak only of "a deepened sense of call to be an ambassador for Jesus." "There was a call for Home Missionaries," recalled Philip H. James, "and the thought came insistently to me: 'Why should I not offer?'" Arthur G. Jewell's testimony is certainly no "Damascus Road

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<sup>48</sup>Breward, 258.

<sup>49</sup>K. Ridgway, *Search for God*, 64.

<sup>50</sup>For a discussion of anti-American attitudes toward holiness churches, see Glen O'Brien, "Just Another 'Queer Sect' from Over the Pacific": Anti-Americanism and the Wesleyan-Holiness Churches in Australia," *Aldersgate Papers*, vol. 4 (Sept. 2003), 29-58.

<sup>51</sup>*Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 13 (28 March, 1928), 296.

experience” when he professes, “I am the product of the quiet routine work of our Methodist Church.” Similarly, Herbert W. R. Malseed is able to say, “My Christian experience is a story of progression through the various departments of our Sunday School and Church.”

There were some, such as W. Russell Maltby, who were concerned at this lack of definiteness in Methodist testimony. In an essay entitled *The Gradual Christian*, Maltby expresses concern at the tendency toward the loss of the note of certainty in Methodist conversions.

We were not wrong in saying that some conversions might be more gradual than others, but we were wrong if we thought they could be arranged to take place unconsciously or automatically. In making conversion less dramatic, we ought not to have made it less divine; in seeing it as more of a process, it should not have been less of a miracle. . . . We never intended to substitute acquiescence in a Christian environment for the personal experience of the power of God, but this is what it has come to, with thousands of church-going people today. And it is a poor exchange, if, instead of the ladder let down from heaven, whose foot was on the earth and top in the skies, you have only an escalator with its foot in the Sunday School and its top in Church membership.<sup>52</sup>

The doctrine of entire sanctification was still adhered to by at least some Australian Methodists in the 1920s. Edward Sugden was able to include “entire sanctification” as one of “the doctrines emphasized by John Wesley” at a lunch-time address given to ministers entitled *Our Doctrines*.<sup>53</sup> On Anzac Sunday 1928, at the Central Mission, the President of the Conference, the Rev. J. H. Cain, preached on *The Blessing of a Clean Heart*. The substance of the sermon, based on Psalm 51,<sup>54</sup> was published in the *Spectator*. But this emphasis would continue to wane during the first half of the twentieth century, leaving the holiness witness in Australian Methodism significantly muted by the time Wesleyan Methodists and Nazarenes began their work in earnest during the years following World War II.

Alongside a waning interest in holiness teaching, Methodists, along with other Protestants, had lost interest in doctrinal controversy. Revival-

<sup>52</sup>*Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 17 (25 April, 1928), 402.

<sup>53</sup>*Spectator*, vol. LIV, no. 13 (28 March, 1928), 299.

<sup>54</sup>“Create in me a clean heart, O God.” Psalm 51:1.

ism, with its emphasis on the religion of the heart, is sometimes blamed for contributing to a lack of interest in doctrine; however, such an attitude was widespread in mainstream Protestant churches around the turn of the twentieth century.

By the 1920s Protestants who attended church regularly in Australia and New Zealand had crossed the threshold into a post-doctrinal age. They had become more like those outside the churches in the indefiniteness of their religious ideas. Doctrine continued to exist in the sense that ministers were still required to subscribe to doctrinal standards and that no denominations formally repudiated any early Christian creed. But, speaking generally, standards and creeds now provided at most a feeling of continuity with the past; the actual thinking of churchgoing Protestants about religion had become inexact, formless, and diverse.<sup>55</sup>

Kenneth Dempsey's research on rural Methodists in New South Wales in 1966 has shown that doctrinal indifferentism continued well into the twentieth century and, indeed, became even more acute. The Methodists he interviewed understood the role of the church in "fundamentally moralistic terms." Fewer than a dozen of the 109 people interviewed ascribed to the church a theological role. Most thought of it as a useful agency for teaching the young "the importance of such things as kindness, courtesy, frugality, and honesty, and the virtues of participation in family life."<sup>56</sup> Jackson concludes, somewhat bleakly, that Protestants in the early part of the twentieth century had failed to "make a creative, and above all, distinctively Christian impact upon their own people, much less society as a whole." Neither Catholics nor Protestants seemed "prepared for the institutional church to lose itself for the sake of the Kingdom of God."

Evangelicals, especially those with a revivalist bent, were interested in doctrinal questions, at least in so far as they related to biblical authority and religious experience. They were influenced, for example, by the theological controversy surrounding the inerrancy of Scripture in the United

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<sup>55</sup>Jackson, 125.

<sup>56</sup>Kenneth C. Dempsey, "Minister-lay Relationships in a Methodist Country Community," *St. Mark's Review*, no. 65 (Aug. 1971), 16, cited in Jackson, 171. Also see Kenneth Dempsey, *Conflict and Decline: Ministers and Laymen in an Australian Country Town* (Sydney: Methuen, 1983).

States. The Wesleyan-Holiness churches represented a possible alternative Methodism, or so they saw themselves, less susceptible to the inroads of modernism, and the authentic heirs of Wesleyan revivalism.

### **The First Rise of Wesleyan-Holiness Churches in Australia**

We will review briefly four examples of the rise in Australia of Wesleyan/Holiness churches. They saw themselves as resisting modernism and carrying the banner of Wesleyan revivalism.

**A. Elliot John Rien and Bethshan Holiness Mission.** Bethshan Holiness Mission, in Wye NSW, was founded in 1908 by Elliot John and Ethel Rien and Esther Wood. Rien was born near Lithgow (NSW) on 16 November, 1866, to a railway worker, Martin Rien, and his wife. Brought up in the Presbyterian Church after a move to Windsor (NSW), he followed his father's footsteps in employment before eventually entering the Hawkesbury Agricultural College at Richmond. During his time as a student there, he began to attend both a Methodist class meeting and Salvation Army meetings, eventually joining the Methodist Church. He took charge of a silk farm in the tiny Hunter Valley township of Wye in 1897, after marrying Ethel Taylor in February of that year. Rien was soon preaching in the district in his spare time, holding cottage meetings and running a Sunday School.

In September, 1907, a visiting American holiness evangelist from Denver, introduced the Riens to the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. The Rev. R. L. Wertheim was a woman evangelist of the Methodist Episcopal Church who held a series of meetings at the Wye Union Church, during which the Riens and Esther Wood "experienced holiness." According to his son, Elliot T. Rien, it was probably the preaching of Wertheim that "laid the foundation" of his father's "remarkable ability in the exegesis of the Bible."<sup>57</sup>

After running an Easter Holiness Convention in 1908, it was decided that a permanent Holiness Mission should be established at Wye. It is interesting to note that, even though Elliot Rien established the non-denominational Bethshan Holiness Mission in order to promote the message of holiness, he never withdrew from his membership in the Methodist Church, and did not exhibit a sectarian attitude toward the mainstream churches.

<sup>57</sup>Rien, 42.

Mr. Rien strongly believed that Christians should not separate themselves from the various avenues of worship provided by the Evangelical Christian Denominations, and he always stood staunchly behind those churches whenever the opportunity presented itself. . . . He did his utmost to further the work of [the Methodist Church] in the district in which he lived.<sup>58</sup>

Bethshan has continued to operate to the present time as an independent mission, with year-round camping and convention facilities, a retirement village, and nursing home. It has had a close association with the Wesleyan Methodist Church for many years, with Wesleyan camps and conferences being regularly held there, a number of Wesleyan ministers serving as pastors of the Bethshan Church, and Wesleyan Methodist representation on the Mission's board of management.

**B. The Church of God (Anderson) and E. P. May.** The first traceable contact between Australians and the Church of God (Anderson) is a letter to the 7 July, 1898, issue of the *Gospel Trumpet*, from Annie Whitehead of Port Melbourne.<sup>59</sup> By 1907 there were 112 Australian subscribers to this magazine. J. M. and Margaret Philpott returned to Sydney in 1908 after a fourteen-year absence, during which they had come in contact with the Church of God movement in Lodi, California.<sup>60</sup> Philpott was a full-time tradesman, but dedicated his free time to door-to-door visitation and literature distribution from his home in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe. He established a circulating library of Church of God books and held Bible studies and prayer meetings in the homes of friends.

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<sup>58</sup>Rien, 47.

<sup>59</sup>Malcolm T. Hughes, *Seeds of Faith: A History of the Church of God Reformation Movement in Australia, Part One* (Englewood, Ohio: self-published, 1995), 5. For the Church of God (Anderson), see: Barry L. Callen, editor, *Following the Light: Teachings, Testimonies, Trials, and Triumphs of the Church of God Movement (Anderson): A Documentary History* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 2000); Barry L. Callen, *It's God's Church!: The Life and Legacy of Daniel Sidney Warner* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1995); Lester A. Crose, *Passport for a Reformation* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1978); and John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1980). For more detailed discussion of the Church of God (Anderson) in Australia, especially under the ministry of Carl and Lova Swart commencing in late 1958, see Glen O'Brien, "North American Wesleyan-Holiness Churches in Australia," Ph.D. thesis, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2005, esp. 170-185.

<sup>60</sup>Hughes, 6.

Philpott reported 6 converts in the *Gospel Trumpet* in April, 1909. The 4 November, 1909, edition listed Philpott's mission as officially recognized by the movement. Early in 1910, the *Gospel Trumpet* published a long piece on Philpott's observations of life in Australia. It was noted that there was a widespread nominal allegiance to Christianity in Australia, but a low degree of personal commitment and little regular church attendance. Reported was a "commonality" between Australians and Americans, citing the warm reception of a group of American missionaries from the Chapman-Alexander Mission in Boston and of crew members on board visiting American warships.<sup>61</sup>

The following two years saw little fruit for the labor expended and the Philpotts began to grow disheartened. E. M. and Lillian Beebe arrived in Sydney on Christmas day, 1911, staying for a few days with the Philpotts and then moving to Queensland. The Philpotts did not consider themselves ministers, but lay people trying to be faithful in their witness. They felt their greatest need was for a minister to be sent to them. The call for a minister was answered by E. P. May, who, interestingly, had been born in Australia (in Goulburn, NSW) in 1887. He had emigrated with his parents four years later, first to England, and then to Canada, where he grew up. May was converted in 1905 after moving from Canada to Ansonia, Connecticut. He became a Salvation Army officer, and while stationed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, came in contact with the Church of God (Anderson). In 1915 he began to work at the Gospel Trumpet Company in Anderson, Indiana, and was also engaged in traveling evangelism. In 1917 he wrote a series of articles on Australia and gave an appeal for missionaries in the issue of 25 January.

On 21 August, 1917, May left Anderson, Indiana, as the Church of God's first accredited missionary to Australia. Along with his wife, he traveled overland, holding meetings along the way, and then sailed from Vancouver, British Columbia, aboard S. S. Niagara for Sydney. On approaching Australia they detoured to Auckland, New Zealand, to elude detection by a German warship patrolling the area. Between Fiji and New Zealand they sailed "blacked out on a zig-zag course and . . . far from the usual shipping lanes."<sup>62</sup> By January 1918, the Mays were holding three regular weekly meetings in homes around Campsie and preaching in Syd-

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<sup>61</sup>Hughes, 6-7.

<sup>62</sup>Hughes, 13.

ney's Domain. May wrote ". . . it has proved a great help to be able to qualify as an Australian, for the prejudice against religious teaching by Americans runs high because of so many heresies from America flourishing here to the distaste of the English mind . . . but they are very much inclined to spiritual things, and readily respond to the truth."<sup>63</sup>

The first edition of *The Australian Gospel Trumpet* was published in February 1918. On 1 June, 1918, the "Unity Mission" commenced its work in a four-storey rented building at 630 George Street, a few blocks from the Sydney Town Hall, with a seating capacity of 160. People began to join the ranks of the Church of God movement from various church backgrounds—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and independent. In October or November 1918, Church of God ministers F. G. Smith and E. A. Reardon came from the U. S. and spent several weeks encouraging the workers in Sydney. An advertising campaign saw billboards erected at Central Station and large newspaper ads. A series of meetings was held to which many of Sydney's prominent ministers were invited in order that they might learn more about Church of God beliefs.<sup>64</sup> By June, 1921, the monthly *Australian Gospel Trumpet* boasted more than 400 subscribers. The 1922 *Yearbook* of the Church of God listed the ex-Methodist preacher J. H. Adams and his wife as ministers in Queensland, E. P. May as missionary, and William Sutherland as missionary to Fiji, along with 6 Fijian assistants.

Around 1920, Harold Chilver, a boy of fifteen on an isolated farm in Gippsland, Victoria grew interested in the theme of Christian unity. He read a book by E. P. May on "The Lure of the Dance," which contained "an appendage of some length to conform more closely to Australian conditions." He had received the book from the Gospel Trumpet Company in Sydney, and it had arrived wrapped in a portion of *The Australian Gospel Trumpet*. As it turned out, this wrapping proved of greater interest to Chilvers than the book itself. The twin themes of the spiritual unity of the church and of the experience of holiness greatly interested him and he subscribed to the paper for seven shillings per year. E. P. May visited Chilver's home and stayed for a few days. Chilver and others were baptized by him on the family property.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Hughes, 15.

<sup>64</sup>Hughes, 18.

<sup>65</sup>Harold Chilver, "My Heart Set Aflame," in Barry L. Callen, ed., *Following the Light: Teachings, Testimonies, Trials, and Triumphs of the Church of God Movement (Anderson): A Documentary History*, 116-117.

Letters from the Mays to Anderson, Indiana, became less and less frequent until the 1926 *Yearbook* gave “the last public mention of the work in Australia for twenty six years.”<sup>66</sup> Hughes suggests that May was experiencing burn out, “the strain of so many years of hard work . . . finally taking its toll.”<sup>67</sup> His wife had also experienced illness. Carl Swart, who restarted Church of God work in the late 1950s, reports that May had encountered financial difficulties, a fire had destroyed the uninsured printing equipment and supplies and May had had a falling out with American church leaders, all of which conspired together to lead to the abandonment of the work.<sup>68</sup> May came out of obscurity to preach at a Church of God camp meeting in 1966, after the Swarts had recommenced work in Sydney.<sup>69</sup> May’s grandson, Peter Breen, who is today a Wesleyan Methodist minister in Brisbane, has recounted the family history of the collapse of May’s faith, his marital infidelities, and his eventual return to the faith before his death in the 1980s.<sup>70</sup>

### C. Alfred Benson Carson and the Holiness Movement Church.

Around 1919, the Rev Alfred Benson Carson arrived in Sydney from the Holiness Movement Church in Canada, with his wife and six children. They had come to pioneer a holiness work in Australia. They worshipped with the Salvation Army at Junee, NSW, for a time, and then relocated to Melbourne, first in Brunswick and finally in Coburg, where they began to hold meetings in the Temperance Hall. Carson was born in Carsonby, Ontario, on 28 July, 1877.

Carson was converted in Melfort, Saskatchewan, in 1905 under the preaching of the George Paul and S. Wesley Caswell. He was assisting the two evangelists in the construction of a church building when he grew offended at their implication that he was not truly converted. He was a religious and clean living young man, of whom all thought well, but their questions plagued him until one night, in the building he had helped to construct, he underwent a conversion experience. “The night I was converted,” he remembered, “it seemed to me the bottom must have fallen

<sup>66</sup>Hughes, 22.

<sup>67</sup>Hughes, 22.

<sup>68</sup>Hughes, 22.

<sup>69</sup>Clyde E. Goin, “How Swift the Year,” *Church of God Missions*, vol. 31, no. 3 (November, 1966), 3.

<sup>70</sup>In a phone conversation with the author on 9 February, 2005.

out of heaven.”<sup>71</sup> A few days later he testified to a definite experience of entire sanctification. He married another convert, Ida Conley, and entered into a preaching ministry. He completed two years of training at Annesley College in Ottawa, and served Holiness Movement churches in Manitoba, Calgary, and British Columbia, where he received a call to Australia.

While singing in the choir at the Melbourne Town Hall during a meeting of the flamboyant American Pentecostal evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson,<sup>72</sup> Kingsley Ridgway met a member of Carson’s flock. The stranger invited Ridgway to come and meet his pastor, reassuring him that Carson was “a real old time Methodist.”<sup>73</sup> Ridgway, a ministerial student at Queen’s College, was persuaded by Carson to remove himself from its modernist influence.<sup>74</sup> As he came under the influence of Carson’s preaching, his sense of unfitness for the ministry began to grow more intense. He lacked assurance of his salvation, and the high standards of holiness set forth by Carson only increased his sense of despair. He informed his theology tutor at Queen’s that he was unconverted and thus not fit for the ministry. “He was very unsympathetic,” remembered Ridgway. He counseled: “You will be alright. I have had other students who felt as you do, but they got over it after a while.” He advised Ridgway to let the church be the judge as to whether or not he was fit for the work of the ministry.<sup>75</sup> Ridgway would later marry Carson’s daughter, Dorcas. The young couple honeymooned at a theological seminary in Canada, while Ridgway trained for the ordained ministry in the Standard Church of America, a Canadian holiness denomination.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>K. Ridgway, *In Search of God*, 53.

<sup>72</sup>For biographies of McPherson, see Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody’s Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Daniel Mark Epstein, *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1993). See also Matthew A. Sutton, “Between the Refrigerator and the Wildfire: Aimee Semple McPherson, Pentecostalism, and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy,” *Church History*, vol. 72, no. 1 (March, 2003), 159-181.

<sup>73</sup>K. Ridgway, *In Search of God*, 53.

<sup>74</sup>O’Brien, *Pioneer with a Passion*, 27.

<sup>75</sup>Ridgway, *In Search of God*, 48-49.

<sup>76</sup>O’Brien, *Pioneer with a Passion*, 27. According to Women’s Missionary Society materials of 1973, only after he met an American serviceman in the Pacific during the war did Kingsley Ridgway “believe God for his own sanctification” and be “baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Women’s Missionary Society program materials (November, 1973), 13. This is very wide of the mark, for he had enjoyed the experience of sanctification since the 1920s when he first became associated with A. B. Carson.

