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# ***Wesleyan Theological Journal***

Volume 18, 1 — Spring — 1983

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# THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT AND THE PROTESTANT PRINCIPLE

By  
Paul Merritt Bassett

Adherents of the Holiness Movement seem not to doubt that they are Protestant. Even those reticent to say so lest they seem to substitute a party label for the infinitely more satisfactory identification with the undivided Body of Christ or People of God readily affirm allegiance to the theological convictions that give Protestantism its unique character among the branches of Christianity: salvation by grace alone through faith, the sole authority of Scripture for faith and practice, and the universal priesthood of believers. The Holiness Movement identifies itself as Protestant, theologically Protestant.<sup>1</sup>

But there is a problem with this identification, a problem of long standing though its recognition is but recent and as yet but half-articulated. It is this: given the insistence of the Holiness Movement that it exists primarily to promulgate a specific doctrine and given the unique theological method of Protestantism, can the Holiness Movement be authentically Protestant? Should it even seek to be Protestant?

This essay attempts to respond to both questions positively. Yes, the Holiness Movement can and should seek to be thoroughly Protestant. In fact, it will be argued, Protestantism is not an option for the Movement. It is an imperative. Further, it is hoped that it will be adequately demonstrated that it is precisely the Movement's doctrinal *raison d'etre* that dictates that it be Protestant. It is a quintessentially Protestant doctrine requiring a quintessentially Protestant context.

## I. The Protestant Principle, Theological Heart of Protestantism

What is it then to be Protestant, theologically Protestant? It is obviously something other than being willing to be called "Protestant," more than being non-Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, and more profound than complete and uncritical fidelity to the sixteenth century reformation.<sup>2</sup>

In 1948, in his book *The Protestant Era*, Paul Tillich discussed what he called the "Protestant Principle." Drawing on the conviction that faith must not be mere assent to doctrinal statements but must instead be radical, obedient response to the Word of God, Tillich insisted that there is

at the heart of Protestantism an understanding and experience of grace in which the security apparently offered by right belief or right behavior or other religious exactitudes is shattered and we are cast upon the mercy of God and nothing else. This radical, obedient response to the Word of God was what Tillich dubbed the "Protestant Principle."<sup>3</sup>

Actually, what Tillich did was to articulate, albeit with an accent too existentialist to suit some theological palates, what a number of theologians across several centuries had understood to be the very heart of Protestant theological method and content. So Tillich's name for it became permanently affixed to it while discussion of its interpretation continues.<sup>4</sup>

Negatively put, the Protestant Principle systematically forbids anything human the place of ultimacy in the Church. No creed, no organizational structure, no person or group of persons, no custom or habit, no idea, nothing human is to be allowed supremacy.<sup>5</sup>

Positively put, the Protestant Principle systematically puts forward the absolute sovereignty of God, but not "mere" sovereignty. God's sovereignty is believed to be expressed in the Gospel. It is God's sovereign will to redeem, and the Gospel, as the expression of that will, comes to human beings where they are. The Gospel has penetrated every kind of human setting and may be manifested in any of them. Opinions vary as to what transpires when the Gospel does manifest itself, whether it destroys, ameliorates, converts, transforms or assimilates itself to the given culture.<sup>6</sup> But the constant is the conviction that no human situation is ultimate; the Gospel is an expression of divine sovereignty and can manifest itself anywhere.

Believing itself to be an expression of the Gospel, Protestantism accepts the entire history of the manifestation of the Gospel as its own history. It does not see itself as schismatic nor even as anything essentially new. Rather, it sees itself as integral to the history of salvation, to the revelation of the Gospel everywhere and across time. It reads its own beginnings in the sixteenth century not as a series of new creations but as a reformation, as a renewed disclosure of the Gospel quite in harmony with all earlier disclosures. It owns the history of the Chosen People, told in the Old Testament, as its own history, as is the history of the church of the apostles and martyrs and even the history of the medieval church. This is not to evade the problematic aspects of these histories, but it is to indicate that any historical difficulties must first submit to the confidence of Protestantism that they are internal to it and not external or extraneous.<sup>7</sup>

Protestantism also disavows the claim that it arose only, or even chiefly, as a protest movement. Rather, it sees itself as the fruition, of long developing "central tendencies" within the history of salvation. It sees reformation as an on-going, essential characteristic of the life of the Church.<sup>8</sup> This means that while it takes the reformation of the sixteenth century to be critical to the history of salvation and paradigmatic as an expression of radical faith in the sovereignty of divine grace, it does not hold that reformation as normative or binding. Protestantism's commitment is to the sovereignty of divine grace, not to any particular expression of it or theological reflection upon it.

At first blush, all of this appears to throw the entire theological enterprise of Protestantism into relativism. But the basic data remain the same:

Jesus Christ came once and for all, died once and for all, and is risen once and for all. These are basic, the same for any time or place. And basic too is the Bible, confessed by Protestants to be the sole authority for faith and practice, however infrequent may be their agreement on the interpretation of it. Protestants do agree that all theological reflection must be aligned with Scripture if it is to be given credence. And the reason for this is the conviction that Scripture is the authoritative depository of God's own words and words about Him and that it presents the authoritative interpretation of human life, of history.

But the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura* makes no idol of the Bible. This doctrine does not refer to the Bible essentially as a material entity, as a physical presence, though it is impossible to think of the Bible apart from these things. The basic point of reference is its ideational content. Only in Scripture do we have the authorized account, as it were, of who or what is really ultimate. Scripture is no ultimate as a written document though it is the ultimate written document. It is the ultimate vehicle of truth, but it is not the ultimate truth itself. Scripture is affirmed as authoritative for faith and practice because it is the sole reliable source (this, the Church knows by experience) of information and instruction concerning the one true God and what it means to believe in him. But even here the reliability of Scripture is understood not to lie in its mere words. Protestantism has insisted that Scripture becomes binding for faith and practice through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, internal to believer and Church, that it is true and incumbent upon those who would be faithful.<sup>9</sup> Scripture speaks savingly only as the Spirit enlivens it and witnesses to its truth. Apart from this witness of the Spirit, it is only another religious book.

With this conviction that divine revelation is fundamentally personal, living and dynamic, Protestantism has insisted that the believer and the Church must be alert and open to God's creativity, to God's freedom. Not that there is any possibility of essential change in the Gospel. In fact, it is part of the Gospel itself, one of its great promises, that it is forever reliable. But the very dynamism of the Gospel, its power to penetrate any human situation with redemption, guarantees that it will appear in new light and with new meaning from time to time.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, this same dynamic quality of the Gospel, precisely because it does bring the Good News to every kind of human situation, will produce, even invite, theological reflection. And that reflection will always be conditioned by its human context. This is why authentic Protestant theology does not permit itself to be confused with the revelation itself. Genuine Protestant theology refuses to be accepted as even an aspect of revelation. It understands itself to be the time-and-place-bound reflection of believers upon the intersection of divine action and human need. Thus it is to be taken seriously as witness, even as vehicle for common witness, but not as irreformable norm.<sup>11</sup>

At first glance, such a position as has been outlined would seem to lead to spiritual and theological relativism. And that has been a constant problem within Protestantism. On the left, as it were, have been the so-called "enthusiasts," who in their proclamation of the creativity of the Spirit have neglected the fact that the Gospel itself is grounded in specific historical data to which Scripture is the authoritative witness.<sup>12</sup> On the right, as it

were, have been those who have tended to legitimize any theological reflection by overlooking the fact that God's principal reason for acting within our world is that it is fallen and by attributing any such reflection to some sort of essential kinship between the Spirit's creativity and human intellectual activity.<sup>13</sup> Then, in reaction to both of these may be found those who seek to avoid theological reflection. These would assert that we must rely on the Bible uninterpreted, or upon religious feeling, or upon some spiritual gift or experience. Thus no doctrine is taken for pure doctrine.<sup>14</sup> But this is finally to deny the dynamic character of the Gospel, to deny its capacity to reach anyone, anywhere.

Generally speaking, Protestantism has rejected the last-described position with little ado, though often for inadequate reasons.<sup>15</sup> At its best, Protestantism rejects both the "enthusiasts" and the relativists by insisting that the guide to the process of re-formation is the Holy Spirit, who never works contrary to Scripture.<sup>16</sup>

The guide to the process of reforming, in fact its encourager, is the Holy Spirit. And since the Spirit is also sovereign God, it acts with freedom and creativity. Belief without intellectual activity, creativity, is another form of faith without works. It denies the Spirit its proper role. "Enthusiasm" denies the continuity of the Spirit's work in real earthly history. Or, at least it denies that its work retains validity from age to age. Relativism denies the divine personality of the Spirit, a personality which ever stands over against fallen human nature.<sup>17</sup>

An ancient hymn of the Church begins "Veni, Creator Spiritus," "O come, creating Spirit." It is traditionally sung on Pentecost Sunday. Only the last verse is quoted here.

Through thee may we the Father learn  
And know the Son, and thee discern  
Who art of both; and thus adore  
In perfect faith for evermore.<sup>18</sup>

There is not the least design here to by-pass Scripture, but there is recognition that the ultimate source of knowledge of God is God Himself, through the Spirit. Scripture is, in this sense, a mediated source.

Creative and creating divine sovereignty and the refusal to absolutize anything human, these are the two poles of the Protestant Principle. But where does this leave doctrine? Given the strictures of the Principle against allowing ultimacy to anything human, how can any sort of theological discipline, any call for doctrinal allegiance, be established or maintained? Are they *verboten*? And given the insistence of the Principle upon openness to the creativity and freedom of God, how can any binding character be claimed for any dogma? The negative side of the Principle seems to make the question of theological or doctrinal authority problematic. Its positive side makes problematic the question of theological permanence and continuity.

What is the status of dogma or doctrine in Protestantism? How authoritative is it? What is the nature of such authority as it may have?

Here, there are no standard nor conventional responses except at two points: 1. any definition of doctrine which makes doctrine an integral part of the revelation itself, that is to say, puts doctrine on a par with Scripture,

is generally rejected by Protestants—at least in theory; and 2. the validity of any doctrine depends upon positive support from Scripture.<sup>19</sup> But in the case of the dependence upon Biblical support, that support must be more than verbal. Behind it must lie the *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*. Beyond these two points generally accepted, at least as broadly stated, the status and role of doctrine differs from group to group within Protestantism, sometimes greatly.

While dilation upon these matters in terms of Protestantism at large would be appropriate here, it seems well to enter now the strait mapped out by the special interests of this Society and consider the issue of the status and role of doctrine and the place of the Protestant Principle in the thought of John Wesley.

## II. John Wesley's Theology and the Protestant Principle

In her presidential address to this Society in 1974, Mildred Bangs Wynkoop raised the question whether John Wesley would be mentor or guru for the Holiness Movement. She hoped he would be allowed to be mentor.<sup>20</sup> Thus she presaged the hope of Albert Outler, who, in a recent and as yet unpublished paper, urged that Wesley studies move to what he perceived to be a third phase in their development. The first phase, now left behind by many but not by all, is one of Methodist or Wesleyan triumphalism. Here dwells a stereotyped, idealized Wesley, a cult hero for dynamic religious movements doing great things in his name. The second phase sees rather rapid growth these days. Here, Wesley is no longer lionized, but he remains very important as an endorser of good causes. The third phase, as yet entered by few, would find Wesley to be *magister* (Outler's choice of title)—instigator, guide and advisor.<sup>21</sup> He would be another of those voices from behind us saying, "This is the way, walk in it."<sup>22</sup>

This last phase provides the standpoint for the present consideration of the theology of John Wesley and the Protestant Principle. And, it seems in itself to be much truer to the Principle than the other two phases.

John Wesley does not tell us how he arrived at his theological conclusions, what his presuppositions were, which were the authoritative sources, what the truth-warrants were, nor how the path to their declaration was chosen. Yet, the general lines of his theological reflection are sufficiently clear and coherent that they reveal an implicit theological method. A method that is, as it happens, completely in line with the Protestant Principle though Wesley probably never heard the term itself.

Further, while Wesley's theological opinions were occasional in their application and often occasional in their conception as well, they were not off-hand. They were formed in consequence of a rigorous process or *ordo*.<sup>23</sup>

An annotated list of Wesley's controlling methodological principles must suffice here.

1) What are the sources for authoritative theology and theologizing? Preeminence is given to Scripture, but it is Scripture as it is read and sung and practiced along the great and living history of the Church.<sup>24</sup> This is to say that liturgy and tradition are also sources for theology and theologizing as are the words of the Fathers and the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.<sup>25</sup> All of these, including Scripture, acting in lively interplay, checking and balancing, are the source of authoritative theology and theological reflection.<sup>26</sup>

2) What is the relationship between theology and faith? Wesley proceeds theologically on the presupposition that while the theology works with revealed materials and with what is generated as the Holy Spirit brings the worshipping Church and those revealed materials into living contact, theology is not itself part of the revelation. Theology, for Wesley, is reflection upon the faith. It is not the faith itself.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, theologizing is a subjective enterprise. Theology becomes objective, or authoritative, or canonical only as it may be assimilated into the *traditio*, i.e., only as it becomes part of the living experience, the faith and practice, of the worshipping Church-worship here being understood to be the service it renders to all and any in the world as well as its rites. Having been so assimilated, theological reflection becomes faith.<sup>28</sup>

3) What is the use of theology? What is its purpose? Wesley seems to presuppose that the function of theology is to bring together and to hold together two elements: Christian experience and the more or less propositionally articulated truths of faith (in whatever source they may be embedded).<sup>29</sup> Chiles suggests that whenever we read the term "experience" in Wesley's writings, with reference to theological authority, it be translated "evangelical experience."<sup>30</sup> This evangelical experience reaches into what modern thought has usually taken to be two different universes. It involves awareness of empirical reality and it involves awareness of the transcendent, with an existential commitment to both. Of this commitment, both in act and in essence, the incarnate Christ is the pre-eminent example. Integration of the two "worlds" is, for Wesley, the proper task of theology.<sup>31</sup>

4) What are the rules for theologizing? Wesley works with a four-sided hermeneutic, as it were. Both historical-literary investigation (i.e., commitment to empirical reality) and theological reflection (i.e., commitment to transcendent truth) must be brought to bear in Biblical interpretation.<sup>32</sup> Behind and supporting investigation and reflection are Scripture itself, reason, experience, and tradition working together.<sup>33</sup> Wesley readily admits the humanity and time-bound character of the Biblical documents.<sup>34</sup> But he insists that interpretation of them is a matter for faith.<sup>35</sup> Scripture is to be reflected upon in faith (hence the intimate relationship between Scripture-interpretation and the worship of the Church).<sup>36</sup> The humanity and the time-bound character of the Bible must not be submitted exclusively to the scrutiny that arises from a commitment to empirical reality alone. The Bible must be submitted to the scrutiny that arises from theological reflection as well.