In 1920, the Holiness Movement Church of Canada, to which Carson belonged, had undergone a schism, leading to the formation of the Standard Church of America, under the leadership of Ralph Clifford Horner, who had also originally founded the Holiness Movement Church. Later, in 1959, Kingsley Ridgway would write to the President of the Standard Church in response to what he felt was “a veiled attack upon the Wesleyan Church” when an editorial asserted that the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia had its origins in the Standard Church.<sup>77</sup>

Rev. A. B. Carson, under whom I was converted in 1922, came as a missionary to Australia in 1919 from the Holiness Movement Church, not from the Standard Church as stated. In 1924 he organized a Holiness Movement Church in Australia; but none of its members except my wife and myself have ever been members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia. There has never been a Standard Church organized in Australia. When I came from Egypt to Australia in 1940 I did labour to establish a Standard Church; but as I wrote to Rev. J. B. Pring and to Rev. E. H. Thompson, the people here simply would not face up to wearing the distinctive uniform which was required of the members, and I was unable to form a membership. None of these people contacted in that period ever became members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Indeed the Wesleyan Methodist Church has actually broken entirely new ground here, and none of its members (except my own family, of course,) even knew me whilst I represented the Standard Church. It is hardly accurate, therefore, to comment editorially that this holiness work in Australia had its origins in the Standard Church.<sup>78</sup>

Clearly, Ridgway valued highly his relationship with A. B. Carson, and his formative years in the Standard Church, but he wanted to make it clear that none of these constituted the formal beginnings of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia. Interestingly, in 2004, the Standard Church of America merged with the Wesleyan Church in Canada and became part of the latter’s Atlantic District, bringing with it mission fields in Egypt, Mexico, and Ghana.

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<sup>77</sup>Kingsley Ridgway to Harold K. Sheets, 31 January, 1959. Indianapolis, Indiana: Wesleyan Archives.

<sup>78</sup>Kingsley Ridgway to “Brother Brown,” 27 January, 1959. Indianapolis, Indiana: Wesleyan Archives.

**D. Forerunners of the Church of the Nazarene in Australia.**<sup>79</sup>

David McEwan has identified the need to research the “religious, social, and political situation in Australia” during the years that immediately preceded the emergence of the Church of the Nazarene in this country. He bemoans the absence of any thorough biographies of early Nazarenes such as Albert Berg, and sees the need for the doctrinal development of these Australian leaders to be traced, both their theological influences and the way those influenced were shaped by American Nazarenes.<sup>80</sup>

E. E. Shellhamer’s meetings in Australia in 1936 were mostly held in Baptist churches. He wrote to the Nazarenes, encouraging them to establish a work in Australia. Why he did not contact his own Free Methodist Church is uncertain.<sup>81</sup> Ron Gibbins remembers Shellhamer’s meetings at Islington, near Newcastle (NSW), where Gibbins’ father was the Baptist pastor of “one of the larger churches in the district.” His father “was in the era of the so-called liberal (really unbelieving) theology. He determined in his heart that he would not go down that track. . . .”<sup>82</sup>

The Nazarene preacher, Prescott L. Beals and his wife visited Australia and submitted a report to the Nazarene’s Board of General Superintendents, dated 9 January, 1939. He wrote, “There are sufficient churches in Australia such as they are. But there is *not one* distinctively holiness church in all of Australia. . . . All with whom we came in contact said we were the first ‘specimens’ from [the Church of the Nazarene] which they had ever seen.”<sup>83</sup> He urged the General Superintendents to establish the

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<sup>79</sup>For a more detailed description of early Nazarenes in Australia, see Glen O’Brien, “A Dogged Inch-by-Inch Affair: The Church of the Nazarene in Australia 1945-1958,” *The Journal of Religious History*, vol. 27, no. 2 (June 2003), 215-233.

<sup>80</sup>David B. McEwan, “An Examination of the Correspondence (1944-48) relating to the founding of the Church of the Nazarene in Australia.” A paper submitted to Professor Raser in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the course *History and Polity of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Theological Seminary, 1984), 1.

<sup>81</sup>Prescott Beals, “Australia: A Report to the Board of General Superintendents, 9 January, 1939,” Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Archives.

<sup>82</sup>In 1967, Gibbins, now chaplain at the University of Newcastle, NSW, was lecturing at the University of Illinois and met the son of E. E. Shellhamer, who was then medical superintendent of the University Hospital. Ron Gibbins, letter to the author, 4 July, 2003.

<sup>83</sup>Beals, 1-2.

Church of the Nazarene in Australia as soon as possible, by sending a missionary couple. These people “should be people of good common sense and not the type who would sing jazzy songs, or do sensational or merely the story type of preaching. Otherwise they would not be acceptable. And yet they must not think they should take the formal route or else there would be no use in their going.”<sup>84</sup>

Beales met with leaders of the Methodist Church who seemed to have some interest in the Church of the Nazarene and worshipped in churches of several denominations. Here he found some “holiness sympathizers,” especially in Baptist churches where Shellhamer had held most of his meetings. Australia did not feel at all like a mission field to Beals, except that it was far distant from home. A holiness preacher from the Immanuel Church (a splinter group from the US-based Pilgrim Holiness Church) was preaching in Sydney and Beals saw this as an indication of holiness groups “bidding for the people of Australia.”

When the holiness churches finally did get a foothold in the years following World War II, they believed themselves to be providing an unmet need in the Australian community, the message of holiness as a distinct second blessing. The idea of a “second work of grace” or “baptism of the Holy Spirit” experienced subsequent to conversion was not taught outside of Pentecostalism, and the earlier Keswick movement had lost momentum. The widely-read and quoted Scofield Reference Bible held the view that the age of spiritual gifts and miracles had ceased with the death of the apostles, and so special manifestations and distinct “blessings” of the Holy Spirit were no longer available in the current “dispensation.” Such ideas were very influential in Australian evangelicalism. Early Nazarene leader Alfred Chesson described Scofield’s influence as “the dead hand of fatalistic, pessimistic, no more revival dispensationalism [which] has done untold harm in Australia.” Its views “are almost universally accepted in Australia and they stultify any hope of revival. . . .”<sup>85</sup>

Holiness leaders saw Australian evangelicalism as dominated by Calvinism, with its insistence on the irresistibility of grace and a “once-saved-always-saved” position, so at odds with Wesleyan-Arminian insistence on free will and the possibility of falling from grace. It could be

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<sup>84</sup>He then goes on to recommend a couple called “the Teasdales,” Beals, 4.

<sup>85</sup>Alfred Chesson to Ted Hollingsworth, 23 March, 1946, Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Archives.

argued that this Reformed theology has historically been the most influential element in Australian evangelical Christianity. It is the theology of the influential Sydney Anglican Diocese, of many Baptists, of most of the Brethren Assemblies, as well as of the more conservative evangelicals in the Presbyterian Church. The fact that holiness people were often thought of as “pentecostal”<sup>86</sup> did little to help them, as this was certainly not a well-received designation among Australian evangelicals in the 1940s.

Chesson believed in 1946 that the “old Arminians” (presumably evangelical Methodists) had largely disappeared or become modernist. Where the older British Methodist denominations (Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist, and Bible Christian) had once held the doctrine of holiness, mainline Methodism had now “lost the old message on Christian Perfection.”<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusions

Wesleyan perfectionism was an important part of Australian Methodism from its early nineteenth-century beginnings, and it may be argued that it was from this matrix that Australian pentecostalism was born.<sup>88</sup> But Australian Methodism did not give rise to the kind of interde-

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<sup>86</sup>Albert Berg to Ted Hollingsworth, 19 September, 1944, Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Archives.

<sup>87</sup>Alfred Chesson to Ted Hollingsworth, 23 March, 1946 Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Archives.

<sup>88</sup>Barry Chant has traced the influence of Wesleyan revivalism on the rise of Australian pentecostalism, though he does this with only passing reference to the American holiness movement, and indeed, is concerned to show that Australian pentecostalism was not an American import. See Barry Chant, “Wesleyan Revivalism and the Rise of Australian Pentecostalism,” in Mark Hutchinson, Edmund Campion, and Stuart Piggin, eds., *Reviving Australia: Essays on the History and Experience of Revival and Revivalism in Australian Christianity* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994), 97-122. Janet “Mummy” Lancaster, born in Williamstown, Victoria, was a Methodist and is a much-celebrated Australian pentecostal pioneer. In 1908 she experienced “speaking in tongues” and opened the Good News Hall in North Melbourne in 1909. It became the centre of the “Pentecostal Mission” she would lead until her death in 1934. She wrote an editorial in 1930 in which she displayed her Methodist origins and sought legitimization of her cause in statements on Pentecost made by prominent Methodist clergymen. “Mummy” bemoaned “the fellowship so familiar and so vital to the Methodism of an earlier day [as] almost nonexistent” and sees a revival of pentecostal manifestations as the answer to the problem. Barry Chant,

nominal holiness revival that emerged out of the Methodist Episcopal Church in mid-nineteenth century America. There were holiness conventions, holiness sermons, and holiness articles in the *Spectator*, but nothing like the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness to launch an American-style holiness movement. If the American Holiness Movement churches could have established a strong denominational presence in the 1920s, they may have been able to capitalize on what was left of the Methodist interest in holiness and of the Keswick Convention movement. The fact that they emerged in the 1940s, at a time when such interest had considerably waned, meant a lost opportunity.

Nonetheless, the American holiness churches believed themselves to be functioning in a strategic role. While modernists laughed at them, some evangelical Methodists saw them as recovering the original fire of “primitive” Methodism, even if they were not often ready to break ranks with the older church and join with the newcomers. Australian evangelicals after World War II looked back to the age of revivals as a kind of “golden age.” The doctrinal indifferentism that had emerged in mainstream Methodism left some evangelical Methodists looking for an alternative. It was hoped that the North American holiness churches might provide that alternative. Not yet ready to be ravished, “the beautiful virgin” was at least beginning to be wooed.

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*Heart of Fire: The Story of Australian Pentecostalism* (Adelaide: Luke Publications, 1975), 285-290. The second earliest Australian pentecostal ministry, the Southern Evangelical Mission, was also established by a former Methodist, the home missionary Robert Horne. He had been involved with the Keswick movement and began his own independent work in the Melbourne suburb of Caulfield in 1911. Philip J. Hughes, *The Pentecostals in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996), 6; Denis and Gwen Smith, *A River is Flowing: The History of the Assemblies of God in Australia* (St. Agnes: Commonwealth Conference Assemblies of God in Australia, 1987), 23.

**THE ILLUSIONS OF PERFECTIONISM:  
E. STANLEY JONES AND  
REINHOLD NIEBUHR**

by

**William Kostlevy**

Tertullian said: the soul is naturally Christian. Reinhold Niebuhr said: the soul is naturally pagan. . . . I vote with Tertullian. The paganism introduced into human nature is an intrusion—not natural, but brought in by humanity’s free will. God created humanity in his own image. Humanity has defiled that image by sin. But it isn’t natural.<sup>1</sup>

It is a delightful irony. For Reinhold Niebuhr, the quintessential naive liberal was that iconic holiness devotional writer, Asbury College’s most distinguished graduate and frequent guest, E. Stanley Jones. In fact, the sparring of Niebuhr and Jones concerning the normative role of Jesus in Christian ethical reflection, and the appropriateness of war as a tool for the modern state, is a fascinating tale from a time rapidly receding from our collective consciousness.

The intensity of Niebuhr’s feud with Jones, and the extent of his fear that Jones’ brand of perfectionistic Christianity represented a danger to responsible Christian social action, is told with stark clarity in a charming aside in volume one of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.’s, autobiography. As Schlesinger tells the story in the middle of denouncing Jones’ pacifism,

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<sup>1</sup>E. Stanley Jones, *A Song of Ascent: A Spiritual Biography* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 172-173.

Niebuhr “stopped in midstream and said, ‘but who am I to pass judgment on Stanley Jones? He’s one of the greatest saints of our time.’”<sup>2</sup>

### A Clash with Perfectionism

Reinhold Niebuhr does make clear on several occasions that his feud with E. Stanley Jones was far more than a feud with liberalism (Niebuhr himself is a liberal, after all). It was the contemporary expression of “responsible” Christianity’s age old internal struggle against “utopian” Christianity, also known as perfectionism. As he writes in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, citing George Fox as a prime example “in more extreme sects . . . the legitimate majesty of government is not apprehended.” “Usually,” Niebuhr continues, citing E. Stanley Jones as his prime example, “the failure to appreciate the necessity of government is derived from perfectionist illusions.” As Niebuhr elaborates, such “anarchistic social theories are explicitly sanctificationist in their theories of redemption.” Further (and accurately I would contend), he places Jones in the company of such English Civil War “anticipators” of Marxism as the Levelers and Diggers.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I argue that Jones is, in fact, best identified as a holiness radical, albeit perhaps a holiness radical of a higher order. In fairness to Niebuhr, Jones was reluctant to identify too closely with a tradition that was easily dismissed by the very American Brahmins that often sought spiritual solace at his, at least to the initiated, thinly disguised “holy roller” revivals.<sup>4</sup>

Before looking at the Niebuhr-Jones feud, it is important to understand the depth of the hostility to public expressions of holiness worship that existed among intellectual and cultural elites during the 1930s and 1940s. Writing in perhaps the most widely used collateral reading text for classes taught in American religious history, H. Richard Niebuhr dismissed the Salvation Army as one of the last representatives of the “naïve

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<sup>2</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginning, 1917-1950* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 513.

<sup>3</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I: Human Destiny* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943), 280

<sup>4</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I*, 279-280. Church of the Brethren scholar Dale W. Brown recalls his astonishment as a teenager when the respected Jones ended a meeting in Wichita, KS, by inviting all seeking the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to come forward. This was not exactly the introduction to Gandhi style non-violence Brown was expecting.

religious movements” of the nineteenth century. Other interpreters of American religious culture were more direct. John Steuart Curry, a struggling New York based magazine illustrator, became an international sensation with his *Baptism in Kansas*, a depiction described by one critic “as a gorgeous piece of satire” of the “religious fanaticism of the hinterland.” Meanwhile, Sinclair Lewis had relocated to Kansas City, an ideal location it seems for research on his highly publicized novel exposing native American religious fanaticism, *Elmer Gantry* (the *Da Vinci Code* of the 1920s). It should be noted that the novel which was a best seller of the 1920s was lionized far more by critics of American evangelicalism than by students of American literature who found it predictable, boring, and stereotypical.<sup>5</sup>

The popular attitudes of principal purveyors of American culture are nicely described again by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in his autobiography. In 1940, the young Schlesinger bravely ventured into the wilds east of the Hudson River. At Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, Schlesinger witnessed his first “evangelical camp meeting.” As he wrote his parents, “he had rarely scene so disgusting a scene.” Individuals were moaning, in trances or “hysterical weeping, shouting ‘Jesus, come to me.’” Lest we accuse Schlesinger of only a basis against American expressions of religious devotion, it should be noted that as a sixteen year old he had been equally offended by sights and ecstasies of Benares’ pilgrims bathing in the Ganges. Schlesinger did report a real sense of shame for his prejudices concerning Hindu expressions of faith. As the narrative makes clear, his feelings about the religious expressions of Idahoans evoked no similar sense of shame.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), 75. On Curry and Lewis, see Robert Smith Bader, *Hayseeds, Moralizers and Methodists: The Twentieth Century Image of Kansas* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 41-71.

<sup>6</sup>Schlesinger, *A Life in the Twentieth Century*, 101, 235. Schlesinger does not indicate the denominational affiliation of the camp meeting. Given its location, it was likely a Church of the Nazarene meeting. Glenn Griffith, the Idaho-Oregon District Superintendent at the time, often told the story that he had never spent a night in jail until he was entirely sanctified. The charges were, of course, disturbing the peace. William McLoughlin in *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald Press, 1959), 475, derisively refers to such holiness figures as Steven Paine, Paul Rees, and Leslie Marston as the “social and intellectual elite of the marginal middle class.”

Traveling with Schlesinger was his Harvard friend and mentor, the noted author of western historical narratives and founder of the History Book Club, Bernard DeVoto. Raised in Utah, the son of a marriage between a lapsed Catholic father and a lapsed Mormon mother, DeVoto had fled his native state as a college sophomore, finding sanctuary in Cambridge, MA. In East St. Louis, IL, DeVoto recalled being passed by a truck “advertising a Nazarene revival and telling us that we must repent for the day of God’s vengeance was at hand.”<sup>7</sup> In both narratives of the same trip, the traveling companions situate these stories in the context of the global struggle against Fascism. In both the camp meeting in Idaho and the Nazarene revival in East St. Louis, holiness religion was seen to be serving as an opiate for the socially marginalized. In fact, both Schlesinger and DeVoto pointedly suggest that such expressions of faith are dangerous distractions from the sacred national mission of the United States, the defeat of Hitler (and for Schlesinger after 1945 the USSR). In this sacred battle, Holiness people were a pathetic side show.

The perfectionism of E. Stanley Jones, on the other hand, was not seen as a side show. It was a utopian social vision with a clear strategy suggesting alternatives to both Fascism and Communism. It was not pie in the sky eschatological fantasy. It was far worse. It proposed actually living in history in light of the teachings and values of Jesus. For a generation committed to the rehabilitation of Augustine and the Puritan fathers, E. Stanley Jones posed a threat and an alternative. To understand the source and character of that threat requires an exploration into an almost forgotten social milieu. It is that of L. L. Pickett and Henry Clay Morrison, mentors of Jones.

### **E. Stanley Jones: A Brief Biographical Sketch**

A native of Maryland, Jones was converted in 1899 and mentored by a converted alcoholic and Methodist class leader, Robert J. Batemen. Under Methodist auspicious he experienced entire sanctification in 1902. Desiring to preach like the famed holiness evangelist Henry Clay Morrison, he enrolled at Asbury College. Later in life Jones would express ambivalence about both the adequacy of his training at Asbury and implicitly the narrowness of the Southern White Holiness worldview.