5) Does the process of theologizing have a special language. Does it require it? Wesley knew nothing of religious language as an academic thicket, but he did sense some language problems. On the one hand, he did not see the language of theology, nor that of religion generally, as supernatural, as a matter of divine *logoi*. On the other hand, neither did he insist that meaning demand empirical referents, so that words such as "saved" or "God," for instance, must apply to some empirical reality or forfeit any claim to meaning. For Wesley, ordinary words may carry religious meaning in religious contexts, meanings not attached to them in ordinary usage, without necessarily equivocating them semantically.<sup>37</sup> "Perfection" is a significant example of this. It is more than mere verbal symbol, i.e., it is

more than a mere vocal utterance with no clear empirical referent; existentially, it is less than what is now called "event," i.e., it is less than a word which, when evoked, changes the character of the situation in which it is evoked. So, "perfection" is used in a religious sense to describe that which in some critical or essential sense cannot be improved upon, and thus relates to its usual non-religious usage.<sup>38</sup> But it is a far remove from that usual non-religious usage insofar as the noun or pronoun to which it applies may not be perfect in the usual sense and may in fact be, from that usual perspective, the antithesis of perfection.<sup>39</sup>

6) What must be the relationship of theology to the person and work of Jesus Christ? For Wesley, the Christological commitment of the Christian faith is the filter through which all that concerns the faith must pass.<sup>40</sup> Christ is the only revealer and He is also the revelation.<sup>41</sup> (Scripture is revelation, but not, in itself, revealer). To know Scripture, one must know Him and worship.<sup>42</sup> Truly to know the liturgy, traditio, the Fathers, the creeds, the Thirty-nine Articles, one must know Him.<sup>43</sup>

In summary, it may help to clarify our understanding of Wesley's theological method if we say that its closest modern analogy seems to be the so-called "critical theology" of some northern European Lutherans, especially the Lundensians.<sup>44</sup>

We must now return to the question of the sources for Wesley's theology and theologizing. Paul Hoon, in three lucid sentences, presents what seems to be a most adequate summary of which the sources are and how they interrelate.

"The procedure by which Wesley arrives at a doctrine consists, first, in deriving it from and formulating it on the basis of Scripture; second, in testing and modifying it in accord with experience; third, in testing it by reason; fourth, in testing it by tradition.... This might be said to be the *ordo auctoritatis* for Wesley. The distinctive feature of this method lies in the high place given to experience and in the manner in which Wesley systematically appeals to experience."<sup>45</sup>

Two notes may help to fill out this summary. First is the observation, already made, that for Wesley Scripture and worship are not to be separated. Scripture gains its meaning in worship, public or private (which latter, for Wesley, still had liturgical or ritual character). Second is the observation that it is often experience that takes Wesley to the Scripture—either his own experience or that of others. Experience, for Wesley, cannot be left to the vagaries of feeling or forgetfulness or unreflected priorities. It must be seen as having religious significance and it must be evaluated accordingly. Wesley's Primitive Physik and his interest in the work of such men as John Ray, whose Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation Wesley paraphrased in title and in content, were not mere symptoms of a curious mind nor of a dilettante spirit. They are, rather, testimony to a profoundly religious reading of all creation. They bespeak an essentially theological approach to all human experience. However, it is well here to remind ourselves again that experience" means "evangelical experience." The experience that serves Wesley as a source for theology is not just any snapping of the synapses nor every sense-contact



with the physical world. It is the experience that has its roots in one's being engrafted by the love of God in Christ. To be sure, the touch of grace is felt in every aspect of life-or at least it may be felt thus. But, again, the experience that serves as a source for theology is the experience of the person under grace, not just human experience in general nor even the experience of the most religious of non-Christians.

In language typical of his time, Wesley declares that the Bible is "infallibly true."<sup>46</sup> It is God-given, and it is free from "material error."<sup>47</sup> The Spirit dictated the words.<sup>48</sup> A tract written by Wesley bore the title "A Clear and Concise Demonstration of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures."<sup>49</sup>

Yet, for all of that, it is unwise to count him among the forebears of Fundamentalism. Wesley's was a critical temperament, as is shown by his notes upon both testaments, from whomever they may be borrowed. He declares that the Apostles have faulty memories, for they quote the Old Testament inexactly.<sup>50</sup> His Prayer Book for the American Methodists is lacking some of the usual (and canonical) Psalms because Wesley believed them to be unworthy of Christian use.<sup>51</sup> He is openly skeptical of any literal interpretation of certain passages in Romans 8 and 9 for they imply predestination.<sup>52</sup>

Wesley is farthest from the Fundamentalist understanding when he insists on the exercise of the venerable notion of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* as a hermeneutical *sine qua non*. For Wesley, the witness of the Holy Spirit, testifying to the truth of a passage and applying the truth to the believer's life, is absolutely necessary if the Bible is to be illuminated and illuminating.<sup>53</sup> The Spirit applies passages and enables the reader to receive their truth in faith. This is a continuing process and is not abstract. The "testimony of the Holy Spirit" is necessary to "continually inspire" and to "supernaturally assist" the reader or hearer, who must approach the Word in "serious and earnest prayer," in self-examination and in meditation.<sup>54</sup> In fact, Wesley doubts that the "letter of Scripture" has value apart from the operations of the Spirit. The unregenerate mind has no (natural) access to the Scriptures.<sup>55</sup>

Further, for Wesley, the revelation is, strictly speaking, Christ, not ideas nor ideals, not even Scripture. To the true Revelation, Christ, Scripture is attuned. From this Revelation, Scripture takes its authority. There could be Christ without Scripture; there could be no authoritative Scripture without Christ.<sup>56</sup>

"Experience" carries neither the physiological nor the psychological loads for Wesley that it carries in our society. We have already touched upon its religious meaning and content in Wesley's thought and return to it now in terms of its role as a source of theology.

For Wesley, experience may include, but certainly is not bounded by, an empiricist/materialist perspective. In the religious sense, it is not sought after except as it comes in answer to prayerful meditation and self-examination.<sup>57</sup> Theologically, experience is a consequence, a confirmatory factor, not an end in itself and certainly not the beginning. Its purpose is to assure the believer of his relationship to God.<sup>58</sup> Its authority as a source for theology, for doctrine-forming, lies in what it confirms, which is not simply the eternal truth of some passage of Scripture. Experience confirms the fact

that through the written Word the Living Word has done and is doing His redemptive work. If this fact be not at the heart of an "experience," that "experience" is not to be taken as spiritually authoritative. Experience, then, is not an end, nor a goal, but is a result-again, a consequence or confirmation.<sup>59</sup>

The third of Wesley's sources for theology is reason. "To renounce reason is to renounce religion."<sup>60</sup> But this is hardly the Reason touted by the English Deists and Bishop Butler, nor is it the Reason enthroned in Paris' cathedral of Notre Dame on the 20th of Brumaire, 1793. That Reason, however grandly championed, barely knows of God's existence, for it is fallen. In reality, mankind is spiritually ignorant, wholly ignorant, and so is wicked and miserable. Proper use of reason was lost in the Fall. Since then, reason has been used in such ways as make our bondage to sin the more secure.<sup>61</sup> But, through the work of Christ reason is restored, as is its proper use. Through the work of Christ, one becomes a partaker of the truth. Reason, now free to serve Christ, is graciously enabled to comprehend the Word, to know the mind of Christ (as Wesley again points to the practical inextricability of written from living Word).<sup>62</sup>

Thus, reason is an authority for theology, for doctrine-formation and spiritual reflection, because it is a vehicle of the mind of Christ in the life of the believer, testing both Scripture and experience. One does not demand rationality, of course, precisely because reason is vehicular. Like experience, it is a means, not an end. Neither is to be served. Both are to serve. One seeks Christlikeness. So, the authority of reason does not lie in its affinity to nor its approximation of some abstract perfection of reality or logic, nor in its power to order reality. Rather, the authority of reason lies in its power, as converted, to evince and to convey the mind of Christ,<sup>63</sup> and that not Christ the ideal or abstraction but Jesus Christ of Bethlehem, Calvary and Easter, the quintessentially historical God-man.

The fourth source of authoritative theology, for Wesley, is tradition. In some sense, tradition is simply experience in the past tense so that it is not altogether a separate source of theology. Nonetheless, we must again reset our mental gears, for while "tradition" ordinarily refers to notions from the past, such meaning caricatures Wesley's use of the term and of the idea itself. Article XXXIV of the Thirty-nine Articles concerns itself with the traditions of the Church: ". . . at all times they have been divers, and may be changed..." A ceremonial change we can grasp, but the changing of a tradition would seem to be impossible unless one understands that the underlying meaning of "tradition" in the Article has to do as much with the process of infecting an oncoming generation with a living faith as it has to do with catching already articulated ideas from the past. Propositions from the past, that which we would call "traditions," were not thought of as "tradition" even yet in Wesley's time and in the Church of England of which he was part. Rather, to Wesley and to the Anglicanism of his day "tradition" was principally a verbal crystallization of the faith beyond which and behind which necessarily lie the living processes of infecting and being infected.<sup>65</sup> Central to the processes, for Wesley as for every theologically reflective Anglican, was liturgy; that is, the communal acting out of the drama of redemption.<sup>66</sup> Whatever one's doctrinal (i.e., propositional or intellectualized) commitments were, they were required to pass

through the filter of liturgy, where they interacted with life, spiritual life, and became more than letter.<sup>67</sup> It would probably not be too far afield to say that for Wesley "tradition" and "liturgy" were nearly identical and that both were broader than the connotations which they now carry.

So, for Wesley, the authority of tradition for theology does not lie in its store of quotations of the wisdom nor of the practices of the Fathers, nor does it lie in laying those ancient words and deeds down as a measuring rod for the faithfulness of subsequent times. Rather, tradition is experienced. Its authority lies in its capacity to help generate Christlikeness.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, "tradition" as authority for theology is exercised or applied much as experience is. The difference is that "tradition" has a communal or churchly context by means of which the temporal and geographical limits of personal experience are transcended.

Given these theological sources, and the methodology of which they are the working parts, a methodology succinctly described by Hoon's earlier-quoted paragraph, what can be said of the theological function of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection? Where and how does it fit in his theological reflection? And, how does it relate to the Protestant Principle?

How well Wesley knew the theology of the sixteenth century reformers and the first generation or two of their successors we cannot determine for lack of explicit information. Thus it is difficult, if not ordinarily impossible, to determine how much and what parts of his own theology are developed in some sort of dialogue with earlier Protestant thought. Certainly Wesley's theology is not *sui generis*. Yet, it is both genuinely Protestant and different from (even at odds with) the tradition of at least the magisterial reformation in its understanding of what justification entails.

Wesley's theology is thoroughly Protestant in that its principal resource and authority is Scripture; its soteriology is based upon the principle of justification by grace through faith; and its means of expression is preaching and the sacraments in the context of the priesthood of all believers; and behind all of this, and working through it, is the redeeming work and presence of Jesus Christ. But Wesley is different in that he runs the risk of being accused of advocating works-righteousness (a charge more likely made by contemporary evangelicalism than by Enlightenment Anglicanism) and he insists upon reading the moral-ethical imperatives of the Bible as commands to be fulfilled in this life by the engraced, not as ideals to be approximated nor as commands met by us only as Christ fulfils them and imputes that fulfillment to our account. Imparted righteousness is as important for Wesley, the practical Wesley, as is imputed righteousness. He recognizes the forensic character of justification and sanctification, but insists that the forensic character not be allowed to obscure or overshadow the analytic character of both.<sup>69</sup> We are called to love wholeheartedly and this we may do because justification includes regeneration and sanctification includes purification. We are called to the imitation of and to conformity to Christ, not merely to security in Him.<sup>70</sup>

Wesley makes this insistence out of his belief that what Christ calls us to, through Scripture, by the Spirit, is authentic personal moral attainment and personal purity in order that our neighbors might be served. Thus, for Wesley, true Christianity is a matter both of doing and of being. This is the call to "scriptural holiness," the goal of the Christian life and the very context of that life.<sup>71</sup>

Theologically, then, the doctrine of Christian perfection is the conclusion toward which all reflection drives. Wesley seldom reflects upon such basic doctrines as Trinity, the Person of Christ, etc. These he takes in their orthodox forms as being indispensable and fundamental, as starting points for thinking Christianity. They are taken for granted, but not, for that, ignored. He obviously knows them well.<sup>72</sup> His retention of all of the classical doctrines common to Protestant Christianity in his reduction of the Thirty-nine Articles to twenty-five bespeaks very keen theological understanding. But in the same spirit in which Anglicanism took the great doctrines as the necessary and proper propaedeutic to authentic worship, Wesley takes them as the necessary and proper propaedeutic to holy living.<sup>73</sup>

Not that one must have mastered their content before one may live properly, any more than among Anglicans their mastery would be insisted upon before one might worship appropriately. But they are the indisputable theological context of holy living. Whatever one wishes to call holy living must square with them. At the same time, they are the soil out of which holy living and its doctrinal expression are generated. Orthodox doctrine and sanctified living form a check and balance system, as it were. So, on one hand, Wesley scores both the Enthusiasts and the Quietist Moravians not for moral-ethical failure nor for unchristlike behavior but for unsound doctrine. On the other hand, while he is quite clear in his positive appreciation of Anglican doctrine, his whole enterprise is a negative criticism of its lifestyle.<sup>74</sup>

The doctrine of entire sanctification, then, is balance and conduit in Wesley's theology. With connections in the direction of more abstract and formal pneumatology and christology, it also links up with the more concrete and everyday disciplines of ethics and ecclesiology. It does not, it cannot, stand alone. Neither is it a theological end in itself, nor a generator of either sound doctrine or a Christlike life in and of itself. Yet, neither can authentic formal theological reflection be done without it, nor can genuine Christian life be conceived apart from it.

In the former case it is the theological capstone, all else points toward it. In the latter case, it is the doctrine that bridges the gap between the "theoretical" and the "practical"; it defines the way in which all other doctrines come to life and how life is made responsive to doctrine. Responsive but not subservient.

Here, then, is a theology that is thoroughly Protestant and faithful to the Protestant Principle. Ultimacy, supremacy, belongs to God alone. Not in any abstract way but at the very heart of the matter, for Wesley's insistence that the essence of Christian perfection is unconditional love to God and neighbor is an insistence upon giving practical expression to the absolute sovereignty of God. Wesley resolutely and systematically puts down any pretenders to the throne: Scripture, reason, experience, tradition, good works, right worship, sound doctrine—the place of each of them is clearly outlined, both in their relationship to the divine sovereignty and in their relationship to each other. And it is precisely the doctrine of Christian perfection that provides the theological structure which maintains this negative side of the Protestant Principle. Pure love of God and neighbor allows none other on the throne but God Himself. Not even the doctrine of perfect love itself can take that place of ultimacy for perfect love is not an abstraction. It has an object.

The positive side of the Protestant Principle is maintained as well. Wesley's theological catholicity is well-known, if sometimes overdrawn. He was no doctrinal relativist. His so-called quadrilateral gave his theology a flexibility unusual for Protestantism up to his time, but each of the elements of the quadrilateral had very clear referents in the history of salvation-Scripture was not simply a book of religious ideas, it was the story of the intersecting of God and human beings, person to person; experience was not simply any human adventure but evangelical experience; reason was not simply ratiocination but Spirit-guided reflection; tradition was not simply venerable thought and custom but that which enlivened the past and made for continuity in living faith.

Here was recognition, then, of the creativity and freedom of the Spirit, of its capacity to carry the Gospel into any human situation without compromising its integrity, and integrity spelled out in Scripture.

Again, on this positive side of the Protestant Principle, it was precisely the doctrine of Christian perfection that was the sustaining factor. Grounding Christian faith and practice in unconditional love to God and neighbor invited Spirit-directed creativity among believers. And he and they were confident, too, that the Creator Spirit was everywhere calling people to the Gospel of reconciliation. He provided reams of reading material on the assumption that the true lover of God and neighbor would want to reflect on what all of that meant.

Such was the status and role of theology and its relationship to the Protestant Principle in the thought of John Wesley. Now, what does it all say to the sons and daughters of Wesley who call themselves the Holiness Movement?

### III. The Holiness Movement and the Protestant Principle

In this final section, the hope that has animated the essay in the earlier sections presses with added fervor. That hope is that the paper will serve heuristically. In this final section, too, advantage is taken of the essay's special character as the presidential address of the Wesleyan Theological Society. It now becomes very much an exercise in advocacy, with candor and hope marking our way.

In discussing the relationship of the Holiness Movement to the Protestant Principle, we begin by asking how the Movement relates to Protestantism's inner history and what it reads as its own inner history.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Holiness Movement struggled with what it called "the Church Question."<sup>75</sup> The majority of the leaders of the Movement laid major emphasis on their view that they were not "come-outers." They were "pushed-outers," they said. They claimed to be reluctant to found new religious bodies.<sup>76</sup> But, as they saw it, the older denominations, particularly Methodism, had become increasingly uncongenial to the message of entire sanctification and the life-style of its proponents. This made them unhealthy places for converts that the holiness revivals were gaining. There seemed to be little choice but to "organize holiness."<sup>77</sup>

Usually, the leaders of the Movement underlined their continuity with what they had left, often identifying themselves as the true inheritors of the spirit and faith of the now forsaken body.<sup>78</sup> Forms of worship and

creedal statements were often taken directly from the older group.<sup>79</sup> The validity of the sacraments celebrated by their former compatriots was not questioned. The holiness folk, for the most part, refused to practice closed communion. And when the occasion called for it they would celebrate the sacraments again, without hesitation, in the churches that they had left.<sup>80</sup> Ordination was usually kept non-sectarian. That is, one was ordained to ministry in the "church of God" or, "in the church of Christ," not to ministry "in XYZ Holiness Group."

All of this, and still other practices, was done quite deliberately to express continuity with the historic Christian community, and with the broader contemporary church.

And yet, discontinuity was touted, too, and encouraged. The holiness groups offered themselves as the true apostolic succession, not as an alternative form of the one true faith. Where Wesley had attempted to send his Methodists back to their Anglican parish churches and priests, and even set the schedules of the societies to avoid conflict with the schedules of parish churches, the holiness groups established their round of meetings and services to compete with those of the "mainline" and invited people to leave the older groups.

For the most part, the holiness groups refused to see themselves as *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. They insisted that they are the *ecclesia* in every respect.<sup>81</sup> On the one hand, they argued that they were legitimate branches of the historic church. On the other, they tended to distance themselves from the older branches.<sup>82</sup>

The ambivalence of the Holiness Movement in its relationship to the Church catholic is also seen in its tendency to pick and choose which persons and chapters it will own from the history of salvation. It tends to disassociate itself from the morally problematic histories of Old Testament Israel and Roman Catholicism, especially from medieval Catholicism. This has caused the Movement to separate itself from the inner history of Protestantism, by and large. It has developed its own inner history in which it sees itself as having developed in spite of much of the rest of Christianity. Rather than understand itself to be the "ripe fruit of central tendencies," it has tended to see itself as a divine interjection into the history of the Church, the history of salvation. It has not generally recognized the need for a symbiotic relationship with the whole Church in its entire history.<sup>83</sup>

Further, though it calls itself Protestant and claims the sixteenth century reformation as its own history, the fact is that it raises serious questions about the theological and spiritual validity of the reformers' very critical doctrines of divine sovereignty and sovereign grace, and scores the reformers' neglect of the doctrine of sanctification (i.e., entire sanctification). Thus, at very crucial points, it actually opposes the sixteenth century reformation. As strong as its claims to be Protestant may be, the Holiness Movement gives the sixteenth century reformation a most ambivalent role in its inner history. It is seen to be a revival of Biblical Christianity at its best. At worst, its teaching and influence are even considered perverse.<sup>84</sup> The paradigmatic or normative character with which it influences the inner history of Protestantism at large is carefully altered in the thinking of the Holiness Movement.

What, then, of the Protestant Principle in the thinking of the Holiness Movement? What of the insistence that nothing human be given ultimacy? And what of the claim that the Gospel can penetrate any culture, be expressed by and large in the forms of that culture, and still be the Gospel?

Here, the Holiness Movement has yet really to understand itself. Exceptionally sensitive to a call to evangelize the world and, at the same time, exceptionally sensitive to relativism, the Movement is but now really seeing and articulating the tensions that these concerns generate. In large part, the Holiness Movement formed itself as a reaction to what can now be seen as a liberal reading of the Principle. That is to say, it formed itself as a reaction to what seemed to beckon to relativism. In Methodism, for instance, the tendency of episcopal leadership to accept a variety of expressions of "scriptural holiness," some of them clearly not aligned with Wesley's understanding, led holiness leaders to see doctrinal slippage at best, and opposition to their very Wesleyan view at worst. Generally, the bishops and others spoke rather clearly on the issue. They opposed some of the methods of the holiness people, especially those methods such as the use of itinerant evangelists, which were not amenable to administrative discipline.<sup>85</sup> But the inner history of the Movement, by the late 1880's, made revivalism, with its itinerant preachers, a necessary adjunct to the preaching and living of the doctrine of entire sanctification. So, the attempt to bring itineracy under control was seen as an attempt to stifle holiness. And, sad to say, as it did come to mean stifling itinerant evangelists, it did come to mean stifling holiness folk.<sup>86</sup> Finally the holiness folk moved out and the doctrine became but a memory in the mainline, or at least it was moved off center.

The inner history of the Holiness Movement has tended to say that its denominations formed as Methodism and others closed the doors to holiness. But that is not the whole story. Who was there to bring the message of holiness when the holiness people had gone?

The fact that many advocates of entire sanctification exited from the mainline bodies believing that those bodies would no longer tolerate their message has created yet another significant characteristic of the Movement's inner history and that is the tendency to see itself as an outside critic of much of Protestantism. It does not see itself as a Protestant self-criticism. And, on the other hand, it has generally not been able to understand that criticism leveled at itself by non-holiness people is often offered as part of their own self-criticism.<sup>87</sup> The inner history of Protestantism at large has counted the Holiness Movement in; the inner history of the Movement has counted much of Protestantism out.

Here, the Movement parts company decisively with Wesley. Wesley's inner history, if we may speak thus, was quite Protestant-and catholic. His loyalty to the Church of England in no way led him to see himself as an outside critic of other traditions. He saw his work as a self-criticism of Protestantism, even of wider Christianity. He was very much the insider, seeking reform; not the outsider, forsaking the old to create the new.<sup>88</sup> His theological method is designed to retain as much of the past as possible, as his understanding of tradition shows, and to build and maintain theological ties with the various groups of his time. To be sure, he could, and did sharply rebuke both his own Church of England and some independents.<sup>89</sup>

But this was as a responsible brother, not as a visiting inquisitor-and certainly not as one who even could stand outside the circle of faith so long as it was clearly Christian by what he believed to be a proper definition.

This is, of course, a consequence of Wesley's theological method and an expression of the Protestant Principle. Wesley confidently stated that the Church of England was constitutionally superior to any others, but this in no way silenced criticism of it.<sup>90</sup> Nowhere, does he make it anything other than a means of grace. It is never an end in itself, though he always feels he must answer to it for his message and method.

In large part, this is because Wesley sees the Spirit as having worked, and working yet, even in groups that official Anglicanism condemned. Even where there was no Christian ministry until he and his co-laborers offered it, the success of the Gospel in cutting through a supposedly impervious socio-cultural condition gave footnotes to Wesley's growing belief that there may be a certain faithlessness to insisting that the Gospel is dependent upon special forms and formulae.<sup>91</sup>

The fact that tradition, experience and reason are sources of theological authority and reflection in dynamic conjunction with Scripture necessarily keeps religious thinking open to the creativity of the Spirit and it implies that the Spirit is not limited to the here and now. But this does not open the door to relativism. The creative Spirit is the same Spirit who enlivens and gives witness to the truth of Scripture. And it is the specific task of Scripture, within the quadrilateral, to serve as the foundation for "norming" the other norms, by the inspiration of the Spirit.

It would seem that the reaction of the Holiness Movement to the liberal reading of the Protestant Principle, a reading that finally did invite theological carelessness and untenable relativism into some quarters, moved it in a direction that cost it too dearly. It separated it from its mentor and, as is becoming evident, from precisely that theological method which would allow it to retain its *raison d'être* in full vigor across the multitude of cultures to which it feels called. The most obvious expression of that separation is the influence of Fundamentalism in the thinking of the Movement.<sup>92</sup> Another is the ethnocentrism that marks its doctrinal and ethical declarations.<sup>93</sup> Yet another is its tendency to limit itself conceptually by an over-nice vocabulary-over-nice in that it assumes that language is static.<sup>94</sup>

Another way to make these observations is to say that the Movement developed an essentially defensive inner history.

This it did not need to do. In fact, its own resources in systematic and constructive theology-i.e., those which present the doctrine of entire sanctification in its full theological context, in contrast to much of the specialized material on that doctrine in isolation-have generally aligned themselves with the inner history of Protestantism at large and have submitted to the Protestant Principle without the slightest betrayal of the Movement's signal tenet.<sup>95</sup>

But more important, it is precisely the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification themselves which call us to positive alignment with the inner history of Protestantism at large and call us to retain the Protestant Principle. Further, without that alignment and without that retention (in some quarters of the Movement it would be a restoration), the doctrine itself is threatened with ossification and the experience with validity at best.



The inner history of Protestantism has focused special interest on the doctrines of *sola gratia*, *sola scriptura* and the universal priesthood of believers. There is a unique relationship between each of these and the doctrine of entire sanctification. In each case, the latter doctrine provides a rich and fruitful "soil" for explication and development. On the other hand, remove serious, fundamental attention to these three doctrinal "boundaries" and the doctrine of entire sanctification becomes an absurdity.

Consider the case of the relationship of *sola gratia* to entire sanctification. The doctrine *sola gratia/sola fide* is the expression of the creative sovereignty of God from the perspective of soteriology. It denies ultimate saving efficacy to any human religious activity. This much, Protestantism at large has seen clearly. But the dimension that the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification brings to this doctrine is much grander. First of all, the Wesleyan understanding can take very seriously the side of the Protestant Principle that much of historic Protestantism has neglected in its proclamation of *sola gratia/sola fide*: the positive side, which asserts that the power of the Gospel is such that it can manifest itself in any human situation. The doctrine of entire sanctification is a grand declaration that the fulness of God's love is available to all, here and now. In any "here and now." Further, in anchoring itself in perfect love rather than in perfect behavior, the doctrine of entire sanctification is a declaration of the power of the Gospel to be expressed as Gospel across cultures.