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<sup>7</sup>Bernard DeVoto, *The Western Paradox: A Conservation Reader*, edited by Douglas Brinkley and Patricia Limerick, with a foreword by Arthur S. Schlesinger, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 183.

An academic career that begins with an entire course devoted to *Butler's Analogy* did not seem ideally suited for someone whose primary intent as a student was on mastering the oratorical techniques required of a first-rate Holiness evangelist. Still, Jones, as he insisted years later, believed that he had been “providentially” guided to Asbury. The two emphasizes of Asbury that would remain with him were passions for an authentic warm-hearted Christian experience and trans-national evangelism.

As Jones insightfully notes, “Asbury was not held together by a cantankerous conservatism, witch-hunting for heresy . . . [but] a common experience of the fullness of the Holy Ghost.” It was at Asbury among “those rougher and more emotional Kentuckians” that the future evangelist had the inner fetters of his sense of intellectual superiority burned away in an intense spiritual experience that he likened to Pentecost. “I was free—free from the herd and its superiorities and inferiorities,” he remembered.<sup>8</sup>

In brief, following graduation from Asbury, Jones served as a missionary pastor in Lucknow, India (1907-1911). In 1915 he experienced a physical and emotional breakdown. Convinced that he had not been called to defend the western evangelical faith he had inherited, Jones now merely introduced Indians to a Christ who both transcended national and cultural boundaries and yet paradoxically sought incarnation within these very cultures. His 1925 book the *Christ of the Indian Road* became an international bestseller. It expresses his mature Christological reflections.

Continuing his intentional effort to root Christianity in indigenous social institutions, Jones created the first Christian ashram, modeled after Hindu spiritual retreats in 1930. Fascinated by the popularity of Marxism among intellectuals and within the colonial independence movements, Jones visited Russia in 1934. Convinced that the west had much to learn from Marxism, Jones nevertheless believed that Christ’s teachings, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount and in the biblical materials articulat-

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<sup>8</sup>On Jones please see David Bundy, “The Kingdom of God in the Theology of E. Stanley Jones,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (1988), 58-80. See also Douglas M. Strong, *They Walked in the Spirit: Personal Faith and Social Action in America* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 77-89. The actual biographical material is drawn from my entry for Jones in the *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 146-147, edited by William C. Kostlevy, Gari-Anne Patzwald Associate Editor. The quotations are from Jones, *Song of Ascent*, 67, 71.

ing the present and coming Kingdom of God, provided a superior model of social regeneration. In *Christ's Alternative to Communism* (1935), *The Choice Before Us* (1937), and *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* (1940), Jones outlined his vision for a non-capitalist egalitarian social order.

On furlough in the United States in the early 1940s, Jones directly confronted America's history of racial segregation. In his 1944 book *The Christ of the American Road*, Jones urged African-Americans to employ Gandhi-style civil disobedience to achieve equality in American society. A friend of Gandhi, Jones wrote *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* following the Indian leader's assassination. An immensely popular author and perhaps the most popular evangelist of the late 1930s and 1940s, Jones never lacked high-profile critics. These critics included a virtual popular front of such unlikely allies as principal neo-orthodox figures, evangelicals, and some holiness evangelists such as John Paul whose own personal contribution to the inter-racial movement had been the attempted segregation of the Taylor University dining hall during the 1920s. He was dismissed as a naïve liberal by writers as diverse as Walter Horton, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Keswick author Robert C. McQuilkin. Even my copy of *The Christ of the Indian Road*, which was once owned by the late great Menonite theologian John C. Wenger (and Westminster Seminary graduate it should be noted), contains the disclaimer, "read with discrimination."

### **The Chiliasm of Hope or Why Niebuhr Understood Jones and Most Wesleyans Do Not**

The Jones-Niebuhr feud, as close as I can tell, was initiated by Stanley Jones himself in his account of his 1934 trip to the USSR, *Christ's Alternative to Communism*. As Jones wrote: "When Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr says that the new day cannot be accomplished except by force—and by force he must mean military force—he definitely throws away the Christian weapons and the takes the Marxian. . . . When the Crusaders waded through blood to capture the holy city of Jerusalem from the Moslems, they found that Christ was not there. He had been lost in the very weapons used."<sup>9</sup>

Niebuhr's response was both curt and direct. Writing several months later, he dismissed the book as "the most perfect swan song of liberal politics." The very suggestion that the "Lord's Year of Jubilee may be nearer than we suppose" was another example of the "sentimental hopes" of a per-

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<sup>9</sup>E. Stanley Jones, *Christ's Alternative to Communism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1935), 177.

factly irrelevant “liberal Christian.” In 1937, Jones responded, “Niebuhr is right when he says that the conflict between Christianity and Communism is a contest between a religion with an inadequate political strategy and a social idealism which falsely raises a political strategy to the heights of a religion. But we do not admit that no adequate political strategy is at hand. . . . Give us the method of Democracy with no reservation as to its full application, and the Kingdom-of-God motive behind it, and the program of the Kingdom of God on earth before it and we can remake the earth.”<sup>10</sup>

As Niebuhr suggested, Jones clearly believed that the Kingdom of God was intended to be a literal reality occurring on earth among those now living. As the writings of Jones’ Asbury mentors make clear, chiliastic ruminations were the common currency of the early twentieth-century movement. However, the radicalism of early twentieth-century holiness millennialism has far more in common with Medieval, Reformation era, and English Civil War social radicals than mid and late twentieth-century popular apocalyptic writers. To understand that continuity, one needs to return to the actual views of Henry Clay Morrison and L. L. Pickett (whose home Jones lived in while a student at Asbury College). Interestingly, while both had embraced premillennialism, they remained deeply committed to key elements of the populism of William Jennings Bryan. In 1901 Pickett wrote, “He who denied Himself and became poor and homeless . . . for the salvation of men will judge the covetousness and selfishness which hoards while others hunger, bloats while others beg, and fattens while others starve.” As Southern Democrats inspired by the populism commonly associated with William Jennings Bryan, they were hardly given in E. P. Thompson’s telling phrase to the “chiliasm of despair.” In fact, during the first year that Jones lived in the Pickett house in Wilmore, Kentucky. L. L. Pickett was working on a manuscript published in 1903 as *The Renewed Earth or the Coming and Reign of Jesus Christ*. In it Pickett insists that during the coming millennial reign the “poor of the earth shall be the possessors of the kingdom, the glory, the honor and wealth of nations.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1935), 162. E. Stanley Jones, *The Choice Before Us* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1937), 134.

<sup>11</sup>On the radicalism of Bryan, see Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Alfred a. Knopf, 2006). L. L. Pickett, *The Blessed Hope of His Glorious Appearing* (Louisville: Pickett Publishing Company, 1901), 37-38 and Pickett’s *The Renewal of the Earth or the Coming Reign of Jesus Christ* (Louisville: Pickett Publishing Company, 1903), 30-31.

The intensity of Pickett's radicalism is evident in his 1902 visit to explore the Metropolitan Holiness Church (later Metropolitan Church Association) in Chicago. One of the dozens of Holiness Movement related communal societies that flourished in the early twentieth century, the MCA taught that the truly sanctified following Acts 2 would live communally. Interestingly, Pickett rejected the MCA for its "censorious spirit" and its insistence that faithful Christians would come out of denominational churches, not the MCA's rejection of private property. Pickett himself believed that one of Jesus' first millennial acts would be the redistribution of property. As he had observed in 1896, people with "two houses, needless horses or extra farms" had a natural distaste for and an appropriate fear of the approaching Second Advent of the Nazarene. As Pickett's associate Henry Clay Morrison would note in the 1930s, people with "massive cathedrals . . . palaces for residences . . . large salaries for ministering in soft speech to worldly or wealthy congregations" would naturally have little enthusiasm for the return of Jesus "the worker." Scholars familiar with indigenous American radical movements of the late nineteenth century will recognize that the reference to "extra farms" would have been a familiar theme to supporters of Henry George (1833-1897).<sup>12</sup>

A Kentucky native and a Bryan enthusiast, Morrison looked forward to the returning Messiah who would give the poor land, destroy concentrated wealth, and bring peace. "For a number of years," Morrison wrote, "the country has been largely dominated by and many of its citizens of the poor laboring classes have been enslaved by a heartless capitalism." As Morrison argued, the Old Testament prophecies of Micah and Isaiah suggested otherwise. God promised a literal liberation for the poor now living to be inaugurated in the near future by Jesus. True to this heritage of holiness radicalism that looked to Jesus for liberation, E. Stanley Jones found much that was familiar in the promises of Communism.<sup>13</sup>

Seventy years after it was written, *Christ's Alternative to Communism* is a very interesting read. "We expect Christianity," Jones wrote, "to outlast Communism because it has a deeper and a more meaningful uni-

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<sup>12</sup>L. L. Pickett, *Our Lord Cometh* (Louisville: Pickett Publishing Company, 1896), 52-56. The Morrison quotation is from H. C. Morrison, *Will God Set Up a Visible Kingdom on Earth?* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing Co., 1934), 106-107. The phrase "Jesus the Worker" comes from Salvation Army hero Samuel Logan Brengle.

<sup>13</sup>Morrison, *Will God Set Up a Visible Kingdom on Earth?*, 135-136.

verse and a firmer ground for believing in man.” As Jones insisted, “materialism in the end will lack dynamic.” Christianity, he believed, offered humanity a goal, the Kingdom of God on earth—a Kingdom without poverty, classes and sickness, inaugurated by the Lord’s Jubilee and empowered not by human effort but the Spirit of God.<sup>14</sup>

As the noted evangelist makes clear in *The Choice before Us*, the choice among Fascism, Communism, and Christianity presents Christianity with a real opportunity. As Jones’ argued, Christianity actual has elements of a real social program, one announced at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in his “Nazareth Manifesto.” It is a manifesto that includes “good news to the poor,” release to the captives, freedom to the physically disinherited, setting at liberty the morally and spiritually disinherited, proclaiming the Lord’s Year of Jubilee, all of this empowered by the “Spirit of the Lord.” Further (and, of course, this is Niebuhr’s real objection to Jones’ perfectionism) the methods to bring about the Kingdom must be consistent with the Spirit of Christ. In other words, Christians could not use force and war. The reconstruction of economic, social, and political spheres requires means consistent with the intended ends.<sup>15</sup>

How would the Kingdom come? It would come, the mature Jones argued, by “gradualism” and “apocalypticism.” The coming of the Kingdom is both like the leaven that gradually works throughout the loaf and the thief who comes suddenly in the night. “While gradualism gives us our task,” Jones insisted, “the apocalyptic gives us our hope.” In *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* a direct response to the skepticism of Niebuhr and other so-called Christian realists, Jones admitted that “the idea of liberalism has been smashed on a million battlefields.” “There was a time” Jones admitted, “when I was afraid of the apocalyptic side of the coming kingdom. I now see my mistake.” It had been the mistake of liberalism’s urging of Christians to “build the kingdom.” People are told “to see, to enter, to receive” the kingdom, not to create it. It is merely accepting God’s reign and God’s values. As he argued “the Kingdom of God is our nature—our real nature, the way we are made to work.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Jones, *Christ’s Alternative to Communism*, 194.

<sup>15</sup>Jones, *The Choice Before Us*, 36-41. It should be noted that John Howard Yoder indicates that his famous contention in the influential *Politics of Jesus* that Jesus was proclaiming a year of Jubilee was proposed by Jones in *Christ’s Alternative to Communism*. See Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 36.

<sup>16</sup>E. Stanley Jones, *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1940), 61-62.

## Conclusion

In fairness, the new apocalyptic that emerges from the thought of the mature E. Stanley Jones has dropped certain elements from the older chiliasm of Pickett and Morrison. It eschews speculative eschatology and assumes a certain degree of human agency. Nevertheless, Jones shares a common hope with the old premillennial optimism of his Asbury mentors. The promises of the Old Testament prophets and actual teachings of Jesus are more than ideals. They are relevant for people now living. As Jones wrote in one of his devotional books, “some theological students asked a prominent Christian [Niebuhr I suspect] why he had abandoned his former position against war for one of moral approval. In reply, he unfolded a map of Europe, pointed to it, and said, ‘that map is my reason.’ He got his morals from a map . . . he looked to the Nazis instead of the Nazarene. . . . The Christian begins with Christ and works from Him out to problems.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1946), 323.

# DON E. SALIERS AND REFORM OF LITURGICAL TEXTS IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

by

J. Barrington Bates

Liturgical language: What is it? What defines it? How does it shape the worshipping community? What principles guide it? This essay serves as an attempt to foster a conversation about these fundamental concerns. Curiously, the Christian church has made little effort to address these issues in any systematic way. Conservative voices seek to preserve the majesty and magnificence of a poetic idiom of yesteryear. On the other hand, progressives, seeking to establish justice and equity, have advanced issues of inclusion and expansive imagery. Can we find resonance between these two agenda?

## Change Brings Conflict

Invoking such fundamental Reformation principles as a need to worship God in the vernacular, revisers of liturgical texts have sought to edit out archaic, quaint, and misleading language. This modernization process has sometimes produced regrettable results. David Martin says it quite plainly, if abruptly: “The jingles of the new liturgy and guitar music may have a place when it comes to creating camaraderie, but they allow no approach to the *mysterium tremendum*.”<sup>1</sup> In an introduction to supplemen-

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<sup>1</sup>David Martin, “Personal Identity and a Changed Church,” in David Martin and Peter Mullen, eds., *No Alternative: The Prayer Book Controversy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 20.

tal texts authorized in the Episcopal Church in 1997, Phoebe Pettingill writes of seeking an “American vernacular that would expand the language and metaphors we use to speak of and to God.” As she puts it, “ears attuned to contemporary language and culture grew uncomfortable with liturgical metaphors and forms of address, inherited largely from the 18th and 19th centuries, in which God is primarily envisioned as a kind of *Paterfamilias*.”<sup>2</sup>

Updating images and metaphors seems a benign task, yet this effort to revise what some might term obsolete language has produced considerable discord. A tendency toward increasing polarization is evident in various denominations in our time—and not only with regard to liturgical language. Discussion of the words we use in worship inevitably brings debate over issues of authority. By whose authority are changes effected? How do we authorize deviations from what, to some, appear as biblical norms?

Debate about authority has led to unfortunate results—such as within the Anglican communion, where the Archbishop of Nigeria has declared the Archbishop of Canterbury to be a heretic, or in the United Methodist Church, where a pastor’s exclusion of gay people from membership was upheld by the church’s high court. Discussing issues of language often leads to conflict over doctrine, with opposing parties sometimes almost coming to blows. Herein lies the conundrum—for doctrine is only the work of humans, work designed to enhance our understanding of the divine. As Don Saliers has said, “Theologians may formulate beautiful systems of doctrine, but if they do not signal the paradox of God’s glory in the cross, such systems are totally inadequate.”<sup>3</sup>

Our language is part of an inherited tradition. To what extent is it a human invention or a divine gift? For instance, through language we speak of the coming of Christ in glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead. Such language seems to make manifest our *lack* of specific knowledge and clear understanding, rather than to describe future events in their particulars. “To speak of the end of history is to go beyond the

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<sup>2</sup>Phoebe Pettingill, “Introduction,” in Standing Liturgical Commission, *Enriching Our Worship* (New York: Church Publishing, 1998), 7-8. A *Paterfamilias* is a man in the role of father and head of a household.

<sup>3</sup>Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 42.

limits of language,”<sup>4</sup> Saliers says. Yet many would presume to understand exactly how this end-of-the-world scenario will unfold. The interest among some Christian evangelicals in rebuilding Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem is one example of this. Constructing the temple anew, they claim, would signify the imminent return of Jesus. While diplomats worry that such an effort would encourage Jewish extremists groups to sabotage Muslim religious sites at the historical location of the temple and risk a Middle Eastern apocalypse, some Christian groups call specifically for this—insisting that the apocalypse would not be nuclear but divine, and will result in the coming of God’s kingdom, on earth as in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

All of this speculative debate leads to conflict. We appear to be far from St. Paul’s call to walk in love, as Christ loved us. Yet, as Knight and Saliers have said, “doctrinal conflicts will not simply disappear if ignored—. . . the ongoing discussion of doctrine is vital to faithful discipleship, Christian maturity, and integrity in mission.”<sup>6</sup> All the debate, discussion, and discord appears mostly to engage one fringe group with its polar opposite, while most of those in the pews seem disinterested in what they consider the unimportant details. The large number of those caught in the middle are not infrequently concerned about

. . . the angry and bitter tone of debate by some on either side of these issues. Many “centrists” have grown indifferent if not adverse to questions about essential doctrines; some because theological squabbles seem abstract and distracting from the real work of the church; others because they have never had the opportunity or the environment for sustained reflection their beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, those who want to revise liturgical texts and those who seek to hold them static are engaged in a conflict that often is not constructive or shared by the majority of worshippers.

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<sup>4</sup>Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 225.

<sup>5</sup>Y. Ariel, “Doomsday in Jerusalem? Christian Messianic Groups and the Rebuilding of the Temple,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13: 1 (Spring 2001), 14.

<sup>6</sup>Henry H Knight III and Don E. Saliers, *The Conversation Matters: Why United Methodists Should Talk with One Another* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>7</sup>Knight and Saliers, *Conversation*, 13.

What exactly are the issues? For one thing, the starting point. As Saliers so eloquently puts it:

To declare loyalty to the God of Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and Jesus of Nazareth is to find one's existence oriented in the attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and intentions which target that God and no other god. To confess faith here means that the confessor is oriented in gratitude, trust, and obedience to the biblical God. That is to say, for anyone confessing faith in the sense relevant to our concerns, the God witnessed in the Scriptures and by the central Church tradition is their proper worship.<sup>8</sup>

Sorting out the attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and intentions that target God and no other god—that is no small objective. Orienting oneself to gratitude, trust, and obedience to the biblical God forms the fulcrum of major doctrinal disagreements currently. What are the implications of these issues with regard to liturgical language?