The principle tenet of the Movement also adds a dimension to the negative side of the Protestant Principle as it applies to *sola gratia/sola fide*. It stoutly affirms that just as ultimate saving efficacy must be denied to any human activity, neither can ultimate saving efficacy be denied God Himself in the human life that has turned itself to Him. It declares that the creative sovereignty of God can make a truly new creature in Christ Jesus, even here.

Such an enrichment of the understanding of *sola gratia/sola fide* is very much within the range of the Movement's present resources. On the other side of the matter, without this great Protestant declaration, the doctrine of entire sanctification is totally eviscerated. The utter inability of the human being perfectly to love God and neighbor is patent. The doctrine of entire sanctification must root itself in grace. Reason, tradition, experience and Scripture all testify to it.

The doctrine of *sola scriptura* expresses the negative side of the Protestant Principle by denying to any merely human word or idea superiority to the Word of God. And lest there be temptation to mistake the fact that the Bible is in human language for mere humanity for the book itself, *sola scriptura* has included the insistence on the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*. *Sola scriptura* expresses the positive side of the Protestant Principle as the vehicle of ordinary language, enlivened and attested by the Spirit becomes a means of grace. The Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification supports and enriches this doctrine by its declaration that the Word of God is to be taken with utter seriousness, even at that point where it would seem to speak only of a spiritual ideal for the believer and for society. That word of perfect love is not to be contravened by any human word, no matter how wise.

Here, the corollary of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* is of special importance. On the one hand, it means that the Word is carried to the

believer in a way tailored to that given believer; it is carried to a society in a way tailored to that society. And as it is the Spirit itself bearing the witness, so it is the Spirit who enables obedience. Thus, we are again at the heart of the doctrine of entire sanctification.

On the other hand, without giving serious and basic attention to the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, with its corollary, the doctrine of entire sanctification lapses into a series of ethical or psychological platitudes absolutely untenable. This is, of course, a clear and present danger, especially as so much holiness preaching is done in ignorance of the Scripture and depends instead upon analogies from hither and yon or on the eisegesis of a Biblical passage without regard for its original intention or context. That is to say, without regard for the authentic *testimonium Spiritus sancti*, which involves tradition, experience and reason.

The doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers expresses the negative side of the Protestant Principle by denying to any human being or to any group of persons saving efficacy or ultimacy. It declares all believers to be mediators, not owners nor generators, of the creative sovereignty of God. On its positive side, the Protestant Principle is seen in the very universality of the priesthood. Again, here is the declaration that the Gospel can penetrate anywhere and manifest itself there. Priesthood is a concomitant of belief, not of status, office, culture or human nomination.

The Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification undergirds and enriches this doctrine on the negative side by insisting that perfect love is perfect submission, a submission that has everything to do with agapeic service to one's neighbor and the wholehearted devotion of the community of believers to the same service to society. On the positive side, the doctrine of entire sanctification affirms the willingness of the Spirit to enter in fulness any believer anywhere. That believer, already mediating his/her own culture, then becomes a mediator of the reconciling will of God in that culture.

On the other hand, without the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers continually and profoundly pressed, the doctrine of entire sanctification destroys itself in self-righteousness and pride. Here it is that the self-critical temper is most necessary but also most likely, theologically. If the believer is truly a mediator of grace, of Gospel, and if the society of believers is a society of mediators, in the Spirit, there should develop a grand and positive enterprise of loving correction and encouragement, of reminding that believers do not own the vineyard but are its tenants. Self-defense is not the mode of the priest, agapeic service in perfect obedience is.

The Holiness Movement is rich in resources and has much to offer the Church at large. Generally speaking, at least theologically, most of Protestantism has counted us in. Sad to say, the Movement has tended to count Protestantism out in all but theory. The cost has been too dear. Our inner history has made of us something that we were not meant to become.

My plea is not that we compromise. Not a whit. My plea is that we recognize some lost resources and turn them to spiritual profit for the sake of the whole Church.

And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God has willed  
His truth to triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim--  
We tremble not for him.  
His rage we can endure,  
For, lo, his doom is sure;  
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly pow'rs  
No thanks to them abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through Him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go.  
This mortal life also.  
The body they may kill;  
God's truth abideth still.  
His kingdom is forever.

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### Notes

- 1 See, for instance, H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, (3 vols.; Kansas City, Mo.: Nazarene Publishing House, 1940-43), I, pp. 82-83. For an example from among those who wish to avoid the sectarian overtones of being called Protestant, see *Anderson School of Theology, We Believe* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner, 1979). This statement was prepared by the faculty in celebration of the centennial of the Church of God reformation movement.
- 2Cf. John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity: Interpreted Through Its Development* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954).
- 3Cf. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1948).
- 4Literature abounds on the point. For a most perceptive work, see Gerhard Ebeling (S. H. Hooke, tr.), *The Word of God and Tradition. Historical Studies Interpreting the Divisions of Christianity* (London: Collins, 1968). For a very different view, see Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964).
- 5Cf. Dillenberger and Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 313-14.
- 6Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951) for a discussion of the various responses generated among Christians concerning this relationship.
- 7Cf. Dillenberger and Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-11. The issue touched here is quite complex and there has been an on-going debate, especially since the reformation of the sixteenth century, on the question of whether the sacred

and the secular have separate histories and whether there is a hidden history as well as the empirical.

8Cf. Dillenberger and Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-12.

9For Luther's view, see Philip Watson, *Let God be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947), pp. 149-177. Also see Calvin, *Institutes* I.7.1-5; I.9.2-3. For a discussion of the development of the idea in the twentieth century, see G. C. Berkouwer (Lewis B. Smedes, tr. and ed.), *A Half Century of Theology: Movements and Motives* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 107-143. Also see Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason. The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946) ch. 22.

10Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* III.2.1-43. The idea is not 90 much explicit here as implicit in the entire passage.

11E.g., Calvin, *Institutes* I.13.1-5.

12The Gnostics and the Montanists are early examples of this sort of enthusiasm. Later examples would include Caspar Schwenckfeld and Sebastian Franck. A modern, and extreme, example would be Christian Science.

13This view has been permitted lodging in the Church only in the last several generations. Examples would be the liberal immanentists, such as, Borden Parker Bowne, *The Immanence of God* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1905) and Albert C. Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1937).

14From this writer's perspective, it is impossible for the believer to avoid theological reflection. A contemporary expression of the Bible only/no theology view would be the Churches of Christ clustered especially around Nashville, Tennessee, and Abilene, Texas.

15Rejection has usually been on the grounds of the supposed necessity for theologizing for apologetic, evangelistic, and educational purposes. But this is an *ex post facto* argument.

16E.g., Calvin, *Institutes* I.9.2.

17E.g., Calvin, *Institutes* III.1.1-4. This argument lies at the heart of Luther's opposition to the "enthusiasts' " understanding of the sacraments. See, for example, Paul Althaus (Robert C. Schultz, tr.), *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), pp. 382-391

18The translation is anonymous.

19E.g., Calvin *Institutes* I.7.4. On the relationship between dogma and Scripture in Luther, see Althaus, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-8.

20Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, "John Wesley-Mentor or Guru", *Wesleyan Theological Journal* Vol. 10 (Spring, 1975), pp. 5-14.

21Albert Outler, "A New Future for 'Wesley Studies': An Agenda for 'Phase III' ", unpublished essay read to the Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies, Keble College, University of Oxford, Oxford, England, 27 July, 1982.

22Isaiah 30:21.

23Cf. S. Paul Schilling, *Methodism and Society in Theological Perspective*, Vol. III of *Methodism and Society* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), pp. 23-43. Also see Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), pp. 13-22.

24For a thoughtful, theologically oriented description of Anglican worship in the time of Wesley, cf. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England from Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1961), pp. 19-37 and 52-75.

25Ibid pp. 193-209.

26Cf. William J. Abraham, "The Concept of Inspiration in the Classical Wesleyan Tradition," unpublished essay read at Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies, Keble College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, 30 July, 1982.

27Cf. Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), pp. 21-32.

28 Ibid., pp. 77-87.

29Ibid

30Chiles, op. cit., p. 80.

31Chiles, op. cit., pp. 84-86.

32Ibid

33Cf. R. Benjamin Garrison, "Vital Interaction: Scripture and Experience: John Wesley's Doctrine of Authority," *Religion in Life*, 25 (1956), pp. 567ff.

34Cf. William9, op. cit., pp. 23-29

35E.g., John Wesley, *Sermons I*, 242-43; *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament Acts 7:38; John 3:21*.

36E.g., *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament II Tim. 3:16*.

37 e.g., *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 19 (*Works XI*, 396); *Sermons: "On Perfection," I*, 1-2. Works refers to the Jackson edition: Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., with the Last Corrections of the Author* (3rd ed.; 14 vols.; London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, 1829-1831). The references to sermons are from the edition of Edward H. Sugden, ed., *Wesley's Standard Sermons* (2 vols.; London: Epworth, 1921).

38 Cf. *Sermons: "On Christian Perfection" I.1,4*, 7-9.

39 Ibid, 20-21.

40 This is the methodological implication in John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1960). Also see *Letters: "To Mary Bishop"* (VI.297-299). The edition of letters used here is John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (8 vols.; London: Epworth Press, 1931).

- 41 E.g. Letters: "To a Roman Catholic," 7 (III.8-9); Sermons: "The Lord Our Righteousness," I.1-4.
- 42 Starkey, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Also see Chiles, *op. cit.*, p. 79; and Franz Hildebrandt, *From Luther to Wesley* (London: Epworth, 1956), pp. 26-29.
- 43 Works XIV. 240-241. This is Wesley's "Preface to the Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers." Also see, Letters; "To Dr. Conyers Middleton," TT 384-388.
- 44 Cf. Thor Hall, *A Framework for Faith . . .* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).
- 45 Cf. Paul Hoon, "The Soteriology of John Wesley," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh, 1936, p. 343.
- 46 Sermons, I.205.
- 47 Sermons, I.225. Also see Letters, IV.369.
- 48 Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament Preface, p. 9, and John 19:24.
- 49 Works, XI.478-479.
- 50 A Compendium of Natural Philosophy, I I.447-449.
- 51 Cf. Chiles, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
- 52 Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament Romans 8 and 9.
- 53 Works, XIV.267; Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament II Tim. 3:16.
- 54 Ibid
- 55 Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament. Acts 7:38, John 3:21.
- 56 Deschner, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-92.
- 57 Sermons, II.357f. Also see Robert Cushman, "Theological Landmarks in the Revival Under Wesley," *Religion in Life* 27 (1957-58), p. 108.
- 58 Cf. Henry Bett, *The Spirit of Methodism* (London; Epworth, 1943), pp. 93-105. Also see Chiles, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82.
- 59 Cf. Garrison, *loc. cit.*
- 60 Letters, V.364.
- 61 Sermons: "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered," I.6, in Works, VI.354-355.
- 62 Starkey, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-78.
- 63 Sermons 70 LXX, II.6, in Works VI.
- 64 The quotation from Article XXXIV of the Thirty-nine Articles is an excellent expression of the classical meaning of tradition.
- 65 Letters: "To Dr. Conyers Middleton," II.384.
- 66 Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-204.
- 67 Ibid, pp. 210-215.
- 68 Letters: "To Dr. Conyers Middleton," II.384-388.

- 69 Works, VIII.361-363. This is a reference to "The Principles of a Methodist."
- 70 Sermons: "The New Birth." In Sermons, II.
- 71 Sermons "The Marks of the New Birth," in Sermons, I.
- 72 This can be seen in all of his work, especially in his comments, his Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament.
- 73 E.g. William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1946), shows in a number of instances the breadth of Wesley's thought. See especially, pp. 176-200, Cannon's discussion of Wesley's discussion of "Man and Sin."
- 74 Works, V.47. This is Wesley's last Oxford sermon. In it he is sharply critical of the level of Christian living in the university community.
- 75 This struggle took several forms, one of the most remarkable of them being the Church of God reformation movement. For a document showing very clearly the issues involved, see the "Declaration of Principles" of the General Convention of Ministers, Workers, and Representatives, convened at Fort Scott, Kansas, Wednesday, 3 March 1897, in Clarence Cowan's, *The History of the Church of God (Holiness)*, (Overland Park, Kansas: Herald and Banner, 1949), pp. 222-225.
- 76 Cf. The quotation from P. F. Bresee concerning his dismissal from the Southern California Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in E. A. Girvin, *Phineas Bresee: A Prince in Israel* (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1916), pp. 99-100. Bresee's words were echoed by many another.
- 77 E.g. John P. Brooks, "What Are the Chief Hindrances to the Progress of the Work of Sanctification Among Believers" in *Proceedings of Holiness Conferences held at Cincinnati, November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1877 and at New York, December 17, 1877* (Philadelphia: National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, [1878]) pp. 85-102.
- 78 Cf. my forthcoming article, "Sanctified Loyalists: The Holiness Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South" in the *Duke Divinity Review*.
- 79 Cf., for instance, *Church of the Nazarene, Manual* (1908), the sections containing ritual.
- 80 While one's boyhood memories may not be entirely accurate, one can remember a number of acquaintances, former Methodists, who returned quarterly to their former church homes to celebrate communion with their friends. This is one example of an ecumenical spirit among the Holiness people.
- 81 This is seen especially in the rapid establishment of schools and colleges, hospitals, and overseas missions by the Holiness people.
- 82 This was especially obvious in the establishment of Holiness camp meetings. It is also seen in the development of a unique Holiness literature

and the rapid rise of Holiness publishing houses. These were direct criticisms of the literature being produced by other denominations. Separation was intended.

- 83 Cf. H. O. Wiley, *Christian Theology* (3 volumes; Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1940-1943), III.107-116. Wiley is not here advocating separation but his description of Church would necessitate separation from the larger body of Protestantism.
- 84 The grass roots practical response to the Protestant doctrine of *sola gratia* has been to turn in the direction of Pelagianism. Of course, the Movement's theologians have sought to avoid this. Nonetheless, both the grass roots and the professional have had a difficult time with *sola gratia* insofar as it may imply a doctrine of divine election.
- 85 Let the reader supply his/her own footnote.
- 86 Again, I would refer the reader to my forthcoming paper on "Sanctified Loyalists" in the *Duke Divinity Review*.
- 87 Probably the most striking example of this reaction on the part of episcopal leadership, was Methodist Bishop Vincent's name for holiness, "cranktification." For a statement that was taken by the Holiness people to be a declaration of opposition, see *Journal of the General Conference . . . M. E. Church (South) . . .*, 1894 (Nashville, 1894), p. 25. Here, the bishops of the Methodist Church, South, express their concern about the growing independence of the Holiness people in their charge.
- 88 This particular point is made with unique sharpness in Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), pp. 39-43, 92-97, 131-146.
- 89 E.g. *Journal*, "Monday 15 June 1741," in *Works II*.467. Here, Wesley criticizes both Luther and the Moravians.
- 90 *Letters*: "To Samuel Walker," III.145-146.
- 91 E.g. *Journal*, 2 April 1739, in *Works II*.172-173.
- 92 Cf. Paul Bassett, "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement . . .", *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (Spring, 1978), pp. 65-91
- 93 To cite an insignificant but clear example, the insistence in some world mission areas that all preachers must wear white shirts and neckties. By now, the practice has become a sub-cultural expectation, but originally it was an alien imposition.
- 94 A humorous example: We remember the mysterious "R.H.D." who governed the meaning of "plenary" in this Society's creedal article on Scripture.
- 95 Among the leaders here, one would name H. O. Wiley, Charles Ewing Brown, and A.M. Hills as authors whose work covers the wide range of systematic theology in the systematic mode.



# A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

by  
Harold Burgess

## Introduction: A Personal Journey

On a January day in 1968, the dean of the liberal arts college at which I was the newly named "Director of Religious Affairs" asked me, on six days' notice, to become the teacher of a required freshman level religion course, "Christian Foundations." With a kind of smiling, naive joy I began, certain that I could help the students-most of them products of Wesleyan Sunday schools-to an exciting, vibrant investigation of their faith. It did not take long for the naive smile to become reshaped into a grey-spirited expression marked, in public, by a stiff upper lip. There was a flurry of "drop slips." I read one of them. "Reason for dropping this course: BORING."

As the course progressed, some instinct for survival heightened my awareness of how students were responding to my efforts. 1) A number of them were indeed genuinely interested; they involved themselves deeply in the process of the class. 2) Other students-a sizeable segment of the class-were willing to memorize anything, nod supportive agreement when it seemed appropriate, or jump through any multiple-choice hoop so long as these things seemed likely to lead to a good grade. 3) Still a third group simply slumped in their seats and stared back at me in a most incredulous, blank, and uninvolved manner; their papers and oral participation duplicated their body-language.

It was the third group, the blank-faced, unresponsive, mostly silent students who captured my interest. "What had been done to them?" "Why was it that these products of growing Sunday schools-schools that prided themselves on being true to our historic faith-seemed so tuned out, so turned off, so spiritually lifeless?" And yet, I suspected that these well-meaning schools were congratulating themselves on having turned out another crop of students into the Christian college of their choice.

Looking back, it is my judgment that this "Christian Foundations" teaching assignment, and more specifically my response to it, was a major turning point in my career. For some reason that I cannot now explain in any satisfactory manner, I was convinced that a significant factor in the total picture was that many of the students in my course had not been very adequately taught in their churches. Furthermore, I was not at all sure that they were being very adequately taught in "Christian Foundations." That

is, at least, if the quality of their involvement in the life of the Christian community was in any sense a measure of teaching effectiveness. Thus it was that my desire to have some better handles on understanding the dynamics and consequences of church education (one form of ministry), and an accompanying desire to have better tools for myself as a teacher (and minister) of the Christian religion, led me directly to a reconsideration of the foundations of my understanding both of teaching and of Christian ministry. This introduction, then, is an abbreviated record of my personal journey in these matters.<sup>1</sup>

## Reflections on Theory/Practice

Now there appeared to be a number of avenues to get at the process of reconsidering these foundations of ministry, as focused in this problem related specifically to teaching. First of all there was the possibility of reconsidering the nature of the theological and experiential foundations of the particular expression of the Christian faith to which I was a fourth generation heir. As a matter of fact I did this somewhat informally, and, in so doing found myself affirming, even rejoicing in, my own faith and the somewhat pietistic tradition of which it was a part. I chose then (in the late 1960's and early 1970's) and I choose now to understand the Christian faith through the "lens model" that our present generation commonly labels "evangelical" and "Wesleyan."

The second avenue for "reconsidering foundations," the one which at that time appeared to have the greatest promise for my needs, was to examine the interaction of fundamental theoretical components in the actual practice of teaching as a dimension of Christian ministry. As I look back upon the process which led me to this approach, and from examining notes made to myself from time to time, I believe that even prior to any formal studies in this field I had come to a tentative personal judgment that Sunday schools, to say nothing of such institutions as colleges and seminaries, did not always succeed in teaching what they thought that they were teaching. Indeed, it seemed that results were many times antithetical to the obvious aims.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly enough, it was not from individuals associated with my own theological tradition that I received the greatest help. Early on in my efforts at examining what had happened to my "group 3" students, and what was in fact happening to students whom I was teaching, I chanced to come across D. Campbell Wyckoff's *The Gospel and Christian Education*. The selection of this book was in some sense a "library accident." To be perfectly honest, I suppose that the appealing title of this small volume was misleading as I decoded its (the title's) possible meaning and promise-given my particular field of experience. Nonetheless, three sentences from Wyckoff gave me my earliest grip on the handle I was looking for:

The most critical problem that faces Christian education, however, is the need to understand itself-to gain deep insight into what it is about. It needs to see how it is related to the cultural situation, to the church's life and thought, and to the educational process. This problem of self-understanding is the problem of theory.<sup>3</sup>

Not long after my somewhat chance, but highly meaningful, encounter with Wyckoff's thought, I was accepted into the graduate program in religious instruction at the University of Notre Dame under the personal direction of James Michael Lee. Early-on, an issue raised by Lee made solid connection with my earlier reading of Wyckoff:

I firmly believe [to put this issue in Lee's words] that one major cause for the relative inefficacy of much of contemporary religious instruction lies in the fact that most religion teachers hold one theory of religious instruction while at the same time they utilize pedagogical practices drawn from another highly-conflicting theory. *Consistency in the relationship between theory and practice is absolutely indispensable for the effectiveness, expansiveness, and fruitfulness of a practice in any domain whatsoever.*<sup>4</sup>

Eventually a kind of scenario began to impress itself upon me as I continued to reflect upon my experience in teaching "Christian Foundations"-and in particular upon the previously mentioned, bored, incredulous segment of the class. Suppose that a well-meaning Sunday school teacher (or pastor) laboring too tensely under the double burden often imposed by the evangelical sense of mission,<sup>5</sup> casts about in his mind for some "effective" means of drawing individuals into his classroom where 1) they may be counted, and where 2) they may respond to his message. By eagerly seizing too uncritically upon some, possibly gimmicky, practice drawn from a theoretical (or theological) framework quite out of harmony with his own convictions, it seems possible that such a teacher (or other minister) might cause his students (charges) to become inoculated rather than evangelized, indoctrinated rather than educated, brought under a kind of boring bondage rather than set free to explore and to live out the implications (and claims) of the Christian faith.

Following the insights gained through contact with the thought of such individuals as Wyckoff and Lee, I began a conscious attempt to link appropriate theory with practice in my ministry of teaching. Overall, I found that a free and inquiring spirit was liberated among the students in "Christian Foundations"-a course which was for me a kind of laboratory for a period of ten years. Indeed, my heart was strangely warmed (to borrow an image from Wesley-somehow we have got to begin getting him into this essay) as this liberation brought a new posture to certain members of the class. Class time began to be much more fun for me; the level of enthusiasm began to rise on the part of students. Best of all, we began to realize at least one of the objectives of the course, namely, to be involved in a vibrant investigation of our faith.

Nonetheless, in spite of a gratifying improvement in my ministry of teaching, I confess to a certain uneasiness with respect to the ultimate wholeness of my resolution of the teaching ministry problem described above. My uneasiness centers on the leap which I seem to have made from an espoused Wesleyan theology to my efforts at improving teaching via an integration of theory and practice. Such a leap might well lead to a practice of ministry that is uninformed, uncriticized, and unenergized by one's theology. While I am in the mood to confess, let me expand the range of my

confession somewhat. I am afraid that a leap from "theology" to "practice" without a vital connection is all too common in Wesleyan circles. Out of our desire to bring about conversions, for example, I firmly believe that we sometimes allow, even encourage, uncriticized, unintegrated, and, worse still, unconscious application of practices drawn from Pavlov's or Skinner's theories of behavior change. Thus, as David Moberg suggests, those of us who by virtue of our theology ought to rely most heavily on the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about conversion strangely tend to rely even more heavily upon practices rooted in the behavioral sciences-i.e. reinforcement, persuasion, social pressure, and the like.<sup>6</sup> William Sargant, a medical specialist interested in the physiology of conversion who also happens to be the son of a minister in the Wesleyan tradition, cuts even closer to the nub in his *Battle for the Mind*. In this fascinating study of the phenomenon of conversion, Sargant details the close similarities in the conversion experiences produced by Russian brainwashing techniques, Wesleyan revivalism, and Tennessee snake handling. In a tacit, though perhaps not intended, argument for a proper integration of theology with the practice of ministry (in this instance evangelism) Sargant quotes from an 1859 "Sermon on the Work of the Holy Spirit" by George Salmon:

We have still much to learn as to the laws according to which the mind and body act on one another, and according to which one mind acts on another; but it is certain that a great part of this mutual action can be reduced to general laws, and the more we know of such laws the greater our power to benefit others will be.

If, when, through the operation of such laws surprising events take place, (and) we cry out . . . "Such is the will of God," instead of setting ourselves to inquire whether it was the will of God to give us power to bring about or prevent these results; then our conduct is not piety but sinful laziness.

To gather up my argument to this point, it seems fair to hold that two major roles of a theology of ministry can be identified: 1) to develop a "linkage" between a theology which is espoused and actual practices of ministry, and 2) to establish a standpoint for evaluating the results of ministry. By definition, a Wesleyan theology of ministry could be perceived as an effort to establish this same "linkage" and "evaluative standpoint" for those of us who choose to identify with the major tenets of Wesleyan thought.

My search of the current literature of Wesleyan thought, which to this point has been less than exhaustive, has not yet uncovered any major work that as a treatment of ministry from a theological perspective incorporates an interpretation and integration of those "great general laws," the more of which we know, "the greater our power to benefit others will be." Judging from the current literature available, we Wesleyans tend to learn the facts of our theological heritage (our faith) and then live in hope that our practices will bring fruitful results.<sup>8</sup> Of course we like to quote Wesley to the effect that our ministry is a matter of letting our faith work by love.

John Wesley's own theology, as it was hammered out during the long years prior to, and during, the eighteenth century revival, however, has the

marks of a rather comprehensive theology of ministry. There was a theory-practice linkage to it, and Wesley was, "forever," critically evaluating the actual results of his ministry. In the eighteenth century, Wesley had not the plethora of theories to draw upon that are readily available to us. What knew he of Freud, Jung, Rogers, of Festinger, Bem, or Likert? It seems fair to say, though, that he held his theology with such a level of consciousness that it is unlikely he would ever have made the leap from "theology espoused" to "theory of ministry" practiced, to which I have already made confession. Perhaps we could learn a thing from this "brand snatched from the burning" who wrote his theology as a manual for ministry, and who practiced his ministry with theological consistency.

#### Taproot of Wesleyan Ministry.

The taproot for a Wesleyan theology of ministry is surely to be identified with the thought and practice of John Wesley. Traveling some six thousand miles a year mostly on horseback, holding conferences, founding schools, forming societies, preaching where and when he could an average of three times each day, helping the poor, undergirding the Sunday school, writing letters, journals, books, tracts and hymns, Wesley was able to state in 1786, "I go on in an even line."<sup>9</sup> Albert Outler, adding his typical touch of color to his estimate of Wesley's ministry aimed at man's betterment, states: "This man was a eudaemonist, convinced and consistent all his life."<sup>10</sup> Wesley had a track to run on, a track that kept him on course through an age that ignored the human wreckage that was so much a part of the scene. He saw the human hurts, to which he consistently applied the gospel as established in God's love. The result was, and Wesley regularly drew attention to results, ". . . that people had turned from their evil ways and taken up a new and good life; indeed, that people who had been pronounced neurotic and melancholic and had been given up as hopeless, became healthy, hard-working and happy."<sup>11</sup>

To appropriate Randolph Crump Miller's happy manner of encapsulating a definition as a description of the track he was on, Wesley's theology was "truth-about-God-in-relation-to-man."<sup>12</sup> His understanding of the nature of ministry constantly kept in tension his awareness of God's truth and his awareness of man's need. Thus the doctrines which became the hallmark of the eighteenth century revival were precisely those which touched upon the God-man relationship. In varied contexts Wesley enumerates these hallmark doctrines: he speaks of "three grand, scriptural doctrines-Original Sin, Justification by Faith, and Holiness"; of "our main doctrines" as being repentance, faith and holiness; and of "the grand fundamental doctrines . . . the New Birth and Justification by Faith."<sup>13</sup> Even if one has in mind the longer list of Wesley's essential doctrines as compiled by Colin Williams, namely: "original sin, the deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith alone, the work of the Holy Spirit (including new birth and holiness) and the Trinity,"<sup>14</sup> the stress is upon the potential for healing man's broken relationship with God.