For many, the loss of uniformity in liturgical prayer has been confusing. For others, the variety has been a refreshing discovery. Consequently, many of us are struggling to understand the meaning and point of prayer in relation to traditional theology as well as to the unsettling forces in contemporary experience.<sup>9</sup>

One traditionalist Episcopalian of my acquaintance has managed to convince his parish priest in northern Michigan to celebrate the rite of the 1928 prayer book once a month, insisting that the 1979 rite is “too confusing” because it allows for a small number of options. “The bodily memory of having knelt at an altar rail, or of sitting in a specific place becomes part of the theological significance of the rites,”<sup>10</sup> according to Saliers. This may account for some of the tenacity with which the traditional rite is championed.

Curiously, as it is enacted in northern Michigan today, the 1928 rite is much more like the 1979 rite than the historical pattern of 1928. No one

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<sup>8</sup>Don E. Saliers, “Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings,” in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch before God*, E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, eds. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 15.

<sup>9</sup>Don E. Saliers, *The Soul in Paraphrase: Prayer and the Religious Affections* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 2.

<sup>10</sup>Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 159.

seems to notice or remember. The worshippers stand when they used to kneel, they join in prayers and proclaim readings that were previously the exclusive provenance of the clergy, and they make considerably more seasonal adjustments than the 1928 rite allowed. Perhaps, in their own way, this congregation in northern Michigan is slowly coming to terms with the conclusion that “faithfulness to the apostolic truth requires a new presentation of the gospel”<sup>11</sup>—even if that new presentation has a deliberately old cast to it. “*How* we pray and worship is linked to how we live—to our emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and actions,”<sup>12</sup> Saliers tells us. Changes in worship may, therefore, imply changes in attitudes, beliefs, even moral values. Therefore, holding to the tradition one inherited at birth helps cement the glue of moral society—at least that’s the argument advanced by my conservative friend.

According to Saliers, “worship is something Christians do together, not just because of religious duty, but because it is their way of remembering and expressing their life unto God.”<sup>13</sup> Does this still hold true if people remember inaccurately? Or, are these folks accepting *part* of the change, while holding fast to a core text they believe is sacred? The “inherited ways of speaking”<sup>14</sup> may have more weight simply because they are believed to be inherited. There is a risk with holding fast to fixed patterns, unvarying ritual, and traditional texts: “we may suddenly catch ourselves at prayer, saying the old familiar religious words, and it may strike us that these are empty gestures.”<sup>15</sup> The act of remembering is more than sticking to inherited patterns—and can itself manifest an erroneous memory.

Saliers asserts that “remembering is constitutive of faith itself and not a mere elaboration of beliefs already held.”<sup>16</sup> It is a living memory, one that charges each Christian with remembering events that took place thousands of years ago. But only by appropriating the tradition and incor-

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<sup>11</sup>Lukas Vischer, “How Does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today?” in Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng, eds., *Concilium: Religion in the Eighties*, No. 148, “Who Has the Say in the Church?” (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 6.

<sup>12</sup>Saliers, “Liturgy and Ethics,” 16.

<sup>13</sup>Saliers, “Liturgy and Ethics,” 17.

<sup>14</sup>Saliers, *Soul in Paraphrase*, 6.

<sup>15</sup>Saliers, *The Soul in Paraphrase*, 1.

<sup>16</sup>Don E. Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 19.

porating it into one's being does one make manifest the image of God. He concludes: "Without living remembrance of the whole biblical story there would be no authentic worship, nor could there be such a thing as becoming a living reminder of Jesus Christ for others."<sup>17</sup> Remembering appropriately is much more than repeating the memory of one's childhood. But how does one measure or evaluate the extent to which a rite is faithful to such living remembrance in our generation? Consider this:

The more one learns to express awe and thanks and to cry out for mercy to God, the more one is plunged into the depths of what it is to be human. At the same time, the more one sounds the depths of human experience, the more one finds the mystery of God unfolding.<sup>18</sup>

Seeking to make manifest this mystery is an awesome and ongoing challenge.

### Principles of Evaluation

In *Worship Come to Its Senses*, Don E. Saliers asks what makes Christian worship true and relevant, expressing authentic Christian faith and life.<sup>19</sup> He answers his own question by positing four essential qualities: awe, delight, truthfulness, and hope. Noting that Christian worship is physically, socially, and culturally embodied, he wonders if much of contemporary American worship—Protestant and Roman Catholic alike—has become domesticated. Worship that is "pleasant, even user-friendly" can hardly evoke awe.<sup>20</sup> Only by recovering and deepening a sense of awe will Christians be able to make connections between what happens when we gather in the worshipping assembly and what happens in our everyday, hence primary experience in life.

Saliers insists that we also must learn to cultivate a need for wonder, gladness, and delight along with our hopes, fears, hurts, and longings.<sup>21</sup> We settle for so little, he claims, because we bring so little with us to worship. "It is easy in North American consumerist culture to confuse delight

<sup>17</sup>Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 18.

<sup>18</sup>Don E. Saliers and Emily Saliers, *A Song to Sing, a Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2005), 16.

<sup>19</sup>Don E. Saliers, *Worship Come to Its Senses* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 14.

<sup>20</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 20.

<sup>21</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 36.

with entertainment or the frivolity of mere self-expression,” he claims.<sup>22</sup> This may result from a kind of separation in the lives of the faithful—between their Sunday worshipping selves and their rest-of-the-time selves. Saliers says:

There is so much difference between coming to be entertained—to simply receive a shot of grace or good advice for the coming week—and bringing all of our life to the table of the Word and the meal. . . . To gather in the name of Jesus to praise God and to hear with delight and awe what God speaks and does in our midst is to come to the place where duty and delight embrace.<sup>23</sup>

When the whole range of our senses is activated by the Word and sacramental signs of God, life comes to worship, and worship comes alive.<sup>24</sup>

He insists that truth is likewise essential to the integrity of worship. Honesty is not enough since honesty must always keep company with humility.<sup>25</sup> Truthfulness is risky, says Saliers—especially for those who wish to remain polite with God and nice with one another—because sometimes truth hurts.

Further, liturgical worship today rarely offers the occasion to express pain and anguish honestly and deeply, says Saliers. This can hinder the movement of grace between lament and praise.<sup>26</sup> In other words, our domesticated liturgies have prevented honest expression of our full humanity.

For too long we have denied the need for real confession and forgiveness, often substituting easy talk about our basic goodness for a truthful understanding of who we are in the presence of God. . . . [S]peaking to God and to one another about what holds us in bondage is liberating. That much therapy knows. But Christian liturgy offers more: grace which frees us to live, to serve, to worship with all that we are—including our shadow side.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 47.

<sup>23</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 42.

<sup>24</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 46.

<sup>25</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 55.

<sup>26</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 60.

<sup>27</sup>Saliers, *Senses*, 61.

Noting also that some confuse hope with optimism, Saliers insists that our worship must not simply comfort and console. If it does not kindle in us a yearning for the divine promises, then worship is empty and meaningless. The problem for many, however, “is not with the theological claim that hope is necessary and central. The problem is that, for many, our public worship of God seems not to arouse and nourish the kind of hope the gospel proclaims.”<sup>28</sup> Saliers lays out a number of reasons why worship sometimes fails to build us up in hope, including a lack of deeper participation, when the primary aim is to entertain or dramatically manipulate a congregation.

Citing interviews he has completed, Saliers reports three primary manifestations of one primary concern—a wish to avoid the demands of faith. This manifests itself in three factors that his interviewees report prevent their deeper participation in worship: (1) when worship is “done *for* us”; (2) when worship is “done *to* us”; and (3) when “we don’t understand what is going on.”<sup>29</sup> Without active participation, hope remains talked about, not internalized. The tendency to entertain can prevent people’s attainment of hope. Noting that all authentic worship possesses a certain dramatic element, Saliers observes that something intrinsic to worship is lost when the focus is entirely on eliciting a response from the pews.<sup>30</sup> In other words, entertaining the faithful may occur as part of a liturgical gathering, but it must never be an explicit objective—or else the essential element of hope may be obscured and even lost entirely.

Finally, in *Worship Come to Its Senses*, Saliers notes a general lack of catechetical education, and cites this as a reason for both lack of participation and increased need for entertainment. In his 1984 work *Worship and Spirituality*, he asserts that “remembering is essential to our sense of history.”<sup>31</sup> From this, one asks if such remembering is somehow basic to liturgy and liturgical texts. If so, how? While positing that “remembering is essential to our sense of identity,”<sup>32</sup> Saliers nonetheless notes that our memories “can be misleading, even deceitful at times.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, establishing that a memory is *authentic* is paramount.

<sup>28</sup> Saliers, *Senses*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Saliers, *Senses*, 73.

<sup>30</sup> Saliers, *Senses*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> Don E. Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 16.

<sup>32</sup> Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 17.

Without living remembrance of the whole biblical story there would be no authentic worship, nor could there be such a thing as becoming a living reminder of Jesus Christ for others. . . . Stories of creation, covenant, and redemption, visions recalled, encounters proclaimed, prophecies uttered, God's mercies celebrated—all these are part of the corporate memories of a religious tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, we must establish to what extent historical facts and doctrinal claims contained within liturgical texts are faithful to God's truth. As Ulrich Kühn reminds us, reiterating a fundamental Reformation principle, "there is as yet not definitive guarantee . . . that the Church remains in the truth."<sup>35</sup>

In another principle for liturgical language, Saliers favors praise and thanksgiving over other types of expression. If the primary mode of prayer in all Jewish and Christian ritual begins in praise and thanksgiving,<sup>36</sup> how can we ascertain if the level of praise and thanksgiving is sufficient? While this may well boil down to a judgment call, we can nevertheless analyze a text to see whether there are any aspects of praise and thanksgiving, how important they appear in the context, and to what extent they appear to be the primary focus of prayer.

In addition, Saliers tells us that questions concerning "Christian ethics and the shape of the moral life cannot be adequately understood apart from thinking about how Christians worship."<sup>37</sup> Although he does not call for this explicitly, perhaps looking at a text through the filter of ethics is warranted. Does the prayer text promote a moral life, and, if so, how well? Some of these same principles are reiterated in Saliers's 1994 book, *Worship as Theology*, in which he clearly lays out four "modes" of prayer. These modes exist in the liturgy, he says, to form us in our own primary humanity before God. While he mentions them in an order from which one could infer a hierarchy, he appears to hold them as four basic modes, without preferential ranking.

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<sup>34</sup>Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 18.

<sup>35</sup>Ulrich Kühn, "A Lutheran Response," in Moltmann and Küng, *Concilium*, 23.

<sup>36</sup>Don E. Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings," in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Strength before God*, E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, eds. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 19.

<sup>37</sup>Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics," 15.

Saliers's first mode of prayer is *the language of gratitude*, blessing, and thanking God. Sometimes found in the "ancient utterances given to us by God in liturgy," the "pathos of praise" is not a statement of information, but a gesture of blessing and thanking God.<sup>38</sup> By naming God in this way, by offering our gratitude, our daily lives are opened to God's grace. The second mode of prayer is *the language of speaking the truth in love*.<sup>39</sup> Why is it, Saliers asks, that church communities can destroy themselves in gossip, innuendo, and xenophobia when the words of our worship address the God from whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden? Honesty with God, with ourselves, and with our neighbor is precisely the standard to which Jesus calls us.

The third mode of prayer is *liturgy as a school for remembering who God has promised to be*.<sup>40</sup> This mode of prayer not only serves as a corrective for our own forgetfulness, but also calls us to "remember our future" and the glories God has promised for us. And finally, in the fourth mode of prayer, *the liturgy is a continuing prayer of intercession*, a cry on behalf of the whole world, in season and out of season. Describing intercession as being "in dialogue with God about the sufferings and yearnings of the whole inhabited world,"<sup>41</sup> Saliers insists that we intercede on behalf of others just as Jesus intercedes for us.

Such resonance with the real needs of contemporary society may have unforeseen consequences, however. Saliers reminds of us that "when the church marries the spirit of the age, she may be left a widow in the next generation."<sup>42</sup> While he does not state this as an explicit principle, it nevertheless calls us to consider the extent to which there is ongoing continuity with historical tradition as another important aspect of liturgical expression and texts. In this, he echoes a 19th-century sentiment about language. Critiquing Noah Webster's new dictionary of the "American language," Joseph Dennie wrote of innovations in literature as "owing to the stupid vanity of the present day, which induces mankind to despise the well-tried principles of their Ancestors."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Divine Glory* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 31

<sup>39</sup>Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 33.

<sup>40</sup>Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 34.

<sup>41</sup>Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 35, paraphrasing William Inge.

<sup>42</sup>Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 189.

<sup>43</sup>Quoted in Jill Lepore, "Noah's Mark: Webster and the Original Dictionary Wars," *The New Yorker*, 6 November 2006, 80.

In sum, Saliers's long career as a theologian and a scholar has produced a wealth of careful reflection on liturgical language, much of it found published within the covers of works on broader themes. These broader themes resonate throughout his works. Like prophets of yesteryear, again and again he repeats the call. His work reveals a number of specific principles, elaborated above, and culminates in a plea for authentic worship in which the realm of God is revealed out of the deep memory of the Christian people. As he so eloquently puts it:

Authentic worship trains us for the reign of God yet to come in a society of justice and peace. The symbol is given in the midst of suffering and injustice. The vision of the divine rule preached by Jesus is the Kingdom already changing us and yet to come. The mystery hidden from the plain view is found in the worship life of those who choose to remember God with the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and the whole company of those whom God has named. Where there is no deep memory, no participation in the history of suffering and hope, but only sentiment and the recall of fixed experience, there can be no true invocation, thanksgiving, supplication, and sustained hope.<sup>44</sup>

### **Comparative Textual Analysis**

In order to discuss the level to which Saliers' principles have been implemented in recent revisions of texts authorized by the United Methodist Church, I will compare the ritual printed in the back of the 1996 *Methodist Hymnal* with the first Service of Word and Table in *The United Methodist Book of Worship* of 1992. The 1996 rite, of course, is derived from Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer of 1549 and its successive versions. Therefore, it retains a number of Elizabethan and even medieval remnants. That it is our "bounden duty" to praise God would be unquestioned in the era that gave birth to Methodism, but such a phrase hardly finds resonance with today's culture. To modern ears, to be bound is to be oppressed, not to choose to serve. Therefore, this phrase has been amended to "a good and joyful thing." Since many individuals in a consumerist culture want to know what one will get, rather than what one must give, this change is refreshing.

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<sup>44</sup>Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 100.

The 1992 preface includes a brief summary of the history of salvation in lieu of the varying Proper Preface of 1966. This establishes an ecumenical pattern that will be adopted in a number of subsequent rites.<sup>45</sup> This summary states that God “breathed into us the breath of life.” However metaphorical this phrase is intended to be, it evokes wonder and amazement—as it about as bold an assertion as a human can make. In this, there appears to be attention to Saliers’s concern with recovering and deepening a sense of awe.

The 1996 rite continues after the *Sanctus* with an account of the saving action of Jesus Christ—in language worthy of the Reformation (e.g., “the one offering of himself, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice”). Instead of this doctrinal approach, the 1992 rite rehearses Jesus’ action in poetic language drawn from Scripture (“to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives,” etc.).<sup>46</sup> One emphasizes Jesus’ divine sacrifice, the other his earthly ministry. These are both fine things, but the use of metaphoric language and its resonance with Scripture serve to enhance the rite at this point. Again, mandates imposed on us are replaced by undeserved gifts given to us, even showered upon us. In the 1966 rite, Jesus instituted and commanded us to continue the perpetual memory. In the 1992 version, we acknowledge that we were not faithful, but that God nevertheless delivered us from captivity and made a covenant with us. In this, we both accommodate the contemporary culture and acknowledge the pain of our failure.

The rehearsal of salvation history in the 1992 rite can better serve a catechetical purpose, as well. The kinds of theological truths established in this language help the worshiper understand that God created the world, that we are created in God’s image, and that Jesus, the Son of God, was anointed to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and eat with sinners. Although it may seem a small point, it is worth nothing that the rubrical directions that specify postures, directions to face, or other actions increase in number slightly. Some of this, however, may have resulted from more explicit directions in the 1992 rite. For instance, it specifically directs that the bread and wine “are prepared for the meal” in the presence of the worshipping community. In the 1966 rite, these actions were more likely performed in private before the worshipers gathered, and the “elements” are simply uncovered.

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<sup>45</sup>For instance, consider the Episcopal Church’s supplemental Eucharistic Prayer 2 in *Enriching Our Worship* (New York: Church Publishing, 1998), 60.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18-19.

Both prayers contain a version of the Scriptural accounts that serve as a warrant for the eucharist. The *verba Christi* are nearly identical in the two versions, although the narrative surrounding them differs significantly. In the 1966 prayer, the Last Supper is set “in the same night in which he was betrayed,” whereas in 1992 this is referred to as “the night in which he gave himself up for us.” Although the first image has a long provenance, it could also be seen as evil forces acting on and controlling God; this was amended in 1992 to an unambiguous expression of God’s self-sacrifice of love.

After the words of institution, the 1966 rite has the minister kneel before the Lord’s Table and recite the Prayer of Humble Access with the people. “We are not worthy so much as to gather up crumbs under thy table,” all say together. While the prayer derives from the rite of Thomas Cranmer, its placement here strikes one as odd. While it did occupy a position after the eucharistic prayer in the original 1549 rite, this was a source of much debate and discussion.<sup>47</sup> Subsequent Anglican compromise, including the prayer book of 1662, retained the prayer, but *before* the words of institution. This, of course, would be the rite that John Wesley knew.

Instead of Humble Access, the 1992 rite continues with the full “West Syrian” structure for a eucharistic prayer.<sup>48</sup> Consonant with the prevailing Reformation understanding, the version of 1966 contains no explicit epiclesis, ending somewhat abruptly, without so much as a concluding doxology. While theologians as early as Ambrose treat the words of institution as in some way consecratory, it was not until the rite of Martin Luther that this narrative alone was considered sufficient unto itself. In conformity with current ecumenical consensus, therefore, this is amended in 1992.