In some contrast to the sixteenth century Reformers, then, Wesley understood God in terms of a loving father who sustained a relationship with His children after the analogy of a family. The Reformers, on the other hand, laying stress upon the character and holiness of God, perceived the

"truth-about-God-in-relation-to-man" to be more on the order of God, as creator and righteous judge, establishing a legal, though saving, relationship with man through justification by faith. Thus, in addition to justification by faith, Wesley championed the doctrine of the new birth (regeneration) as an entry point, not only to a right relationship with God (the righteous judge), but into the warm fellowship of the family of God. It should not be surprising that the atmosphere of the Wesley societies was much warmer than the atmosphere of Luther's or Calvin's churches. There was a recognition of, and rejoicing in, a sense of God's unconditional love that simply was not the case under the more legal system of reformed doctrine. The theory of ministry was different, the results were different. Indeed, to restate the Wesleyan understanding of the "truth-about-God-in-relation-to-man," Wynkoop argues that "love is more definitive of Wesley's theology than any methodology of the experience dimension presumed to be Wesley's."<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, it was the focusing of this "love" that gave form and substance to Wesleyanism's most distinctive doctrine, "holiness." As Philip Watson phrases it, ". . . holiness was their (the Wesleys') point.' . . . The way of faith must lead to love filling the heart and governing the life, or it was not true faith."<sup>16</sup> It was the work of a lifetime for John and Charles Wesley to establish that "holiness," often designated "perfection in love," was the essence of salvation. Holiness was both a doctrine and a point of view for their ministry. When holiness was neglected in the eighteenth century, as even then it sometimes was the spirit of revival waned. Whenever he happened to notice this waning this lack of the focused fire of love, Wesley fanned the flames by getting back to "the point." In his journals, in his preaching, in his conferences, and in his tracts Wesley kept reminding himself and the "Methodists" that God had thrust him out to raise a holy people who could make a difference only as "faith working by love" made them alive and able. Albert Outler notes that contemporary Christians are sometimes made uneasy by this Wesleyan doctrine of "holiness of heart and life."

But [says he] I take comfort and courage in such a venture from the undeniable fact that John Wesley believed and taught an explicit doctrine of "holiness" as the goal and crown of the Christian life, and if this gives you trouble the burden of proof shifts over to your side (that is if you profess to be a Wesleyan at all) to explain why you are prepared to reject or ignore what he regarded as not only essential but climactic.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond all of the personal characteristics and formative experiences that form much of the lore of Wesleyana, and from which it is common for scholars to draw inferences concerning the secrets to Wesley's successes, it is my opinion that John Wesley was able to sustain a long life of vital ministry in large part because he was "on a track" that did not disconnect his practice from his theory. Rather his ministry was an outflow of his theology. In his own words, Wesley had only "one point of view-to promote so far as I am able, vital, practical religion; and by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men."<sup>18</sup> Wynkoop's observation is pertinent to the thrust of my argument here:

He added a spiritual dimension which put theology into a new framework—personal relationship and experience. This new "addition" threw the balance of doctrines into a different configuration but did not actually alter the system. His entire ministry was an explication of the altered configuration."<sup>19</sup>

Harald Lindstrom makes a similar point but strikes the target differently when he avers:

It was the practical, not the theological, aspect of his contribution to religion that looms largest in the popular consciousness. And this is obviously in accord with the facts. Even his thinking is practical in its aims. The principal stress falls not on opinions and doctrines, but on cast of mind and way of life.<sup>20</sup>

This practical cast of mind in the Wesleyan movement was not in step with the prevailing mentality of the eighteenth century when to a considerable extent

deism had shunted aside God's saving disclosure making the Christian drama of salvation seem implausible and reactionary. The practical effect of Wesley's work (his ministry) was to reverse the trend by showing God decisively active in the world as sovereign Lord and gracious Father.<sup>21</sup>

Wesley's way of doing theology thus did not draw attention to itself as a system. It is even doubtful that Wesley would strongly object to Outler's characterization of him as "a folk-theologian who found effective ways to communicate the gospel."<sup>22</sup> Rattenbury raises a related issue that deserves much more than mere mention when he suggests that "Christianity at its centre is life. Wesley knew this, and discovered that Christianity could only be understood by experiment."<sup>23</sup> There was a pragmatic, empirical, even existential dimension to Wesley that allowed him to make vital contact with his age. He was constantly searching for the nourishment for his own hungers. His journals, letters and diaries record the depth with which he was involved in the search for answers to the needs and hungers of the human family. Once he found an answer, as at Aldersgate, he turned all of his energies toward sharing his answer with those whom he perceived God had committed to his care. Thus there is no ring of falseness to his often quoted statement concerning the character of his own ministry:

I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work he hath given me to do. His servant I am, and, as such, am employed accordingly to the plain direction of his Word, "As I have opportunity, doing good to all men." And his providence clearly concurs with his word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, "and go about doing good."<sup>24</sup>

## Wesley's Groups and His Use of Lay Ministers

Wesley's was a many faceted ministry. Since he had no capacity for complacency in the presence of evil, his was a social ministry that reached out to touch and heal the physical and emotional scars brought about in individual lives by the political and structural evils of his day. Since he had no tolerance for bigotry, his was a catholic-spirited ministry and his "Methodism" was a sworn foe to sectarianism-his spirit was to offer his hand of fellowship to all whose faith led them to love God and neighbor. Since he had no patience with the Church's unconcern for lost men, his was an evangelistic ministry-his message was the gospel of God for the whole world. Two other aspects of his ministry, though, have been selected for at least a summarizing treatment at this point because of their close relationship to the core theory of Wesley's ministry, namely his spiritual fellowship groups and his wide use of lay persons in ministry.

Although Wesley became a very significant theologian and preacher, his greatest strength related to the gathering of his followers into small groups, or societies, where they could experience and exercise that form of spiritual fellowship that bonded them into a genuine people of God. (It could be argued that his theory at this point worked out so well in practice that his societies of "Methodists" became a church in spite of Wesley's best efforts to keep them from thus institutionalizing the revival.) Wesley's efforts as an evangelist seem not to have been concentrated so much on leading persons to an individualized moment of decision as to form "little bands of God-seekers who joined together in an earnest quest to be Jesus' disciples."<sup>25</sup> The classical theologians wrote widely of the theological importance of the soul powers of man, namely: intellect, feeling, and will. However, it remained for the practical Wesley to organize a ministry which fed the intellect through the societies, nourished the heart (feeling) through the bands, and shaped the will (behavior) through the class-meetings.<sup>26</sup> In these Methodist core groups it was expected, in harmony with the suggestion of the apostle John in his first letter, that their fellowship was to include one another-and beyond that to include fellowship with the Father and with the Son through the action of the Holy Spirit. These groups were almost ingenious in their power to conserve the fruits (a favorite Wesley word, by the way) of the Revival. Indeed, Robert Tuttle boldly claims, and it is difficult to disagree with him, that:

Wesley's most significant contribution to the eighteenth century and to the church as a whole lies in his exceptional ability to organize people into a kind of body that would sustain both them and the movement called the Eighteenth Century Revival.<sup>27</sup>

It may be that the role of the spiritual fellowship groups in Wesley's ministry is nowhere better expressed than in Charles Wesley's hymn:

Help us to help each other, Lord,  
Each other's cross to bear,  
Let each his friendly aid afford,  
And feel his brother's care.



Help us to build each other up,  
Our little stock improve;  
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,  
And perfect us in love.

Then, when the mighty work is  
wrought,  
Receive thy ready bride:  
Give us in heaven a happy lot  
With all the sanctified.<sup>28</sup>

Even a casual reading of Wesley's earlier writings, particularly the journals and letters written during his mission to Georgia (1735-1737), confirm that his early views of ministry were dominantly high church. From the time of his ordination on September 22, 1725, Wesley shouldered the yoke of the ministry with a hearty commitment to all of the rubrics of the Church of England and its traditions as he believed them to be. Until the time of his Aldersgate experience on May 24, 1738, Wesley was in whole-hearted agreement with the doctrine that the ministrations of grace are dependent upon an episcopal ministry. But with his experience of the "warmed heart," his devotion to the Church of England tempered in the direction of experience as authoritative (at least to the extent that he took experience seriously). Eventually, he was able to write, "I am called . . . not to make Church of England men . . . but Christian men of faith and love."<sup>29</sup>

Considerable profit might be gained by reporting on and interpreting a growing body of literature which traces Wesley's changing theological concepts of what the Christian ministry entails: as, for example, his views as a member of the Holy Club (1727-1738); his views as the energizer and overseer of the Fellowship of People Called Methodists (1738-1784); and his views as the somewhat reluctant episcopal founder of the Methodist Church (1784-1791). Sufficient for the purpose of this essay is the recognition of the fact that the drift of Wesley's theological convictions, and hence his practice of ministry, was from a high church to a more utilitarian (or sect) view of ministry. This changed perspective is surely evidenced by his use of extempore prayer, his open air preaching, his declarations to the effect that "orders and laws are not the essence of the church," and, in particular, his wide utilization of lay preachers.<sup>30</sup>

In this utilizing of lay persons in ministry, especially in the class-meetings, there was "a practical demonstration of the Priesthood of All Believers."<sup>31</sup> Both Wesley and the Methodism he founded had a high view of the church's ordained ministry, but they did not recognize any clerical monopoly on the ministration of grace-especially in the matter of preaching. There would seem to be little argument against the position that a major factor in the rapid growth of Methodism-a direct outgrowth of Wesley's changed theology of ministry-was that laymen were commissioned along with ordained clergymen to a wide range of activities such as preaching, evangelism, teaching, caring, discipling, and overseeing. Many of the Wesley hymns-we conclude this section with one of them-were composed to give direction and encouragement to persons engaged in lay ministry:

Shall I, for fear of feeble man,  
The Spirit's course in me restrain?  
Or, undismayed, in deed and word  
Be a true witness for my Lord?

The love of Christ doth me constrain  
To seek the wandering souls of men;  
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,  
And snatch them from the gaping grave.<sup>32</sup>

### *Tapping the Taproot*

It is well beyond the scope of this paper to sketch even the outlines of the broad-based Wesleyan Theology of Ministry adequate for our needs in the complex world that exists two hundred years after the revival that owed so much to John Wesley. Yet in concluding this small attempt "to serve the present age" by tapping the taproot, it does seem reasonable to describe some possible benchmarks in relation to the two roles of a theology of ministry identified as of particular interest to this investigation, namely: 1) to establish a linkage between espoused theology and the practice of ministry, and 2) to establish a standpoint for evaluating the results of ministry.

In the first place, it seems clear that a critical need is to work in the direction of reducing any disjunction that may exist between Wesleyan theology and Wesleyan practice of ministry. Our propensity is, it seems, to be quite Wesleyan in espoused doctrine and at the same time to be rather disconnectedly Rogerian, for example, in practice. For Wesley, if I am interpreting correctly at this point, there was a very real synapse between theology and ministry. He not only offered a theology of love, but a life-changing ministry which demonstrated that his theology was more than a heavenly theory.

A plausible explanation for some distancing between theology and life as the arena of ministry is offered by Robert Chiles. He argues that Wesley's well-integrated theology began to be compromised in the direction of a scholasticism even with the second generation of Wesleyans. Of the highly orthodox defender of Wesley's theology, Richard Watson, he writes:

Though he preserves the substance of Wesleyan theology, Watson compromises its spirit. Tending to be more preoccupied with the evidences of faith than with the faith itself, he typifies the scholastic inclinations of second generation Methodist theology.<sup>33</sup>

To return here to an insight which arose out of my reflection on the case presented earlier in this study,<sup>34</sup> it does seem that there may be a tendency for us Wesleyans to be loyal to our theology in a manner that indeed approximates a heavenly theory which is not fully rooted into our ministry. Wesleyan theology, however, works best when it is hot, permeating one's mind, one's heart, and one's action. What I am suggesting, then, is that one benchmark of a more adequate theology of ministry is one which features a healthy integration of the evidences for faith and the faith itself; of the truths to which we assent with the playing out of these truths in the work of ministry.<sup>35</sup>

In the second place, to deliberately incorporate the actual results of our ministry as a primary element in evaluation would make a positive contribution to wholesome ministry.<sup>36</sup> One temptation which Wesley nearly always resisted was to link orthodoxy with evaluation. He seemed instinctively to know that "it is possible to be straight as a gun barrel and just as empty." Thus Wesley kept his list of essential doctrines pared down to a manageable few-original sin, justification by faith, holiness. This was one reason he spent so little of his energy testing gun barrels. Wesley kept these few doctrines alive and well warmed in head and heart, then he applied them in his ministry and he expected results, "fruit." As his journals indicate, Wesley constantly evaluated the results of his ministry by observing the fruit-and he looked it over very critically, using qualitative as well as quantitative measures (but this important topic deserves another paper).

Because he kept his doctrine and practice so intimately related, Wesley could afford to follow his own propensity, experimentation, using what he knew of the sciences and the scientific method. A significant problem occurs when a disjunction is allowed to exist between theology and ministry in that there is no close check on the direction our practices may be taking us-no ready check on whether we may not, in fact, be producing mutant fruit. As implied earlier, the complex world of two hundred years after Wesley offers many useful theoretical possibilities for ministry (communication theory, behavior change theory, organizational theory, among others). Almost all of these theories hold significant potential for Christian ministry. We do need to properly examine the produce, though.

Closely related to my argument here is Wesley's often repeated criticism-a kind of justified laughter, if you will-at those Calvinists who, in his day, thought that they had "fruitfully" communicated the gospel because they had "bawled out some doctrine on a street corner." Wesley's example was to take the gospel into the world and put its claims to the test of an expected result.<sup>37</sup> By the way, to speculate just a bit, there are times in our day when I suspect that Wesley would also laugh-perhaps in this case a kind of sanctified laughter-when we assume that we have "fruitfully" communicated Wesleyan doctrine because we have bawled out the word "holiness" from some pulpit.

To "spread scriptural holiness" is indeed a Wesleyan task for ministry. But "spreading scriptural holiness" is much more than merely saying "the right" words-it is a matter of producing the right kind of fruit. A helpful benchmark statement here is:

... the only infallible proof of a true church of Christ is its ability to seek and to save the lost, to disseminate the Pentecostal spirit and life, to spread scriptural holiness, and to transform all peoples and nations through the gospel of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

These things, then, are what I am persuaded a Wesleyan Theology of Ministry is, at least in part, about.

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## Notes

1. This abbreviated record is adapted from my chapter "Evangelical Foundations: Reconsidered" in Marlene Mayr, editor, *Modern Masters of Religious Education* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, in press).
2. As one example of results that were "antithetical to the obvious aims" of a course, I vividly recall a professor who assigned a paper on the Wesleyan theme of "Holiness." My paper drew together certain evidences for the doctrine and my conclusion offered a number of plausible interpretations. When I protested my "C-" grade, the professor informed me that "C-" was an appropriate grade since I had not included a clear personal testimony to "heart holiness." He offered the option of a higher grade if I would do so, but I could not allow myself to be coerced into such a confession for the sake of a grade. I think most readers will not be surprised that my attitude toward "holiness" was negatively affected for a number of years. For readings that develop the possibility of educational results being antithetical to aims, see Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1957) and Robert Mager, *Developing Attitude Toward Learning* (Belmont, California: Fearon-Pitman, 1967), especially his limerick on p. 21:

A teacher with insight once turned  
To a colleague and said, "I've discerned  
That if I'm aversive  
While waxing discursive  
My students detest what they've learned."

3. D. Campbell Wyckoff, *The Gospel and Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), p. 7.
4. James Michael Lee, *The Flow of Religious Instruction* (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum/Standard, 1973), p. 27.
5. In my essay from which this introduction is adapted, I argue that typical foundation elements in an evangelical understanding of Christian education commonly include some rendering and division of the following items: 1) That the core subject matter content is a divinely revealed, salvific message to be transmitted from teacher to student, and 2) that numerical growth is directly related to Christian Education as an evaluative measure—evangelical churches are supposed to grow.
6. David O. Moberg, *The Church as a Social Institution* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), especially Moberg's insightful chapter, "Religious Conversion and Revivalism," pp. 421-444.
7. William Sargent, *Battle for the Mind* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1961), see frontice sheet for Salmon quote.
8. Perhaps we tend to preserve this disjunction between theology and practice by the way we organize the learning experience of ministry students, i.e., theology is commonly taught as a classical discipline, ministry as a practical one.
9. From Wesley's letter to Elizabeth Ritchie, February 24, 1786. Works,

- XIII, p. 52. The thrust of his letter suggests that I am not pressing his intention too far at this point.
10. Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Tidings, 1975), p. 81.
  11. See Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography Vol. 2, Part 2*, translated by Denis Inman, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), p. 123.
  12. Randolph Crump Miller, *The Clue to Christian Education* (New York: Scribner's, 1950).
  13. See Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (New York: Abingdon, 1965), p. 27.
  14. See Colin Williams, *John Wesley 's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), pp. 16-17.
  15. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1972), p. 27.
  16. Philip S. Watson, *The Message of the Wesleys: A Reader of Instruction and Devotion* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 13.
  17. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* p. 67.
  18. From Wesley's letter to Samuel Walker, September 3, 1756, *Works*, XIII, p. 167.
  19. Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, p. 19.
  20. Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Francis Asbury), p. 1.
  21. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism*, pp. 28-29.
  22. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* p. 3.
  23. J. E. Rattenbury, *Wesley 's Legacy to the World* (London, 1928), p.58.
  24. *Works*, I, p. 201.
  25. Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley: Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1980), p. 2
  26. I am indebted to Michael Henderson for this insight. See David Michael Henderson, "John Wesley's Instructional Groups" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1980). In my opinion, Henderson's dissertation deserves to be published and to be widely read.
  27. Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *John Wesley, His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 69.
  28. See Philip Watson, *The Message of the Wesleys*, p. 52.
  29. *Letters*, III, p. 37 (May 22, 1750).
  30. An excellent treatment of Wesley's developing understanding of the ministry at this point is to be found in E. Herbert Nygren, "Take Thou Authority: John Wesley's Doctrine of the Ministry" (Publication projected for 1984 by Francis Asbury Publishing Company), approximately 150 pp.
  31. Philip Watson, *The Message of the Wesleys*, p. 53.

32. See *Ibid.*, p. 54.
33. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism*, p. 49.
34. The "Case Study Method" when applied to theological education offers a potentially powerful tool for bringing about a proper relationship between theology and ministry.
35. Two excellent resources for further study at this point are: Ray S. Anderson, editor, *Theological Foundations For Ministry: Selected Readings for a Theology of the Church in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), and Frank Lake, *Clinical Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966).
36. This is also in harmony with the teachings of Jesus Christ, see, for example, Matthew 7:20 and context.
37. While it would be difficult to prove that Wesley employed a formal hypothesis making and testing procedure, he certainly kept in mind what his goals were and the extent to which his methods were successful in achieving them. His was no aimless ministry. It is well beyond the scope of this paper to extend a discussion of hypothesis making and testing as a dimension of ministry, but it surely has its place in any complete treatment of a theology of ministry.
38. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1980), p. 10.

## A RESPONSE TO HAROLD BURGESS

by  
Daniel N. Berg

The fundamental problem for Wesleyan ministry is really no different than for any other system of belief that invokes action. Theory and practice, *doxis and praxis*, may be a simple way to reduce the problem but it is the problem and it is no simple problem. In the setting of the church the problem is presumed to divide theology and ministry, and practically, too often does.

Theology is a rational function. It has to do with knowing. It has to do with the head. Ministry requires the affective and behavioral dimensions of human existence. In a world that can live neither with nor without its inheritance from rationalism, the division between theology and ministry in the church sounds like a philosophical echo of questions about the relationship between the mind and the body and the is and the ought.

No general announcement of the resolution of these issues in Western intellectual tradition is on the horizon, Process Thought notwithstanding. Furthermore, it is the consistent practice of those who think about the issue to seek for resolution by redefinition. The result is that the priority of head to heart is reasserted and the division is magnified.

From the other side of the division comes the worthy complaint that to wait until the head has its act together is to wait forever. What people are feeling and doing often cannot wait for some theological laboratory to run its tests. The people of God honor the judge and the prophet as well as the wise man. Charismata is as Biblical as sophia. Charismata is like pitch. It is sticky, picks up any loose dirt, and spreads with a touch. But it can also plug knotholes and keep the ark afloat.

The issue will only be more thoroughly pressed if our attempts at resolution involve only redefinition on the one hand and virtual ignoring of the issue on the other. We need another mode, another method to work with the problem. The whole problem involves the whole person, head and heart and hands.

This paper, which we have just heard, is a contribution to the continuing discussion about this division. In a significant footnote Mr. Burgess finds a lame man at the door of our pedagogical temples. "Perhaps," he says, "we tend to preserve this disjunction between theology and practice by the way we organize the learning experience of ministry students, i.e.,

theology is commonly taught as a classical discipline, ministry as a practical one." But again, the attempt to resolve the problem directs itself toward redefinition. And we cannot succeed at simply defining the problem away.

Nor is that really the intent of this paper overall. The intent of the paper is to direct us first to more critical perception of the linkage between a theology which is espoused and actual practices of ministry; and secondly, to establish a standpoint for evaluating the results of ministry. These two objectives are to be accomplished in a context of self-conscious Wesleyanism.

With regard to the first objective the author assures us that the options for establishing the linkage between theology and ministry are more articulate if not actually more numerous in our own time than in Wesley's. Names such as Freud and Jung suggest the theoretical distance between Wesley and us.

Because I think rather concretely, I looked for examples in which present Wesleyans are enlarging the breach between theology espoused and ministry practiced. I think I found one in the author's suggestion that we are too Rogerian. I am frankly not positive what that means. At first I thought it meant that we are too non-directive in our inculcation of theory and our encouragement to practice. But to correct that would be to tend in the direction of the very scholasticism that is condemned in the next several paragraphs. So I rejected that meaning. I decided that it must mean that we anticipate the healing of the soul from within, that the natural tendency of the human is to sound theology and true ministry and the role of the spiritual helper is to help the soul discover its own natural ability. Here is certainly a serious critique, a failure of theological nerve, and the grounds for a counterproductive ministry. Understood thus, our Rogerian tendencies are a good example of the distance between theology systematic and theology pastoral.

With regard to the second objective, I naturally wanted the author not just to say that we ought to establish a standpoint for evaluating the results of ministry, but to go right ahead and establish it. He did us the negating service of criticizing lip-service theology that considers its task complete once creedal words have been hung in the air. And there is the abstract "benchmark" statement drawn from the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church that . . . "the only infallible proof of a true church of Christ is its ability to seek and to save the lost, to disseminate the Pentecostal spirit and life, to spread scriptural holiness, and to transform all peoples and nations through the gospel of Christ." But the task is surely to press beyond the negative and/or the abstract and run up some flags emblazoned with standards concrete enough to be evaluated. This the author believes Wesley succeeded in doing. The standards may not be clear now. But the mutual accountability of theology to ministry and ministry to theology did seem to work in Wesley's life.

Finally, it is to be noted that these two objectives are to be achieved in the context of a self-conscious Wesleyanism. The frequent attempts to invoke Wesley as one who accomplished both the objectives desired by this paper can be considered only mildly successful for the reason that neither is dealt with in a clear and direct way by Wesley himself. The author



confesses as much with regard to the second objective where he says (in a footnote) that "it would be difficult to prove that Wesley employed a formal hypothesis-making and testing procedure." What the author does help us to see is that Wesley might more properly be viewed as a model than a mentor. That he manages to unite theology and ministry is his major contribution. How he manages to unite theology and ministry remains for his followers to articulate and emulate.

That he was able to hold his theology accountable to his ministry and his ministry to his theology is important in the history of the Christian faith. How he did this is important right now.

There are certain standards bequeathed to us from Wesley that can give us guidance. They are not necessarily the standards that we most often admire in the churches of Wesley, either doctrinal or behavioral. With reflection and maturity, the doctrinal and behavioral standards are seen to be neither the most noble nor the most interesting inheritances. Rather the standards by which Wesley moves from question to answer, or, more practically from problem to resolution, appears to be far more interesting, and informative.

For example, it is a truism among Wesleyan scholars that Wesley was quite at home with the quadrilateral of theological authority propounded in the Anglican church. Debate may flourish about the degree of primacy accorded faith over reason in Wesley but reason remains valued, trusted, invoked. "It is a fundamental principle with us that to renounce reason is to renounce religion, that religion and reason go hand in hand, and that all irrational religion is false religion" (Letter to Dr. Rutherford, Letters V, 364). Like emphasis could be adduced from his writings to support as well experience, tradition and the Scripture as sources of authority for theology. This coupling of experience especially with scripture or reason or tradition creates a sense of risk for both theology and ministry. A Wesleyan theology demands the risk and a Wesleyan ministry will bear it. It is a methodological standard and a guarantee that Doctrine and service belong together.

There are other standards of Wesleyan theology that can only be understood in the practice of people influenced by it. For example, a Wesleyan ministry is more concerned to see people "converted" than to see them "get saved." Wesleyanism appreciates the theological categories which accompany conversion that are common to evangelicalism in general. But emphasis creates a degree of difference. Two illustrations might help. The Wesleyan, along with other evangelicals, sees the experience of conversion as instantaneous, supernatural, and sometimes accompanied by tremendous emotional upheaval. Wesley's own experience of this in meetings where he preached occasioned at least one letter in which he deals with the relationship between emotional "peaking" and conversion. He simply acknowledges that such emotion whether silent and brooding or noisy and frenetic accompanies conversion. ". . . What influence sudden and sharp awakenings may have upon the body I pretend not to explain" (Works, I, 208). And, in fact, he could leave his reader wondering if such emotional upheaval is a product of the piercing of the sword of the spirit or the devil's work of distraction. What he does not leave his reader wondering about is the nature of the association of highemotion with true conversion. "The merciful issue of these conflicts in the conversion of the persons thus

affected, is the main thing" (loc. cit.). Thus emotion is devalued. And the conversion, though perhaps accompanied by emotion, is not verified by emotion but by change. "The influence on some of these (people thus affected), like a landflood, dries up; we hear of no change wrought: But in others it appears in the fruits of righteousness, and the tract of a holy conversation (loc. cit.). These words of Wesley make it clear that the emphasis in a Wesleyan ministry must be entirely upon the fact of conversion and not upon the circumstances of conversion. And the fact of conversion manifests itself in positive change subsequently observed.

A second illustration of the Wesleyan interest in conversion rather than getting people saved may be seen in Wesley's understanding of assurance. That conversion is accompanied by a profound assurance for the convert many evangelicals would readily affirm. Wesley, however, is careful to distinguish in good Arminian fashion, that it is the assurance of present pardon and not the assurance of final perseverance and salvation that the convert receives (Works, I, 160, and IX, 32). Final salvation is the goal toward which conversion turns us. Between conversion and final salvation lies the project of love perfected.

The point of all this is that while the Wesleyan ministry identifies with the theological language of evangelicalism generally, a closer examination reveals that there are significant emphases that actually distinguish the Wesleyan idea of "conversion" from "being saved." A Wesleyan ministry understands the supernatural, emotional, instantaneous nature of conversion. A Wesleyan ministry understands assurance and its place in conversion. But this understanding, this theology, is nuanced in quite a different way from the rest of evangelicalism because of its demand for evidence in practice. The instant of conversion is not the objective of a Wesleyan evangelistic ministry because conversion is not simply a juridical and irrevocable adjustment of eternal destiny. The work of God for us which produces conversion is not an end in itself. The objective of the work of God for us is to commence His work in us. A Wesleyan ministry does not excite to "getting saved." Theologically and practically, a Wesleyan ministry can only understand conversion.