The prayer of 1992 continues with an anamnesis, in which the church pledges to fulfill Christ’s command. This is followed by a memorial acclamation. To this Anglican, this seems an improvement over our 1979 prayer book, which interjects the memorial acclamation between the

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<sup>47</sup>For example, see J. Barrington Bates, “Stephen Gardiner’s ‘Explication’ and the Identity of the Church,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 72:1, March 2003.

<sup>48</sup> See Byron D. Stuhlman, *A Good and Joyful Thing: The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing, 2000), 158-161.

institution narrative and anamnesis. Instead, the connection is made between Jesus' instruction and our agreement to follow it. This submission, however, hardly has a medieval ring to it, as "we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving," a phrase that both echoes Cranmer's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and gives voice to Saliers's call for pathos of praise. The 1992 rite continues with an invocation of the Holy Spirit over the gifts of bread and wine, explicitly praying, "Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ." Following this is an invocation of the Spirit to unify the people, with the remarkable petition to become "one in ministry to all the world." This resonates with Saliers's call for integrity in mission.

The prayer then concludes with a doxological ending. Again, conforming to ecumenical consensus, the Lord's Prayer follows. In the 1966 rite, the Lord's Prayer is at the beginning of the service, between the Collect for Purity and *Gloria in excelsis*. Although the rite of 1966 contains no explicit fraction, the hymn *Agnus Dei* was permitted to be sung or said. The 1992 rite directs the pastor to break the bread, and then provides an alternative text from Scripture.<sup>49</sup> It also provides explicit "Breaking the Bread" and "Giving the Cup" headings. Clearly, the compilers of the *Book of Worship* have read their Dix, as the fourfold shape of taking, blessing, breaking, and giving is clearly laid out.<sup>50</sup>

In 1966, a verbal exchange of the Peace is followed by the people's sharing of communion. More commonly, the Peace is shared either before the Eucharistic prayer, at the conclusion of the liturgy of the Word, or at the fraction, *before* the reception of communion (or, as in the traditional Cranmerian rite, all but obliterated in its incorporation into the final blessing—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding. . ."). The somewhat unorthodox 1966 position was amended in 1992. Following the Peace, the 1966 rite continues with what Anglicans would recognize from the 1928 American *Book of Common Prayer* as the rest of the eucharistic prayer, nearly word-for-word. One can only surmise that some considered it a victory to include both the Peace and the components of a fuller eucharistic prayer, and therefore were willing to compromise by having these included in such a peculiar location. In lieu of the anamnesis, epiclesis over the people, and concluding doxology of 1966, the rite of 1992

<sup>49</sup> Romans 12:5.

<sup>50</sup> Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: A& C Black, 1945), 48.

ends with a more appropriate prayer of thanksgiving, directed at the people's work and mission in the world.

## Conclusions

A quote from Don E. Saliers sets well the scene for drawing some general conclusions about recent liturgical developments.

There can be little doubt that we are now living through a period of great turmoil and often great confusion concerning Christian worship. Congregations have become visibly polarized or split into several grudging factions over what constituted true worship. Many wish to do away with the old forms and language in the name of relevancy and creativity; others regard any such changes as tampering with "hallowed and sacred" tradition (in some cases scarcely a hundred years old). Those of us given pastoral responsibilities, both clergy and laity, often find ourselves caught in the crossfire, struggling for integrity and understanding. We live in a time of immense liturgical change, resulting from both cultural and theological pressures. Not since the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation has there been so much widespread concern for the reform and renewal of inherited rites and assumed patterns, in both liturgical and free-church traditions.<sup>51</sup>

In this quote, Saliers has laid out two helpful insights that will inform our understanding of the current round of reforms to liturgical texts. First, we have lamentably become more polarized—and this is manifest across denominational lines. Second, the Liturgical Movement that culminated in the 20th century did indeed signal a paradigm shift no less significant than that of the Reformation in the 16th century.

We are left with a kind of logical contradiction. The reforms of the 20th century signaled great health and vitality in the various denominations, and an unprecedented willingness to cooperate ecumenically. While these reforms produced greater collaboration between denominational bodies,<sup>52</sup> they simultaneously generated friction and discord *within* the various groups. In other words, the willingness to engage in theological self-examination, coupled with the vigorous energy that produced such

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<sup>51</sup> Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, 29.

<sup>52</sup> Consider, for example, the Consultation on Common Texts, an informal ecumenical group representing 18 denominations.

monumental change, resulted both in the reform of rites and texts *and* in the unintentional disenfranchisement of some of the faithful.

Is this simply the cost we must pay for progress? Saliers insists that this is not the case, suggesting rather that we come to terms with our human finitude and accept a basic tautology of our mortal existence: “Christians have no other language and gesture, no other music and bodily actions than the human ones we have received and within which we dwell.”<sup>53</sup> Given this quite human constraint, the reforms of the eucharistic rite within the United Methodist Church seem to satisfy Saliers’s concerns for authentic liturgical language. The rite meets Saliers’s criteria for worship that is true and relevant, proclaiming joy and delight, while recognizing hurt and pain. The rite requires fuller participation of the faithful, thereby avoiding the tendency to entertain by presenting a liturgy before them.

The language has been formed so that people may discern what is going on, but also in an idiom that is poetically graceful. The 1992 text establishes some basic theological claims and historical facts (a doctrine of creation, summary of Christ’s earthly ministry, the Christian hope for the second coming among them), helping to establish faithfulness to God’s truth. And the text certainly privileges praise and thanksgiving.

Using this language of gratitude, the 1992 text speaks the truth in love, proclaims who God has promised to be, and continues the universal church’s prayer of intercession on behalf of the whole world. It certainly seems to be the kind of language that may arouse the faithful, although questions of whether it nourishes hope in them or comes alive for them would require their input to ascertain. The 1992 text deviates from its most recent predecessor, but in doing so provides greater continuity with an older tradition and conformity with the contemporary ecumenical consensus. In short, the text fulfills all of Saliers’s requirements for liturgical language.

If anything, the only problem inherent in the newer rite is that it demands the active participation of all the faithful—one of the basic tenets of the Liturgical Movement. This active involvement is called for not only in the rite itself, but—more challengingly—in the call to go forth into the world to give ourselves for others in the name of Jesus Christ. This may yet be more than many contemporary American Christians are

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<sup>53</sup> Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 154.

willing to do. For some, it is so much easier to avoid the demands of faith. Saliers himself admits to personal hesitancy to commit himself, saying, “I find myself at times admitting that I am afraid to take God’s promises for the world seriously, for to do so would change my life too radically.”<sup>54</sup>

In my assessment, the 1992 text of the United Methodist Church helps make the call to mission unmistakable. Christians are beckoned to radical change of life, a process that continues throughout one’s spiritual journey. Daunting though it may be for many, if not most of us, this is the calling of our Lord. Living in the tension between comfortable sustenance and sacrificial service is the vocation of all Christian people, and this rite helps make this clear.

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<sup>54</sup> Saliers, *Senses*, 68.

# **THE HOLINESS MANIFESTO: AN ECUMENICAL DOCUMENT**

by

**Don Thorsen<sup>1</sup>**

The “‘Holiness Manifesto’” is a document written by church leaders and scholars from the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions. It summarizes the heart of Christian holiness beliefs, values, and practices, relevant to the twenty-first century. Holiness, of course, is not a new topic; it is as old as the Bible. Yet, holiness is not always a theme to which Christians are drawn for various reasons.

Authors of the Holiness Manifesto intend that it become a clarion call to the kind of salvation and lifestyle to which God calls all Christians. The terminology is not commonly used these days, but it is believed that holiness encapsulates the totality of God’s nature as well as biblical emphases upon Christian beliefs, values, and practices. As such, it serves as a unifying or ecumenical document both for Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions, and for other Christians, churches, and denominations. Although the pursuit of Christian unity is an ongoing process, the Holiness Manifesto serves to unite disparate church and theological traditions as well as to promote the biblical emphasis upon the holiness of God and God’s call for Christians to be holy.

I want to begin by talking about the creation of the Holiness Manifesto through the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project. I will continue by talking about the ecumenical dynamic that is growing among Christians

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and churches from the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions. Finally, I will talk about the potential of the Holiness Manifesto for promoting unity and cooperation among all Christians, churches, and denominations by affirming God's holiness and the fullness of holiness that God provides for people.

### **Wesleyan Holiness Study Project**

In 2003, Kevin Mannoia, then Dean of the School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University, envisioned a collaborative effort on the part of Wesleyan and Holiness denominations to reconceive and promote biblical holiness for the twenty-first century. To this end, Mannoia secured from these denominations the financial as well as conceptual support for the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (WHSP). The WHSP would take place over a three-year period (2004-2006). Denominations would send up to three representatives, including administrators, scholars, and pastors to participate in the study. Representatives at the initial meeting of the WHSP in 2004 came from the following denominations:

- Brethren in Christ
- Church of God, Anderson, Indiana
- Church of the Nazarene
- Evangelical Friends Church
- Free Methodist Church
- Salvation Army
- Shield of Faith

Most participants came from traditional Wesleyan and Holiness denominations, with the addition of representatives from the Evangelical Friends Church Southwest and the Shield of Faith, a holiness Pentecostal denomination. Independent members of the Wesleyan Church participated in the WHSP; however, the denomination did not formally participate. Although a variety of outcomes were considered by a planning committee before the WHSP began, the project participants largely determined the goals and work they undertook. The planning committee included David Bundy, Don Dayton, Lisa Dorsey, Bill Kostlevy, Kevin Mannoia (chair), and Don Thorsen.

One of the more creative goals was the writing of a short document, which would summarize the WHSP's view of holiness in order to distill its relevance for the twenty-first century. Among several assignments par-

## THE HOLINESS MANIFESTO: AN ECUMENICAL DOCUMENT

ticipants gave to themselves, one was for them to write short descriptions of holiness to be shared the following year. In 2005, half a dozen descriptions were written, discussed, and summarized by the WHSP. Their work became the foundation of the eventual writing of the Holiness Manifesto.

Another goal of the WHSP was to invite additional participants, including those from denominations that promoted holiness or had historic ties with the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions. The denominations that participated at subsequent meetings of the WHSP include the following:

- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Church of God in Christ
- International Church of the Foursquare
- International Pentecostal Holiness Church

Noteworthy were a growing number of Pentecostal churches, that identified with holiness as an emphasis in their beliefs, values, and practices. The United Methodist Church sent an official observer to the WHSP, who participated in the study. Thus, a wide variety of voices were heard over the three years, voices that were heard, understood, and incorporated into the goals and work of the WHSP.

The summary document created by the WHSP was the Holiness Manifesto. It drew upon bits and pieces of the short descriptions written by participants. However, the majority of it was written by more than forty participants in the WHSP. Modifications were written over the last two years of the study project, and they included input from dozens of local pastors, district superintendents, and others. However, pastors were especially invited in order to help them understand the message of holiness and its power to engage and transform individuals, churches, and communities.

Immediately following the second and third gatherings of the WHSP (2005-2006), Kevin Mannoia organized a minister's conference called "Holiness in the Twenty-first Century." At the minister's conferences, participants heard from numerous speakers and forums from denominations. Speakers from outside representative denominations were also invited to speak on the message of holiness, including Robert Schuler and George Barna. All the participants were invited to read, discuss, and offer comments on the Holiness Manifesto. Such input helped make the document more understandable and relevant to a wide audience—one that reached out to everyone in the twenty-first century.

The full text of the Holiness Manifesto follows. It is not a finished document; its work needs to continue in order to communicate holiness effectively to different peoples, places, and times. Participants in the WHSP were well aware that their views reflect the limitations of their North American context. Although a great deal of denominational diversity was present, there was not as much gender and ethnic diversity as desired, although such diversity was present in the WHSP. There certainly were not representatives from outside North America. Perhaps such representation can occur in the future.

The Holiness Manifesto is divided into three sections: The Crisis We Face; The Message We Have; and The Action We Take. It was hoped that the document would function like a manifesto, publicly challenging people with the biblical emphasis upon holiness, and making it as accessible as possible to a broad readership. Following is its full text. It was written by participants in the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (2004-2006) meeting on the campus of Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California, and will be published in an anthology titled *The Holiness Manifesto* edited by Kevin Mannoia and Don Thorsen.

### **The Holiness Manifesto<sup>2</sup>**

**The Crisis We Face.** There has never been a time in greater need of a compelling articulation of the message of holiness. Pastors and church leaders at every level of the church have come to new heights of frustration in seeking ways to revitalize their congregations and denominations. What we are doing is not working. Membership in churches of all traditions has flat-lined. In many cases, churches are declining. We are not even keeping pace with the biological growth rate in North America. The power and health of churches has also been drained by the incessant search for a better method, a more effective fad, a newer and bigger program to yield growth. In the process of trying to lead growing, vibrant churches, our people have become largely ineffective and fallen prey to a generic Chris-

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<sup>2</sup>The “Holiness Manifesto” was written by participants in the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (2004-2006), and it was completed at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California, February 2006. This document is the most up-to-date version, and it will be published in an anthology titled *The Holiness Manifesto*, edited by Kevin Mannoia and Don Thorsen. An early version of the ‘Holiness Manifesto’ can be found on the Holiness and Unity website <[http://holinessandunity.org/fs/fileadmin/hau/text/Holiness\\_Manifesto\\_Feb\\_2006.pdf](http://holinessandunity.org/fs/fileadmin/hau/text/Holiness_Manifesto_Feb_2006.pdf)>.

tianity that results in congregations that are indistinguishable from the culture around them. Churches need a clear, compelling message that will replace the “holy grail” of methods as the focus of our mission.

Many church leaders have become hostages to the success mentality of numeric and programmatic influence. They have become so concerned about “how” they do church that they have neglected the weightier matter of “what” the church declares. We have inundated the “market” with methodological efforts to grow the church. In the process, many of our leaders have lost the ability to lead. They cannot lead because they have no compelling message to give, no compelling vision of God, no transformational understanding of God’s otherness. They know it and long to find the centering power of a message that makes a difference. Now more than ever, they long to soak up a deep understanding of God’s call to holiness—transformed living. They want a mission. They want a message!

People all around are looking for a future without possessing a spiritual memory. They beg for a generous and integrative word from Christians that makes sense and makes a difference. If God is going to be relevant to people, we have a responsibility to make it clear to them. We have to shed our obsession with cumbersome language, awkward expectations, and intransigent patterns. What is the core, the center, the essence of God’s call? That is our message, and that is our mission!

People in churches are tired of our petty lines of demarcation that artificially create compartments, denominations, and divisions. They are tired of building institutions. They long for a clear, articulate message that transcends institutionalism and in-fighting among followers of Jesus Christ. They are embarrassed by the corporate mentality of churches that defend parts of the gospel as if it were their own. They want to know the unifying power of God that transforms. They want to see the awesomeness of God’s holiness that compels us to oneness in which there is a testimony of power. They accept the fact that not all of us will look alike; there will be diversity. But they want to know that churches and leaders believe that we are one—bound by the holy character of God who gives us all life and love. They want a message that is unifying. The only message that can do that comes from the nature of God, who is unity in diversity.

Therefore, in this critical time, we set forth for the church’s well being a fresh focus on holiness. In our view, this focus is the heart of Scripture concerning Christian existence for all times—and clearly for our time.

**The Message We Have.** God is holy and calls us to be a holy people. God, who is holy, has abundant and steadfast love for us. God's holy love is revealed to us in the life and teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. God continues to work, giving life, hope and salvation through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, drawing us into God's own holy, loving life. God transforms us, delivering us from sin, idolatry, bondage, and self-centeredness to love and serve God, others, and to be stewards of creation. Thus, we are renewed in the image of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Apart from God, no one is holy. Holy people are set apart for God's purpose in the world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, holy people live and love like Jesus Christ. Holiness is both gift and response, renewing and transforming, personal and communal, ethical and missional. The holy people of God follow Jesus Christ in engaging all the cultures of the world and drawing all peoples to God. Holy people are not legalistic or judgmental. They do not pursue an exclusive, private state of being better than others. Holiness is not flawlessness, but the fulfillment of God's intention for us. The pursuit of holiness can never cease because love can never be exhausted.

God wants us to be, think, speak, and act in the world in a Christ-like manner. We invite all to embrace God's call to:

- Be filled with all the fullness of God in Jesus Christ—Holy Spirit-endowed co-workers for the reign of God;
- Live lives that are devout, pure, and reconciled, thereby being Jesus Christ's agents of transformation in the world;
- Live as a faithful covenant people, building accountable community, growing up into Jesus Christ, embodying the spirit of God's law in holy love;
- Exercise for the common good an effective array of ministries and callings, according to the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- Practice compassionate ministries, solidarity with the poor, advocacy for equality, justice, reconciliation, and peace; and
- Care for the earth, God's gift in trust to us, working in faith, hope, and confidence for the healing and care of all creation.

By the grace of God, let us covenant together to be a holy people.

**The Action We Take.** May this call impel us to rise to this biblical vision of Christian mission:

- Preach the transforming message of holiness;
- Teach the principles of Christ-like love and forgiveness;
- Embody lives that reflect Jesus Christ;
- Lead in engaging with the cultures of the world; and
- Partner with others to multiply its effect for the reconciliation of all things.

For this we live and labor to the glory of God.

### **Ecumenical Dynamic**

Although the overarching emphasis of the WHSP is on holiness, there is an underlying emphasis upon unity. The desire for unity among Christians and churches traces back to Jesus' prayer for his followers (John 17:2). Subsequent attempts to bring about visible unity have been thought to be at the core of ecumenism (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-20). The ecumenical dynamic of bringing Christians together represents an equally powerful contribution of the WHSP, although ecumenism may not have been the reason primarily motivating those involved. Unity has been a high value for Kevin Mannoia in his various ministries as pastor, superintendent, and bishop of the Free Methodist Church, and later as President of the National Association of Evangelicals. His commitment to unity carried through in his organization of Wesleyan and Holiness denominational leaders, and eventually he was able to enfold Pentecostals as well. The WHSP succeeded, practically speaking, in successfully promoting ecumenical participation by the various individuals, churches, and denominations in addition to participation that reconceived and promoted biblical holiness.

After the first gathering of the WHSP in 2003, Mannoia worked with John Schaub to set up a website that published many of the writings of the study. It was entitled "Holiness & Unity" and found at <[holiness-andunity.org](http://holiness-andunity.org)>. Initially, the website contained papers presented at the annual gatherings of the WHSP. It also contained summaries of the WHSP, occasional newsletters, and other writings that promote holiness. Eventually, the website included the Holiness Manifesto, including translations of it in Chinese, Korean, and Spanish. Also included in it are news releases, videos, and a monthly article and discussion.

At the time, the WHSP represented one of the most effective ecumenical activities of the historic Wesleyan and Holiness denominations. The respective denominations committed people, administrative priority, and finances to its success. Results of the WHSP continue to influence on behalf of ecumenism. Soon a book will be published, edited by Mannoia and Thorsen, that contains the Holiness Manifesto along with chapters

that contain papers written by participants in the WHSP or by others inspired by the emphasis on biblical holiness. The writers will include:

- Jim Adams, Church of the Foursquare
- David Bundy, United Methodist Church
- Jon Huntzinger, Church of the Foursquare
- Cheryl Bridges Johns, Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee
- David Kendall, Free Methodist Church
- Bill Kostlevy, Church of the Brethren
- Diane LeClerc, Church of the Nazarene
- James Earl Massey, Church of God, Anderson, Indiana
- George McKinney, Church of God in Christ
- Jonathan Raymond, Salvation Army
- Steven Schell, Church of the Foursquare
- Howard Snyder, Free Methodist Church
- Ken Waters, United Methodist Church

Noteworthy is the diversity of denominations represented by the various authors.<sup>3</sup> It includes historic Wesleyan and Holiness denominations, and much more. There are several Pentecostal authors, who help to broaden our understanding of the full holiness family of Christians. United Methodist authors are also included, reflecting the earliest roots of the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions.

A significant ecumenical event took place in the Fall of 2006, a half year after the third meeting of the WHSP. The Wesleyan Holiness Consortium was created, spearheaded by Kevin Mannoia's emphasis on holiness. Consider the following news release:

Top leaders from eight denominations met for a one-day gathering to discuss the need for a coordinated and unified effort among them surrounding their common heritage and commitment to the holiness message. The outcome of the gathering was the creation of the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium. The Consortium will be working cooperatively to multiply efforts already started and piloted in the Southern California area

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<sup>3</sup>There are also plans to include an appendix that contains initial statements on holiness written by Don Dayton (Wesleyan Church), Lisa Dorsey (Shield of Faith), Craig Keen (Church of the Nazarene), Tom Noble (Church of the Nazarene), Keith Reeves (Wesleyan Church), and Lyn Thrush (Brethren in Christ).

among these churches over the past three years.<sup>4</sup>

The Consortium includes seven Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal denominations.

- Brethren in Christ
- Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Church of God, Anderson, Indiana
- Church of God in Christ
- Church of the Nazarene
- Free Methodist Church
- Salvation Army

The Wesleyan Holiness Consortium (WHC) represents important evidence of cooperation among denominations. In addition to annual meetings scheduled for the WHC, there are a number of other cooperative efforts planned around the country in the hope of expanding the growing interest in relevant articulation of the holiness message to other regions, nations, and continents. For example:

1. The Wesleyan Holiness Study Project will continue as a means to provide ongoing theological dialogue among the churches regarding the message of holiness;
2. There was a Wesleyan Holiness Young Leaders Hangout in August of 2007, in Dallas to glean input and engagement of the young generation of leaders in carrying the holiness message forward in the new century; and
3. A Wesleyan Holiness Pastors' Day will be developed in a second city to replicate the already successful Pastors' Day conducted in Southern California over the two previous years.<sup>5</sup>

The Wesleyan Holiness Consortium is not intended to function as a replacement or successor for the near non-operational Christian Holiness Partnership (CHP). The CHP has a long and distinguished history, going back to its founding in 1867 as the National Camp Meeting Association

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<sup>4</sup>“Wesleyan Holiness Consortium Is Created,” Holiness & Unity home page, HolinessAndUnity.org, accessed 9 February 2007 <<http://holinessandunity.org/fs/index.php?id=1254>>.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

for the Promotion of Holiness. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, holiness denominations grew up alongside this ecumenical organization, which became known as the Christian Holiness Association (CHA). The CHA changed its name in 1997 to the CHP, but its effectiveness in unifying denominations waned. Today it no longer meets. Despite this organizational inactivity, the WHC and the projects related to it are representative of a rising interest in the holiness message among scholars as well as pastors and church leaders. There continues to be interest in unity among Christians as well as a curiosity about holiness, and the two may create an ecumenical dynamic seldom seen among Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal denominations.

There are, of course, always questions and concerns about efforts to unite Christians in cooperative ministries, if not actual church mergers. Ecumenism, after all, occurs in many shapes and forms. For example, the WHC and CHP are not exactly alike, and people rightly care about how the two can and should relate to one another. Other questions and concerns have to do with increasing unity among Wesleyan and Holiness denominations, on the one hand, and Pentecostal denominations, on the other hand. Despite the family resemblance they all share in terms of shared beliefs, values, and practices related to holiness, they have not historically cooperated much together. It remains to be seen whether they can cooperate here and now through the WHC.

Recent discussions among participants of the Consortium are leading it to continue expanding activity in three ways. (1) The regional networks are an opportunity for district denominational leaders to bring their pastors together to raise the importance and understanding of holiness in their mission in the future. (2) The interest among the younger generation is fueling the growth of young leader gatherings to discuss in new terms the holiness message as a relevant point of engagement. (3) While the Study Project has completed its original three-year charter and fulfilled all its goals and more, it may continue as an at large representation of the churches that formed it. In this fashion, it may not be an ecclesiastical council or association, but rather a voluntary consortium of churches centered on their interest and commitment to the message of holiness.

### **Fresh Eyes on Holiness**

At the 2007 meeting of the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project, an additional contribution was made to expanding and applying the Holiness Manifesto. Participants focused upon the need for developing key themes for understanding, embodying, and proclaiming holiness in the twenty-

first century. In particular, the WHSP wanted to focus on the immediate needs of pastors. Thus, a set of themes were established. The resulting document includes brief explanations of the themes and questions that will help pastors and others to reflect upon and implement the message of holiness.

The following seven themes summarized the work of the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project. They were presented, initially, to the annual “Holiness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor’s Day” conference, featuring the theme of “Fresh Eyes on Holiness.” Below are the themes, descriptions, and questions.

*Fresh Eyes on Holiness: Living Out the Holiness Manifesto*<sup>6</sup>

**1. Dimensions of Holiness**

Holiness has several dimensions. Within each dimension there are contrasting realities. It is important to embrace both elements of each contrast in order to experience and practice holiness in its completeness.

- a. *Individual and Corporate*: We are called to be holy persons individually and to be a holy people corporately. The corporate aspect of holiness which is prominent in Scripture needs to be emphasized again in this time and culture.
- b. *Christ-centered and Holy Spirit-centered*: The Holy Spirit’s work within us leads to conformity to the person of Jesus Christ. Neither should be expressed without the other.
- c. *Development and End*: God has an ultimate purpose for each person, which is to be like Jesus Christ. Teaching on development in the Christian life should keep the end of Christ-likeness in view.
- d. *Crisis and Process*: A definite work of God’s grace in our hearts and our ongoing cooperation with God’s grace are to be equally emphasized.
- e. *Blessings and Suffering*: Full union with Jesus Christ brings many blessings, but also a sharing of his sufferings.
- f. *Separation and Incarnation*: Holy people are in but not of the world. Holiness requires both separation and redemptive, reconcil-

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<sup>6</sup>“Fresh Eyes on Holiness: Living Out the Holiness Manifesto,” Wesleyan Holiness Study Project, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, California, 27 March 2007.

ing, and restorative engagement.

g. *Forms and Essence*: Holiness always expresses itself in particular forms, which are the ways in which it is translated into life and action. But the forms must not be confused with the essence of holiness itself.

How do you balance these contrasting realities in your personal life and ministry? Where do you see the need for greater balance?

## **2. Essence of Holiness**

The essence of holiness is that God is holy and calls us to be a holy people. The challenge is reflecting Jesus Christ in a relevant and contextual way that transcends social location and diversity. Indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, holy people live and love like Jesus Christ. Walking intimately with him overflows in compassion and advocacy for those whom God loves.

How can you effectively embody holiness in the context where you are now, personally and in ministry?

## **3. Catholicity of Holiness**

Although differences have led to fragmentation in churches, holiness invites unity. God wants to heal—to make whole—the brokenness of people, churches, and society. The impact of holiness goes beyond boundaries of tradition, theology, gender, ethnicity, and time to affect people and institutional structures. The resulting healing unites all Christians in wholeness, growing up into Christ-likeness. The message of holiness involves conversation and engagement with others.

What conversations and actions do you need to engage in to bring healing to people, churches, and society?

## **4. Holiness and Culture**

Holiness people, while themselves influenced by culture, must convey the holiness message within multiple cultures. Culture affects the holiness message and churches because we are socially shaped human beings. Culture challenges us to mediate holiness in ways that are relevant and transforming without losing the integrity of the message.

How do we exegete culture and subculture in order to achieve transformation? How might you embody the holiness message in your immediate pastoral setting?

## **5. Holiness and Community**

Individual and corporate holiness require that faith communities pursue organizational structures, processes, and content that promote radical obedience to Jesus Christ. Holiness does not develop in isolation from other believers and faith communities that provide spiritual support and accountability.

What communal structures, processes, and content would help promote radical obedience to Jesus Christ, personally and in ministry?

## **6. Holiness and Social Concern**

Social engagement is an essential incarnational expression of personal and social holiness. It includes ministry among the poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized. Holiness requires a response to the world's deepest and starkest needs. Social engagement is the continuing work of Jesus Christ in and through the church by the Holy Spirit for the world.

Since proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the poor is essential, how do you embody the continuing personal and social engagement with the disenfranchised and marginalized?

## **7. Communicating Holiness**

Christians live in environments of changing language. They must communicate a holiness message in ways that are clear, relevant, and winsome. The message of holiness often has been communicated with terms and paradigms that are not understood today.

What terms and paradigms could you use to communicate the holiness message in a compelling way?

## **Promoting Unity and Cooperation**

An amazing amount of ecumenical cooperation has occurred in response to the WHSP and the leadership of Kevin Mannoia in general, and to the Holiness Manifesto in particular. It remains to be seen just how far and how lasting will be the influence in terms of developing unity and cooperation among Christians, churches, and denominations. Ecumenism, like so many other Christian beliefs, values, and practices, is already present, and yet not complete.

Frankly, there already are cracks in the tenuous strands of ecumenism. It is hoped that the WHSP will continue, enjoying the priority and financial support offered by denominations in the past. However, some of the denominations are reassessing their involvements. Participants will have to assess long-term goals and viability. The practicalities

of life and the prioritization of finances sometimes prohibit individuals, churches, and denominations from participating as much as they want, no matter how great the cause.

Despite obstacles that may arise, holiness—its study and promotion—has already proved itself to be more vibrant and inspiring of ecumenical cooperation than most imagined. Even those in the historic Wesleyan and Holiness traditions have been surprised at the responsiveness of pastors and laity to a renewed emphasis on holiness. After all, does it not seem self-evident that holiness is *passé*? Certainly, it is not like the “old time religion” or “old time holiness” preaching and teaching of the past. Perhaps the words, conceptions, and means of communicating holiness became outdated, even though biblical holiness has not.

The intent behind the Holiness Manifesto was to reconceive and promote biblical holiness in the twenty-first century. So far, so good. Will holiness still “sell in Peoria”? Will it sell, so to speak, to people in urban centers? ethnically diverse populations? and so-called post-moderns? We shall see. However, if holiness is thought to be at the core of God’s nature and of what God wants for people—to be holy as God is holy<sup>7</sup>—then its message is timeless. See Leviticus 11:44-45; Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:16. Holiness It will never become irrelevant or trite in its essence; it will only become so in its communication by Christians through what they do, live, and say. Thus, the Holiness Manifesto is timely in order to reorient Christians toward biblical holiness in the holistic way the document presents it.

Ironically, potentialities in something are not always found (or remembered best) by those closest to the potentialities. Instead, it sometimes takes outsiders to notice, appreciate, and remind us of the message we have. This is true of holiness. Although those of us within the historic parameters of the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions may consider ourselves the keepers of biblical holiness, we can be enriched by listening to what others have to say about the holiness we cherish and stumblingly try to promote. In particular, we may not always notice the potential biblical holiness has for promoting unity and cooperation within historic denominations, as well as ecumenical dynamics with those outside our traditions.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>7</sup>For example, see Leviticus 11:44-45; Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 1:16.

In conclusion, let me offer three “points of light” with regard to the ecumenical potential holiness has, which is embodied in the words of the Holiness Manifesto. By points of light I mean insights about the importance of holiness recognized by people outside the historic manifestations of the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions. Let me summarize them with the words: spirituality, ecumenism, and worship.

**1. Spirituality.** The first point of light pertains to the longstanding desire on the part of people to be holistic, to find the right balance, to find the *via media*—the middle way—of biblical beliefs, values, and practices. Aristotle tried to find the “mean” between extremes, what philosophers since the time of Aristotle call the “golden mean.” Anglicans after the Continental Reformation wanted to find the *via media* between the excesses of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. For decades, New Age aficionados have sought after anything holistic—foods, clothes, crystals, and drugs. Not surprisingly, it has been Christians all the while who have had access to the holiness—the wholeness and completeness—which only comes from God, which is available to people through faith, repentance, and obedience.

Ironically, it has not always been historic Wesleyan and Holiness traditions that have promoted interest in holiness as much as it has been the recent preoccupation with spirituality, especially Christian spirituality. Promoters of spirituality such as Richard Foster and Dallas Willard have pointed out time and time again that it is the Wesleyan and the Holiness traditions that epitomize the kind of biblical holiness that appeared throughout church history, regardless of whether it appeared in the east or west, Catholic or Protestant, mainline or evangelical. The recognition and respect of the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions outside those traditions sometimes exceeds the recognition and respect those in the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions have for themselves.

**2. Ecumenism.** A second point of light, where the value of holiness is recognized, is in ecumenical groups around the country. For example, the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches has long recognized, valued, and incorporated members of the Wesleyan Theological Society as representatives of holiness-oriented churches that are Wesleyan and evangelical. Such representation is not required by the NCC, but it is wanted.

Much of the value in Faith and Order, admittedly, came as a result of the decades of ecumenical work done by Don Dayton. Dayton and others pioneered ecumenical involvements on behalf of the Wesleyan Theological Society, which in turn served as a kind of ecumenical leaven that has nourished the Society more than by denominations represented in it. Kevin Mannoia also helped to promote the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions in the ecumenical movement, broadly conceived, through his work in the National Association of Evangelicals. Thus, the Holiness Manifesto serves as a persuasive as well as up-to-date presentation of holiness as understood in holiness-oriented denominations, which make them more noticeable and applicable to the larger Christian world.

**3. Worship.** A third and final point of light, where the value of holiness is recognized, is in contemporary ways that worship is publicly undertaken in churches today. Although a variety of worship styles persist in churches, the growing freestyle of worship in churches reflects a remarkable interest in and concern for holiness. One might think that contemporary worship choruses would not carry holiness words and concern-shave such words, if holiness is out-of-date. It is not!

The remarkable thing is that holiness—biblical holiness—is not out-of-date. On the contrary, it is up-to-date and needed more than ever by Christians and by churches, locally and denominationally. As the Holiness Manifesto seeks to make holiness understandable and relevant to people today, it also seeks to unite Christians in their promotion of holiness.

**2007 SMITH-WYNKOOP BOOK AWARD**  
**HOWARD A. SNYDER, FOR THE BOOK**  
***POPULIST SAINTS***

**Tribute Written by Stan Ingersol**

The Smith-Wynkoop Book Award is given annually to an author for a recent work that exemplifies the Wesleyan Theological Society's spirit and aims. It is named for two former members—Timothy Smith, a historian, and Mildred Wynkoop, a theologian—whose writings were marked by sound research, original thought, and bold thesis. The winning book must demonstrate the author's commitment to the same values.

The award has been given for books in the fields of systematic theology, historical theology, and narrative history. This year it goes for the first time to a work in the genre of biography. Tonight the society honors Howard A. Snyder for his book *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists*.

*Populist Saints* is not your typical biography. With over 900 pages of text, it contains three books in one. Within its covers, Snyder develops two biographies and provides a lively discussion of the wider history of early Free Methodism.

Like David Newsome's *The Wilberforces and Henry Manning* or Richard Lee Marks' *Three Men of the Beagle*, this book is aptly described as social biography, for *Populist Saints* finds its center in the lives of two people whose fortunes were intertwined. And by examining parallel lives, the writer uncovers new facets of their stories.

As the primary founder of the Free Methodist Church, B. T. Roberts was the subject of earlier biographies. Until now, the most recent and

thorough of these was Clarence Zahniser's *Earnest Christian*, an appealing book which appeared a half-century ago. But by expanding the scope to include Ellen Roberts, Snyder has extended the canvas upon which earlier biographers worked, creating space to explore additional themes, including the spirituality of Ellen Roberts and her leadership among other women. In doing so, Snyder is faithful to the legacy of B. T. Roberts, one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's strongest advocates on behalf of women's leadership in the church, including their ordination and pastoral leadership.

A second unique feature of *Populist Saints* is that it includes a thorough re-examination of Free Methodist origins. Some degree of re-examination would be inevitable in any biography of a key founder of a denomination. But as Carl Bangs demonstrated in his 1995 biography of Phineas Bresee, one can stay close to the human subject without re-telling the story of a denomination's early history. But again Snyder intentionally chose the broad canvas, and for many readers this will be more satisfying, first because the wider origins of Free Methodism deserve reappraisal by a new set of eyes, and secondly, because the Bangs approach—though quite justifiable—also left many legitimate questions unasked and unanswered. Many readers will regard Snyder's choice of the broader canvas as an asset.

Where does this work stand in terms of the author's own biography? Howard Snyder served as a missionary in Brazil. He worked in the world mission department of the Free Methodist Church. And he taught missiology at Asbury Theological Seminary for a number of years. His doctoral dissertation at Notre Dame was on John Wesley's radical ecclesiology. His series of books published by Inter-Varsity Press began with *The Problem of Wineskins: Church Structure in a Technological Age*, which was the basic introduction to his thought. But his readers went on to read his subsequent books, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal*, *Community of the King*, and *Liberating the Church*. He has other books as well. What strikes me is this: that someone who has devoted much of a lifetime to reflection upon the themes of ecclesiology, mission, social justice, and church renewal now re-examines the key personalities and the bases upon which a major Wesleyan-holiness denomination was founded. And why not? B. T. Roberts considered the rise of Free Methodism to be a renewal of essential Methodism. Snyder brings an interesting and worthwhile lens to such a study. It is a lens that fits well with words that Martin Marty gave another group of Wesleyans when he advised them to

re-read the writings of their founders and then ask how that early vision should inform their work today. This, Marty said, was a key part of the antidote to the vague sense that generic evangelicalism is taking over. *Populist Saints* has a good deal to offer to present-day Free Methodists and other Wesleyans, for B. T. Roberts believed strongly in the imperative of taking the gospel to the poor, the necessity of urban ministry, and women's full equality in the public ministry. And his struggle to establish these points should not be taken for granted or simply relegated to some kind of unusable past.

Last, it should be stressed that Snyder contributes materially to a deeper understanding of a problem that has long intrigued social historians of 19<sup>th</sup>-century America, namely the relationship between the holiness movement and the populist movement. One was a movement of religious dissent, while the other was a movement of political and social dissent. There have been several attempts to show that the geography of these movements overlapped, but Snyder's work adds something vitally important to this line of inquiry. He provides substantial documentation to support his thesis that B. T. Roberts was an active and key populist within New York State as that movement sought to find a third way between unbridled capitalism and socialism. Snyder's chapter on the subject is now essential reading for those who are occupied with this historical problem.



**Paul Merritt Bassett**

## **IN HONOR OF PAUL MERRITT BASSETT**

**The Wesleyan Theological Society's  
2007 Lifetime Achievement Award**

**by Stan Ingersol**

How fitting that Paul Merritt Bassett receive this society's Lifetime Achievement Award here at Olivet Nazarene University, his alma mater. His theological education did not begin here. It began much earlier, in the Nazarene parsonages, churches, and camp meetings of Ohio. But he came to this college eager to learn more. Fateful connections were made at Olivet. Here he met Pearl, a young woman with Mennonite roots who became his wife. Here, too, he became a student of Carl Bangs, then a young teacher, who helped awaken his interest in the Christian church's history and theology. Carl became Paul's life-long friend, and years later they were reunited in Kansas City, teaching at two seminaries representing different households in Methodism's extended family.

After Olivet, Bassett attended Duke University. There, during the hey-day of Robert E. Cushman in theology and James T. Cleland in preaching, he earned his seminary degree. He returned to Ohio to study experimental psychology years but returned to Duke and earned his doctoral degree in church history. Paul made other fateful connections at Duke. He worked with Cleland as a preaching instructor, developed a life-long friendship with Thomas A. Langford, and came under the guidance of Ray Petry, a reigning giant in the field of medieval church history. Petry became his doctoral advisor. Paul's doctoral dissertation on Isidore of Seville was striking evidence that he accepted with pride the label of "medievalist," and it heralded his enduring interest and specialization in the religious history of the Iberian peninsula.

Let me suggest another lasting influence from this period. The distinguishing spirit of Duke Divinity School during this period is often summed up in two words, “critical orthodoxy.” A fair assessment of Paul’s scholarship must, I believe, admit that critical orthodoxy has been a distinguishing characteristic of his thought, teaching, and writing. Bassett taught first at Trevecca Nazarene College, then at West Virginia University. In 1969 he became Professor of the History of European Christianity at Nazarene Theological Seminary, where he taught for thirty-five years. His long-time colleague and great friend Alex Deasley stated, “Bassett the man is also Bassett the churchman.” Surely this is the case. And if a phrase can capture Paul’s essential spirit as a churchman, I would suggest this one: “Wesleyan vision and the Great Tradition.”

At Nazarene Theological Seminary, Paul settled in as the complete church historian, offering an arc of courses that included “The Early Church,” “Medieval Church and Culture,” “The Reformation,” “Belief and Unbelief in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” “Christianity in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” and “Christian Interpretations of History.” This arc was punctuated by many bonus courses, such as “History of British Christianity” and “Who are the Heretics? History of an Idea.”

Throughout this program of course offerings, Paul exemplified the idea that the true Wesleyan—indeed the *contemporary Wesleyan*—was to be in conversation with the whole Church. His intentions somewhat paralleled those of Albert Outler, who wrote that the idea of “back to Wesley” was only shorthand for a broader agenda. “Back to Wesley,” said Outler, really means back to Wesley and then back behind Wesley to Wesley’s sources, then forward to our own time and place. And while that might be *one* program for Wesleyan theology, Bassett (as I understand him) would not want our interests to be limited only to *Wesley’s* sources.

Take Bassett’s unique passion and long standing interest in the history of Iberian Christianity. Wesley had only superficial acquaintance with such things. Not Paul. This passion to track the history of Iberian Christianity has taken him to countless archives and libraries throughout Spain and Portugal and to thousands of records, published and unpublished. Such an absorbing interest was, in part, an antidote to the sectarian mentality into which the Church of the Nazarene—Paul’s denomination—had sunk by the mid-20th century. But sectarianism was never an option for Bassett. Bassett has always had a strong attachment to the Church’s catholicity. And there are rich veins in the Christian tradition

that Wesley ignored *and his disciples* have ignored even more. Paul has worked out of the conviction that true Wesleyan vision must be rooted and shaped by the Church's Great Tradition.

Such is evident in a cursory sample of the hundreds of articles Bassett has published. They carry such titles as "Practicing Holiness in the Great Tradition," "Children at the Lord's Table," and "Finding the Real John Wesley." This concern is evident in his volume *Exploring Christian Holiness: The Historical Development* (co-authored with William Greathouse) and *Holiness Teaching: New Testament Times to Wesley*. In these he makes the critical point that if we look for the specific language of the Wesleyan-holiness folks among the Christian writers of earlier centuries, we will not find our shibboleths repeated there. But if we search the writings of the Christian centuries looking for the fundamental notion of entire devotement to God, then there is abundant evidence of reflection on and practice of Christian holiness.

His concern that Wesleyan vision be shaped by authentic conservation on historic themes is likewise evident in a series of historical articles on Scripture. His early statement on the subject, "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement," caught the critical attention of Harold Lindsell, editor of *Christianity Today*, who argued that all evangelicals should toe Lindsell's reactionary line on the issue of Biblical inerrancy. Lindsell came down hard on Timothy Smith and Paul Bassett in his book *The Bible in the Balance*. Not one to avoid a good dustup, nor to just stand by while a Southern Baptist tells him how to think, Bassett replied with strength in a probing essay, "The Theological Identity of the North American Holiness Movement," a classic statement demonstrating that the principle of "the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation" was rooted in sound Reformation theology (of the Anglican variety) and that its pedigree was actually more distinguished than that of the poor dog Lindsell had entered into the hunt.

Bassett is known for several core convictions: that the cause of Christian holiness suffers most when it is reduced merely to being the basis for a sect; that the Wesleyan holiness churches could serve the Church of Christ better if they maintained their disciplined ways but viewed themselves as religious orders within the Universal Church; and that the truth be told even when it is unpleasant.

Paul has been visiting professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, the University of Kansas School of

Religion, and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. His international teaching experience includes assignments in Spain, England, Mexico, Costa Rica, Australia, The Philippines, and several institutions in South America. He has been a consulting editor to *Christianity Today*, a resident scholar of the Institute of Ecumenical and Cultural Research, a member of the board of editors of the online *Journal of Southern Religion*, and an Ark Rocker—the writer of a humor column in *Preacher's Magazine*. He has served the Wesleyan Theological Society in various capacities: in 1981-82 as its 18th president; from 1987 to 1993 as editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*; and for many years as one of our ecumenical representatives to the Commission on Faith and Order.

Paul has left traces of his personality in the places wherever he has ministered. When Barry Bryant became the pastor of a Nazarene church in Graham, North Carolina, he asked the people what they remembered of their previous pastors. This church of mill-hands and other blue-collar folks remembered Paul Bassett as a man of prayer. Those who have sat in the chapel at Nazarene Theological Seminary fondly remember his sermons and his faithful service as the chapel organist. His classroom students remember lectures that were well-structured, well-delivered, clever, and never wasted a student's time.

Paul, we have no intention to bury you yet, nor to foreclose on your further achievements. But here, in your 72nd year, and at your alma mater, we express our appreciation for your life as a church historian worthy of being emulated, your devotion to the highest type of teaching and writing, and the catholic and ecumenical spirit that has inspired us and has represented this society so well for so long.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Maxine E. Walker, ed., *Charles Wesley's Hymns: "Prints" and Practices of Love Divine* (Point Loma Press, 2007). Paperback, 99 pages. ISBN: 0-9754729-7-6.

Reviewed by Barry L. Callen, Professor Emeritus of Anderson University, Editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* and Anderson University Press.

Upon opening this book, one notices four things immediately. It is a handsomely published paperback; John R. Tyson provides a brief overview of Charles Wesley's life and ministry; the book includes some interesting photographs by Ruthanne Smith-Mann; and in the back is a bonus CD of some of Charles Wesley's music, newly arranged for piano and played by Brenda Martin. In the immediate background of this publication is the three-hundredth anniversary of Charles Wesley (1707-2007) and the February 2007 conference "See, the 'Prints' of Love: Writers' and Artists' Portrayals of the Christian Way" that convened at the Wesleyan Center on the Point Loma Nazarene University campus. The book is number seven in Point Loma's monograph series.

The textual content is a collection of essays by writers who are among the best in this field. The essays are grouped into (1) "Wesleyan Hymns in Ecumenical Connection and Spiritual Formation," "Wesleyan Hymns in Communal and Individual 'Prints' of Christ's Abiding Presence," and "In All My Works, Thy Presence Find." Maxine Walker explains in her introduction that one should do more than "see" this musical heritage as a tourist inspecting the admirable remains of the past. In fact, this book hopes to help the reader also experience and "hear" the great Wesley heritage of hymns—hear in both the senses of the attached

CD and entering into previously lived experiences for the sake of present transformation. This book's essayists show unity-in-diversity in that they all "live in" these Wesley hymns and help point us in such a transformational direction.

It is argued throughout that the original followers of the John and Charles Wesley were formed by the vocabulary and poetic expression of Charles Wesley's hymns and taught through the very experience of hymn singing. Kathryn and Michael McConnell, for instance, write about how the hymns of Charles Wesley have sustained them when life was at its worst. The hymns of Charles, and their role in corporate worship and spiritual formation, may be one of the great treasures that Methodists can contribute to the church as a whole. This present book champions this assumption and tries to further the process of the gifting to and thus the current spiritual formation of the broader church.

S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., explains in his essay how Charles Wesley's hymns can be seen as "verbal icons," the mixing of art and theology that can be a medium of God's living revelation (p. 8). The hymns are windows to the divine presence, the mystery of God, the way of holiness, and the world of Holy Scripture. Numbering some 9,000 in all, the hymns range in content from autobiography and biography to the devotional, instructional, polemical, and apologetic. Likewise, this book seeks to be something of a multi-faceted icon itself (words, art, photography, and actual music). It succeeds in shining some fresh light on the crucial arena of Christian spiritual formation, Christian education, illness, ecumenicity, and more. Rather than trying to be the last word, the book seeks to be an open door into the mystery and power of a great musical heritage that has transforming potential for today's church.

My instinct is to dispense with the usual role of a book review, picking at weaknesses that exist in any publication, and instead focus on emphasizing the high goal of these pages. The seven essays comprise a rich depository of once-lived theology that deserves a fresh lease on life. A proud past is glimpsed and offered as something to be seen, heard, and lived into again! Such an offering, beyond this present volume, is in fact the very mission of the publisher, Point Loma Nazarene University's Wesleyan Center for Twenty-First Century Studies—"to inspire a new generation of Wesleyan thinking that will influence the broader church and social worlds of the twenty-first century." This monograph certainly moves in that direction.

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Adrian Burdon, *Authority and Order: John Wesley and his Preachers* (Ashgate: Burlington, VT, 2005).

Reviewed by Ryan Nicholas Danker, Ph.D. candidate, Boston University.

Adrian Burdon, in his 2005 book *Authority and Order: John Wesley and his Preachers*, has provided an introductory discourse on the nature of John Wesley's use of authority, with particular attention to the process that ultimately culminated with the ordination of Methodist preachers. Burdon uses a narrative approach. From the beginning of the work he admits that it is written consciously in the context of the current ecumenical dialogue between the British Methodist Church and the Church of England. This historiographical approach both helps and hinders Burdon's presentation, since modern questions imposed on the historical past do not always create an historically accurate picture of the past.

For many, John Wesley's authoritarian style is often seen in negative terms. Although Burdon does not entirely deny this common accusation, he does temper the debate with historical context. He writes that Wesley was not, in fact, a "despot," but rather "one who felt himself under an extraordinary calling" (5) and who saw the Methodist Connexion as an extension of his own work. Those who wanted to help in that work were under his care and guidance. If they wanted to remain in "connexion" it was understood in terms of a connection to Mr. Wesley.

While the vast majority of Burdon's book is about John Wesley's appointment and subsequent ordination of the Methodist preachers, he begins with a short description of Wesley's use of authority before and after his Aldersgate experience. It would have been beneficial to discuss Wesley's use of authority in more detail during this period, including his ability to gain a following at Oxford in the face of great public scorn and his clash with civic authority that ultimately caused him to flee Georgia. Wesley's understanding of the place of civil and ecclesiastical authority is a complex and fascinating discussion that would add to any description of any part of his ministry.

Burdon is in his element when he writes about Wesley and his relationship to the Methodist preachers. As he notes on numerous occasions, Wesley often walked a creative tight-rope between his adherence to ecclesiastical authority and what Wesley considered his divine calling from God. It appears that the divine calling always "won out" when it clashed with

ecclesiastical authority. But, as Burdon notes, it did so only after Wesley felt certain that all possible avenues to reconcile the two had been explored.

To Wesley, it was “a call from God, rather than license of a bishop, [that] made a preacher” (30). Subsequently, the fruits of such a ministry were the canon by which any calling was understood to be valid. It was a “measurement of practical results,” as Burdon puts it, that mattered to Wesley. This understanding of the proper measure of a ministry’s validity led Wesley to accept many as preachers who would have otherwise never served in such a role in established contexts. It would seem inevitable that this criterion would be met with hostility by many in the Anglican establishment, and it was. With it, along with other distinctive Methodist practices, Wesley was creating what could be called a “Methodist ethos,” the fruits of which ultimately led to schism. Burdon does not discuss this “ethos” with much detail, although it would be a positive addition to his work.

While making sense within Burdon’s historiographical approach, many of the more broadly conceived notions of authority are lost in his work when the book focuses its latter half almost entirely on Wesley’s understanding of himself as a “scriptural episcopos,” followed by the ordinations which began in 1784. Burdon fleshes out Wesley’s journey from one who firmly believed in apostolic succession to one who saw himself as a New Testament bishop with the right to ordain elders within Methodism. Wesley’s reading of King and Stillingfleet instilled in him an understanding that there was no distinct difference between the order of presbyters and that of bishops. The distinction lay in their respective functions. Burdon rightly points out that, once Wesley did begin to ordain, he did so as the “Scriptural episcopos” of the Methodists and not as a presbyter in the Church of England. Only in this way can Wesley claim to have remained loyal to the canons of the English Church.

Wesley’s logic is such that Burdon, like Charles Wesley, does not appear to find it convincing. The picture that one gets from Burdon is that, by the time the ordinations took place within Methodism, Wesley had little or no choice but to ordain. Within the context of his own belief that ecclesiastical authority needed to bend to divine or extraordinary calling, together with pressure from the Methodist people, Wesley was left with few or no options. Although Burdon does not discuss it, this leads the reader to wonder whether Wesley’s authority was given the same deference it had been given in the earlier period.

Burdon has provided a great place to begin a discussion of Wesley's use and understanding of authority. The number of sources that he uses is broad and shows that he is well-read on the subject. At the same time, one of the weaknesses of the book is that the reader is left to wade through the sources with very little interpretation provided by the author. The inclusion of the text of Wesley's adaptation of the Prayer Book Ordinal, together with the text of the Ordinal itself, is a perfect example. Not only should this text be provided as an appendix to the work, but what little interpretation the author provides is almost entirely descriptive. The reader is left to guess at Wesley's reasons for the changes he made. This lack of interpretation of original sources hinders the entire work. That said, Burdon's work does provide an invaluable description of Wesley's understanding of authority, broadly conceived.

Charles Edwin Jones. *The Wesleyan Holiness Movement: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2 Vols. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005).

Reviewed by D. William Faupel, Professor of Theological Research, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

In 1974, *A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement* appeared as the first of a new series of bibliographies edited by Kenneth Rowe and sponsored by the American Theological Library Association. The work, an extensive expansion of Jones' bibliography of his 1968 Ph.D. dissertation, "Perfectionist Persuasion: a Social Profile of the National Holiness Movement within American Methodism: 1867-1936," served to firmly establish the Holiness Movement as a discipline of study and launched Jones' career as a bibliographer extraordinaire. The *Guide* was followed by major bibliographies on the Pentecostal Movement (1983), Africa American Holiness Churches (1987), the Charismatic Movement (1995), and the Keswick Movement (2006). Each in turn has become the authoritative introduction to the literature of these respective traditions. Now, thirty years after the first edition was published, Jones returns to his first love, the literature of the Holiness Movement.

Jones has organized this work in much the same manner that he has his past efforts. Each entry is given a number (16777 entries in all) followed by an extensive index. The entries are organized in five parts. Part I (Historical Context) seeks to position the movement in its historical, theological and global contexts, with a selective but carefully chosen set of 184 entries. Part II (Authoritative Biography) provides in 595 entries brief summaries of the lives and works by and about historical figures who were revered by the Movement and whose writings helped to shape its tradition. These figures range from Tertullian to Francis of Assisi to Luther to the Wesleys to Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Part III (Holiness Movement), the heart of the work, identifies the literature of some 268 denominations and associations which are related to what Jones describes as the National Holiness Movement and the Inter-Church Holiness Movement. A brief historical sketch describes each group. Mergers and splits are identified and include cross references to each.

Uniform subdivisions under each include: apologetic works, biography, controversial works, doctrinal and didactic works, education, fictional literature, history, history and study of doctrines, history and study of ministry, hymns and sacred songs, juvenile literature, missions, music, pastoral theology, periodicals, sermons, tracts, addresses, essays, and worship. Geographical entries are organized by country. Part IV (Schools),

contains 722 entries describing the institutions of higher learning the Movement has produced and the literature that has been produced about them. Finally, Part V (Biography) is devoted to works by and about individuals within the movement. The work is enhanced by a perceptive ten-page forward written by Jones' longtime friend and former colleague, Paul Bassett, Professor Emeritus of Nazarene Theological Seminary.

This edition is an advancement over the first *Guide* in several respects. First, of course, it brings the literature of the Movement up to date. This is not to suggest that the work seeks to include everything that the Movement has produced through 2005. Jones is convinced that, following World War II, the bulk of the Movement formally identifying with the National Association of Evangelicals in the U. S. an informally elsewhere gradually ceased to be a distinctive entity. As a result, with few exceptions, the cut-off date for primary works produced by the Movement is 1940. Secondary works interpreting the movement, of course, include publication through 2005. Secondly, it is much larger. The original *Guide* contained 7,338 entries within one large volume. This edition has 16,777 entries. Thirdly, this edition is more focused. The first edition contained sections on Holiness-Pentecostal groups and the Keswick Movement. Jones has expanded materials on these related movements which have subsequently been published separately. This edition is limited to those groups that have held exclusively to John's Wesley's understanding of entire sanctification. Finally, and most importantly, this edition seeks to document more comprehensively the literature of this more focused definition of the Holiness tradition. One of the major critiques of the first edition was that it focused primarily on groups within the United States. Although this edition does not seek to be exhaustive, it is comprehensive in that it contains sufficient material to document the development of the tradition throughout the world.

Undoubtedly, some will find shortcomings in this edition: questioning the author's judgment as to which groups should have been included or excluded from the volume; suggesting a different paradigm as to how the Movement best fits together or discovering new materials that should have been included. This reviewer has spotted a few of the latter himself. Such critiques will be mere quibbles in comparison to the outstanding achievement this work represents. It is a must for all academic libraries that serve theological schools or departments of religion. It is an indispensable tool for scholars of the tradition. The Wesleyan Theological Society owes a great debt of gratitude of the careful scholarship of this work. Its members will benefit from the fruit of a life-time labor of love for years to come.

Clark H. Pinnock, with Barry L. Callen. *The Scripture Principle: Reclaiming the Full Authority of the Bible* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006). ISBN 978-0-8010-3155-7.

Reviewed by Mitchel Modine, Nashville, TN.

I highly recommend *The Scripture Principle* by Clark Pinnock and Barry Callen as a resource for understanding the nuances of evangelical Christian thinking about the inspiration and authority of the Bible. This book goes a long way toward calming some of the vitriol that passes for impassioned defense of the Bible in evangelical circles. The authors have given the non-specialist evangelical reader a quite helpful guide for navigating somewhat confusing and intimidating waters. Their primary audience is “the person who asks, ‘How should I regard the Bible and respond to it?’ Our emphasis is on that vital, practical certainty one can have in the Bible we now possess” (7). By framing the discussion in this way, the authors set up for the most impressive contribution of their work, namely, to affirm “that the Bible is the primary and fully trustworthy canon of Christian revelation, the reliable medium for encountering and understanding the God who seeks to transform all persons who read the sacred text into the image of Christ” (11). This is what the authors mean by “the Scripture principle.”

The authors have three aims in mind. First, they aim to present the “Scripture principle” in a way that vitiates the caricature of conservative evangelicals as bibliolatrous (7). It is often thought that evangelicals treat the inerrancy of Scripture “as a battering ram to injure fellow Christians who disagree” (85). Such an approach “overshadows those wonderful certainties in Christ that ought to be front and center” (86). By emphasizing these certainties, the authors seek to be more positive than many of their contemporaries within evangelical Protestant circles.

The authors’ second aim “is to speak out . . . in defense of the full authority and trustworthiness of the Bible” (8). They are convinced that “belief in the Scriptures as the canon and yardstick of Christian truth, the unique locus of the word of God, is part of an almost universal consensus going back at least to the second century” (11-12). Their pastoral sensibility comes into play precisely at this point, for “although the number of those involved in...a deprecation [of Biblical authority] is relatively small...they are often influential scholars and teachers whose opinions sway the unwary and subvert the faith of those who are weak and unin-

formed” (8). Thus, scholars should exercise caution so that they do not damage persons’ faith unawares: “Responsible scholarship cannot stop because of . . . possible reactions; however, it should proceed gently and respectfully” (172).

The authors’ final aim is to demonstrate that “evangelical” does not mean “intellectually stunted.” That is, they endeavor “to assist Christians who hold to the full authority of the Bible to move ahead in the understanding of their conviction. It is sad when critics are able to nail us on one point or another simply because we have not done our work very well” (8). The redefinition of “inerrancy” is connected to this desire to move evangelical thinking on Scripture forward. In spite of the attacks leveled at them from both sides of the debate, they aver that a sure belief in the authority of Scripture can be maintained while incorporating reasonable developments in scholarship, always bearing in mind that the topic is not one to be approached lightly, but rather lies at the center of Christian faith and practice.

An important contribution of this volume is a redefinition of “inerrancy” as “the belief that Scripture never leads one astray in what it intentionally teaches” (11). Such a redefinition might allow for wide latitude in the application of inerrancy. Reviews of the original publication had pointed this out (261 n. 26), but the authors insist that their position is necessary in order to avoid error: “Dogmatism about errancy, as well as about inerrancy, is foolish and immature and creates only problems” (103).

A weakness of this volume is that it does not appear to have been extensively revised from the original. For example, in their chapter on biblical criticism, the authors suggest: “There also is value in newer fields of study called *structural* and *rhetorical* criticism” (169, emphasis original). In 1984, certainly, these were on the frontier of methodology in biblical criticism, but this is no longer the case in 2006. I think the authors could have dealt with some developments in biblical criticism since 1984, while still maintaining the pastoral sensibility on which they quite properly insist. The authors treat with great felicity those topics on which they do comment, but it would be most helpful had they not passed in silence over some others. This criticism aside, the authors have ably negotiated the space between academic responsibility and pastoral sensibility in their effort to promote belief in the authority of Scripture in the face of criticism.

Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let's Start with Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). 165 pp. \$15.99.

Reviewed by Matthew O'Reilly, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

With his latest book, distinguished holiness scholar Dennis Kinlaw has made an important contribution to the discipline of systematic theology. Thoughtful Christians from a variety of traditions will find his emphasis on the person of Christ helpful and refreshing. Former president of Asbury College and founder of the Francis Asbury Society, the author argues persuasively that the only appropriate place to begin Christian theology is with the person of Jesus Christ. Thus the title: *Let's Start with Jesus*. Jesus is the factor that makes Christianity unique among the other world religions. Only Jesus reveals the nature of the creator God and how that God desires to relate to humanity.

Underlying Kinlaw's argument is a pointed critique of the Reformed emphasis on juridical language as the primary way of understanding how God relates to humanity. Juridical language, while biblically valid, is not the primary way that God relates to humanity. A truly biblical theology must embrace all of the various metaphors for how God has chosen to relate to human beings. Beginning with the person of Christ, Kinlaw examines other major biblical metaphors which describe the relationship God desires to have with humans. This is by far Kinlaw's most complex book. However, it is largely non-technical and within the reach of pastors and laypersons.

The first chapter places Christianity in its context among the poly/pantheistic and monotheistic religions of the world. The claims of Jesus concerning his relationship to Israel's God set Christianity apart from the other monotheistic religions. Kinlaw argues that Jesus' unique filial relationship to Israel's God creates a new paradigm for understanding God by demonstrating that there is differentiation within the oneness of God. This unity between Jesus and the God of Israel is conceived in familial terms that should be understood prototypically rather than analogically. The first person of the Trinity is the original father. The second person is the original son. Thus, all human relationships are derived from and can only be properly understood as they are analogous to the divine relationships. Jesus, by understanding himself to be the son of Israel's God, is developing a minor theme in the Old Testament into a dominant paradigm for the way human beings should relate to God.

Chapter two is devoted to explaining the development of and the language involved in the royal/legal, the familial, and the nuptial metaphors set forth in Scripture to describe the relationship between God and the creation. The juridical language of a law court is a part of the royal/legal metaphor. A strength of Kinlaw's argument is his criticism of the Protestant dependency on the language of the law court. He points out that it does not communicate who God is eternally. The language of the law court is only available after the Fall. Different language is needed to understand the eternal nature of God and the nature of God's desired relationship to his people. The familial and the nuptial metaphors provide such language and offer insight into the depth of intimacy with which God longs to relate to his human creation. These metaphors provide room for Jesus to describe the depth of intimacy involved in his unique relationship to Israel's God. These categories also give Jesus language to communicate that God desires the same relationship with all humans that he has with Jesus. The language of family and marriage indicates a startling depth of intimacy that God desires to have with his human creatures.

Kinlaw goes on to briefly recount the struggle of the early church to understand how Jesus of Nazareth related to the God of Israel. Committed to their monotheism and to the divinity of Christ, early Christians turned to the language of personhood to describe the relationship between Israel's God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The early Christians concluded that the oneness of the Godhead should be understood ontologically, while the distinct otherness of the Father, Son, and Spirit is personal, not ontological. From this distinction the language and concept of personhood developed.

The author then develops the idea of personhood based on this new language to describe Jesus and his relationship with the other persons of the Trinity. Kinlaw argues that, because the personhood of Jesus is only conceivable as he relates to the other persons of the Trinity, human beings can only understand what it is to be a person in the context of interpersonal relationships. Further, the triune God is holy, which implies that all persons have a moral consciousness and a responsibility to respond to the call of a holy God, with the potential to become holy as a result of being properly related to the holy God. To be separated from God and isolated from relationships is to be an incomplete person. Relationships are broken through betrayal and lack of trust. Thus, relating to God and others in relationships of trusting and self-giving love is a necessary component of authentic personhood.

The language of personhood and the intimate relational metaphors of family and marriage allow sin to be understood as a dehumanizing turn from a relationship with God of trusting and self-giving love to a relationship of distrust, suspicion, and self-love. The broken relationship with God affects all human relationships, filling them with the same distrust that, as a result of sin, now characterizes the human relationship to God. Salvation, then, is not merely understood in terms of legal status. It is the restoration of a relationship of trusting and self-giving love between a person and God. This is accomplished through the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God. Without the biblical concept of personhood, the incarnation and human salvation is impossible. The familial metaphor allows salvation to be understood as more than forgiveness of sins. God intends for the redeemed to share the divine nature. They are to be complete persons by partaking in the nature of their Father, the nature of holy-love. The fulfillment of salvation is, thus, entire sanctification.

One weakness of the book is the author's almost exclusive use of the sayings of Jesus in John's Gospel as his primary Christological source, with little appeal to Jesus' deeds. The way Jesus acted, particularly in the Synoptic Gospels, demonstrated his understanding of his relationship to God. Jesus' sayings were often explanations of his actions, and a study of Jesus' behavior would greatly illumine the reader's understanding of the way Jesus saw his relationship to the creator God. Kinlaw points out that Synoptic Christology is much more implicit than that of John's Gospel. This is why he goes to the explicit Christology of the fourth Gospel. However, the implicit Christology of the Synoptics is highly useful in understanding the nature of the mutual indwelling relationship between Jesus and the Father, the relationship that is the basis for Kinlaw's conclusions concerning divine and human personhood.

Overall, I highly recommend the book as an exceptional introduction to the Christian doctrines of God, sin, and salvation as understood by the Wesleyan tradition. Kinlaw's focus on the person of Jesus brings new insights to the field. This book is a worthy contribution to Wesleyan studies and would serve as a strong beginning to a Wesleyan systematic theology.

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Riley B. Case, *Evangelical and Methodist: A Popular History*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004. 320 pages. ISBN: 0-68704-444-8 (pbk).

Reviewed by Andrew J. Wood, Auburn University.

The historiography of Methodism is in the midst of an important shift in emphasis and perspective. Perhaps the transition is most obvious in the work of so-called “secular” historians that made its appearance in the 1980s and shows few signs of abating. Influenced by the now decades-old social history, these studies moved beyond great leaders, controversies, and institutions to explore what life was like for non-elite clergy and the thousands of Methodist laity, most of whom were women and children. Historians such as David Hempton, Nathan Hatch, John Wigger, Beth Barton Schweiger and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly have described the popular roots of American Methodism, considering a range of topics, including women, race, class, nationalism, economics, the family, Atlantic contexts, common circuit riders, and institution building. These historians have added to our understanding of the diversity and dynamism of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Methodism, while confirming many of the basic lines of its development noted by earlier historians.

Riley B. Case’s *Evangelical and Methodist: A Popular History* adds significantly to this literature on American Methodism. Case, a retired pastor and district superintendent from the Indiana Conference and leader of the Good News movement, has put in print perspectives he and others have been advocating for many years. Case provides a passionate account of conservatism in the United Methodist Church, writing one of those books that will be praised or condemned without being read. Those familiar with contemporary Methodist debates know which side Case is on, and will likely respond to this volume based on their own position on present concerns. All this is to be regretted.

Case makes two central claims. First, he posits two kinds of Methodism in place since the controversies of the 1890s: official Methodism and “populist” Methodism. The former constitutes Methodist elites, the latter the rank and file working as they always have in evangelistic and compassionate ministries at the local level. Second, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, official Methodism and its “mediating elite” have sought to marginalize “grass roots” evangelical Methodism. Much of the book is a history of that second interaction seen through debates over Sunday school literature, pastoral appointments, theological education, the nature of mis-

sion, doctrine, Good News political advocacy, and General Conference legislation. Those interested in such developments since the 1950s will find it here. Moreover, interesting stories, dramatic twists, and rich characters abound.

Characterization of the two Methodist groups is central to Case's argument and an important, if potentially controversial, contribution. The official Methodism he describes functions as an oligarchy, is symbolized by the seminary, conference and General Board, and is motivated by cultural and intellectual respectability. Populist Methodism functions democratically, is symbolized by the congregation, revival meeting, and millions of Methodist laity, and is motivated by a robust pneumatology. Case's narrative highlights 20<sup>th</sup>-century official Methodism's theological heterodoxy, basic distrust of the laity, and love affair with specialists, experts, and intellectuals.

Beyond this interpretive framework, Case's work is historiographically important for two other reasons. First, he extends the conversation beyond the founding period and antebellum Methodism into the yet-understudied realm of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Methodism. Second, by imagining "Methodisms" and not "Methodism," the door is open to another important aspect of Methodist experience. Methodism has rarely embraced its many dissenters. More often, they have been mocked as disloyal radicals; they and their arguments have been dismissed. By featuring these important themes in Methodist history, Case has accomplished a rare feat. In one book, he has advanced the scholarship on Methodist history and conveyed a contemporary ecclesiastical position he shares with a large number of his fellow Methodists. Thus, more than simply a polemic, this volume makes visible an aspect of ecclesiastical history often ignored by historians and theologians alike.

Methodism *has* changed dramatically in its two and a quarter centuries on American soil. What has changed is a question for historians. Whether any given change is laudable or lamentable is a proper question for all those who love the church and seek to serve the present age. It seems unlikely that this or any other denomination can successfully navigate its current tensions without an honest assessment of its past, especially since facts, perceptions, and interpretations of the past usually provide both the context of and argumentative fodder for present disagreements.

Case's writing is straightforward, accessible, humorous, and passionate. His attention to the personalities at the center of the Good News movement is especially valuable. However, despite his emphasis on the Methodist evangelicals' concern for local ministry, he pays surprisingly little attention to congregations. Aside from his colorful account of his student pastor days in northwestern Indiana, his focus is on denomination-wide developments. Moreover, Case rarely attempts to see these controversies from the perspective of those with whom he disagrees. No doubt, some—for a variety of reasons—will disagree with his historical interpretations, even more with his theological and ecclesiastical aims. However, readers of this journal may have good reason to appreciate Case's call for Methodists to rethink the meaning of their own tradition. Theologians will appreciate his attention to the doctrinal nature of these debates. Students of Methodist history, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century intersections of church, society, and doctrine, and the contemporary controversies within United Methodism will be especially interested in this important volume.

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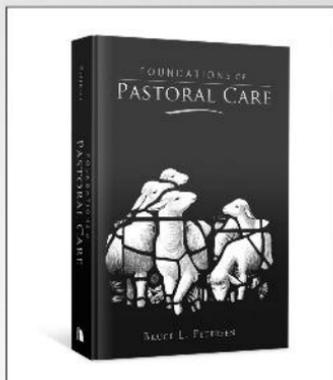
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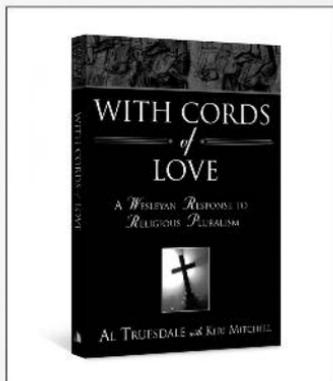


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