We ought to note along the way that Wesley demurred at using the word "conversion" because it is 90 "rarely used in the New Testament." That consideration gives an air of the hypothetical to all we have been saying about setting a standard for evaluating a Wesleyan ministry. But it is hypothetical only in the sense that Wesley never addressed the issues precisely as they are raised for us.

This consideration bears especially upon a second standard of a Wesleyan ministry which I would like to project. Howard Snyder has done a great deal of the groundwork for setting this standard. He reminds us that Wesley's view of ministry may be described as charismatic. While I do not wish to disagree that Wesley's view of ministry is something other than strictly institutional I would feel uneasy with a wholesale description of Wesley's view of the ministry as charismatic. In fact, I would want to argue that apart from suggesting that Wesley softens the institutionalism ordinary in his day and to his office in the church, the word charismatic obscures rather badly Wesley's view of ministry. The reason is that Wesley is so much more articulate in both theory and practice about spiritual

discipline and so incomplete in his descriptions of the scriptural basis, history and function of spiritual gifts. In short, the second standard of a Wesleyan ministry is a preference for spiritual disciplines above spiritual gifts.

The structure with which John Wesley endowed the institution that was named in derision of that structure may be sufficient to remind us of the surpassing value placed upon the orderly transference between theology and practice. By contrast, as Howard Snyder points out, Wesley's attempt to distinguish between ordinary and extraordinary spiritual gifts simply bequeaths a confusion to Wesley's heirs. Wesley's judgment that the extraordinary gifts have not operated in the church from the fourth century to the present, for whatever reason, makes it impossible to speak meaningfully of him as charismatically inclined in the sense of modern hard-core charismatic theology. Even a soft-core charismatic interest suffers when Wesley balances against the extraordinary gifts of the spirit what he calls the ordinary fruits of the spirit ( Works, V, 38) in his sermon on "Scriptural Christianity" and what he calls "the ordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost" in his sermon "The More Excellent Way" (Works VII, 27). These "ordinary" gifts include:

- 1) "convincing speech, " in order to "sound the unbelieving heart;"
- 2) "persuasion" to move the affections, as well as enlighten the understanding. "
- 3) Knowledge both of the word and of the works of God, whether of providence or grace.
- 4) faith . . . which goes far beyond the power of natural causes.

"We may desire," he continues, "whatever would enable us, as we have opportunity, to be useful wherever we are." The element of the supernatural is not essential here. Furthermore, the recipient is in no sense passive and a gift simply visited upon him or her. These "ordinary gifts" could be attributed to talents quite as readily as to charismata.

But the really convincing argument that spiritual disciplines are more highly valued than spiritual gifts in a Wesleyan ministry is the dramatic shift in this very sermon from a rather cursory examination of spiritual gifts which concludes in a paean of praise to love in the style of I Corinthians 13 to a full-bodied presentation of the disciplines of holiness.

But at present I would take a different view of the text, (I Corinthians 12:31) and point out a "more excellent way" in another sense. It is the observation of an ancient writer, that there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one lived an innocent life, conforming in all things, not sinful, to the customs and fashions of the world; doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God. They endeavoured, in general, to have a conscience void of offence in the behaviour, but did not aim at any particular strictness, being in most things like their neighbours. The other Christians not only abstained from all appearance of evil, were zealous of good works in every kind, and attended all the ordinances of God, but likewise used all diligence to attain the whole

mind that was in Christ, and laboured to walk, in every point, as their beloved Master. In order to this, they walked in a constant course of universal self-denial, trampling on every pleasure which they were not divinely conscious prepared them for taking pleasure in God. They took up their cross daily. They strove, they agonized without intermission, to enter in at the strait gate. This one thing they did, they spared no pains to arrive at the summit of Christian holiness; "leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection;" to "know all that love of God which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fullness of God."

The quotation could be extended yet several paragraphs as Wesley works out in considerable detail the kinds of disciplines that will characterize the quest for holiness.

If these two standards are typical of Wesley and a Wesleyan ministry it is because they view man as an active participant in both his spiritual birth and nurture. The passivity implied in being saved and in popular notions of charismata are simply not characteristic of Wesley.

Harold Burgess began his paper with a story about his students. Let me conclude with a story about one of mine. As a Master's level student, he was very unhappy about the C he received on his major paper in a seminar on theology. He is a fine fellow and I suppose I must tell you that he is a firm pentecostal. When his understandable wrath had subsided at the grade he had received he explained that he was simply a preacher, that he hadn't an analytical mind and that he just "didn't have the gift of academic writing." What could I say? I have no experience of academic writing as a gift. I know it only as a discipline.

If theology and ministry are ever to be united, the proof will appear in the ability to activate the people of God in quest of their own spiritual well-being and that of others. That Wesley succeeded at this will continue to fascinate us. How Wesley succeeded at this will continue to challenge us.

## CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AS LOVE FOR GOD

by W. Stanley Johnson

The mission to declare scriptural holiness challenges each generation of Methodism. It would be self-aggrandizing and false to imagine that only holiness voices proclaim such things, but it is not far-fetched to claim that certain nuances of expression habitually occur primarily within these circles. If one listens attentively, the words entire sanctification, Christian perfection, second definite work of grace, deliverance from inbred sin and purity of heart may be parsed from the grammar of holiness. This is all well and good, but after re-examining the bulk of Wesley's writings on perfection, it appears that his concept of love for God does not receive adequate treatment.<sup>1</sup> Although a recent rereading of holiness theologians<sup>2</sup> unveils a sketch of John Wesley's doctrine of love for God in relation to Christian perfection, the details and place of this panel in the mural of Wesleyan theology remain to be seen.<sup>3</sup>

The growing conviction that love for God is central to Wesley's idea of perfection stands in the uneasy company of a nagging suspicion that current theological literature and much preaching from the holiness pulpit has missed the Wesleyan and Biblical emphasis upon love for God. The following material represents an attempt to clarify the nature and central role of the concept of love for God in Christian perfection according to Wesley's vision.

It must be acknowledged that a paraenetic tone permeates this discourse. Mary Alice Tenney in her book, *Blueprint for a Christian World*, sets the stage for us as she describes the "dominant disposition" of the Methodist: "It was love-love to God, expressed in complete obedience to His will, and love for men, expressed in tireless service to all in need."<sup>4</sup> The church today needs to review, reappropriate and proclaim the privilege and responsibility to love God. This mandate cannot be overlooked without detracting from the vitality of the faith and life of our movement.

In the material which follows, we will consider: first, the centrality of love for God in Wesley's concept of perfection. Secondly, the grounds of love for God. These are: God's prior love for humanity, knowledge of God and man's love for and faith in God. Thirdly, the nature of love for God under the following headings: love for God as passion and affection, love for God as changeable, love for

God as an "expulsive power." Fourthly, we will examine the God who is loved, and the relation of love for God to love for others.

Finally, I will propose two broadly stated implications of Wesley's concept of love for God as I conceive its application to the holiness movement today.

### **The Centrality of Love for God in John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection**

One of the most crucial texts<sup>5</sup> in the literature of John Wesley quotes Jesus directly:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40

Unlike the anthropocentric understandings of this text which dissolve the first commandment into the second<sup>6</sup> or dismiss it as hopelessly outmoded because it is linked to an ephemeral eschaton<sup>7</sup> Wesley thrusts the first into prominence throughout the Plain Account of Christian Perfection and other key passages of this theological literature. In answer to the question "What is Christian Perfection?" he responds:

The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love.<sup>8</sup>

Wesley's "abridgment" of the twofold commandment is significant. He cuts across the grain of all theologians who produce anthropologies of love, forthrightly insisting that the Christian is perfected primarily in love for God. A theology of love is intended. To another question, "What command is there" for Christian perfection or entire sanctification? he answers:

"Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.) (2.) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matt. xii, 37.) But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin there.<sup>9</sup>

There is nothing more important than love, indeed, Wesley affirms there is "nothing else."

You should be thoroughly sensible of this,—"the heaven of heavens is love." There is nothing higher in religion; there is in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way.<sup>10</sup>

Wesley's vision of love for God as the apex of Christian religion is clearly reflected in these representative passages. Wesley believes that

faith in God leads to a knowledge of God and that both faith and knowledge become the ground for the self's genuine love for God.

### **Re-Ascending Fire**

The descent of God's love to human selves makes possible the ascent of human love for God. Wesley sweeps aside any notion that love for God can erupt out of the resources of the unaided human self. His vivid imagery leaves no doubt about this: "The fire of divine love has this advantage over material fire, that it can re-ascend to its source, and raise thither with it all the good works which it produces."<sup>11</sup> In more traditionally Biblical language the same truth emerges:

We must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know he loves us. "We love him, because he first loved us." And we cannot know his pardoning love to us, till his Spirit witnesses to our spirit. Since, therefore, this testimony of his Spirit must precede the Love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the testimony concerning them.<sup>12</sup>

This does not imply, for Wesley, that the love which returns to God is merely a product of divine cause. Anders Nygren errs seriously at this point when he asserts that the proper understanding of Agape in the New Testament excludes the action of the self's love for God as an act of a free moral agent.<sup>13</sup> While Wesley grounds love for God in prior movement of divinity, he does not deny the properly active role of the self's love for God.

### **Love for God Requires Knowledge of God**

Love for God as Wesley understands it is an impossibility without the close fellowship and true knowledge of God Himself. Wesley laments the religion of the world which substitutes "doing no harm," "doing good . . . being charitable," "using the means of grace" for genuine spiritual worship. He attacks this error forcefully:

But will this satisfy him who hungers after God? No . . . the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, "the life which is hid with Christ in God " the being "joined unto the Lord in one spirit;" the having "fellowship with the Father and the Son;" the "walking in the light as God is in the light;" the being "purified even as He is pure;"-this is the religion, the righteousness, he thirsts after: Nor can he rest, till he thus rests in God.<sup>14</sup>

Knowledge of God includes, for Wesley, an element of immediate encounter with God: "the soul could not . . . 'abide in the love of God' without a direct witness of the Spirit to sanctification."<sup>15</sup> Prayer becomes a matter of knowing God intimately. Wesley instructs converts to "see that it be thy one design to commune with God. . ."<sup>16</sup> Such communion in the love of God experiences a continual sense of spiritual "presence."

The life of God in the soul of the believer . . . implies the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing what it first receives from God . . .

an increasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God . . . and an increasing return of love, promise, and prayer....<sup>17</sup>

The "increasing presence of God" grounds love for God, since He is "the Sole End as well as Source, of your Being."<sup>18</sup> The pure in heart enjoy "such a near approach as cannot be expressed. They see him; as it were, face to face, and talk with him, as a man talketh with his friend;-a fit preparation for those mansions above, wherein they shall see him as he is."<sup>19</sup>

### **The Relation of Faith and Love**

For Wesley, love must be grounded in trust of the beloved. The "victory that overcometh the world" is faith. But not bare faith. Wesley writes, "But here let no man deceive his own soul. It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance, and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith, but a dead and devilish one."<sup>20</sup>

Wesley does not collapse love into faith. The significant, but erroneous, idea that "Faith is love towards God, but a love of which the keynote is receptivity, not spontaneity."<sup>21</sup> is foreign to Wesley's thought. He speaks of love which "engrosses the whole heart," "takes up all the affections," and leads one to "desire God." Such love, Wesley says, leads believers to "rejoice in him" and "to have such a possession of God as makes us always happy." Our Anglican "enthusiast," or so he was labeled by many more passive intellectuals, gained his reputation for zeal and fervor in part by believing that the true Christian is one who actively demonstrates love for God.

### **Love for God Includes Eros**

Some theologians within Christendom have been wary of the identification of passion for God, eros, and love of God. Nygren is adamant that eros has nothing to do with Christian Agape, while Kierkegaard emphasizes the duty of loving God ("you shall love!").<sup>22</sup> Passions and feelings do not have permanence and fall short of the eternal character of love. Wesley does not share this degree of reservation about emotions, passions and feelings. He continually pictures the Christian as one who desires God and who is in love with God in such a way that all the capacities or faculties of human personality are involved. When he explains what is "implied in the being altogether a Christian" he says:

First. The Love of God. For thus saith his word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and all thy strength." Such a love is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost of all its faculties<sup>23</sup>

Of such a Christian Wesley affirms, "All his desire is unto God . . . there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."<sup>24</sup> This desire for God is one which not only involves all the passions and affections of the soul, but results in "a possession of God" which is true happiness:



Now to love God in the manner the Scripture describes, in the manner God himself requires of us, and by requiring engages to work in us,-is to love him as the ONE God; that is, 'with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength; '-it is to desire God alone for his own sake; and nothing else, but with reference to him;-to rejoice in God;-to delight in the Lord; not only to seek, but find, happiness in him, as our God and all;-in a word, to have such a possession of God as makes us always happy.<sup>25</sup>

In Wesley's way of thinking, the whole person participates in loving God. Various thinkers elevate intellect, or feeling, or will as the central human capacity, but Wesley refuses to reduce human nature to a single trait.

### **Affections Are Involved**

The important of the affections is noticed when Wesley considers the marks of those who are only partially perfected in love for God. Carnal Christians:

know they do not love the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength . . . when they pour out their souls in secret to Him who seeth all the thoughts and interests of their heart, they are continually ashamed of their wandering thoughts, or of the deadness and dullness of their affections; yet there is no condemnation to them still, either from God or from their own heart.<sup>26</sup>

The affections are, for Wesley, an important indicator of the perfection of love. "Deadness and dullness" are evidence of less than perfect love. He certainly disagrees with any who propose to love God "disinterestedly." Wesley asserts that the hunger and thirst for righteousness is satisfied only in love for God, adding, "Give me love, or else I die!" Wesley asks rhetorically if it is true that

the keeping the outward commandment is all that is implied in loving God with all your heart, with all your mind, and soul, and strength, and in loving your neighbour as yourself? that the love of God is not an affection of the soul, but merely an outward service?<sup>27</sup>

He answers his question vehemently, "To mention so wild an interpretation of the Apostle's words, is sufficiently to confute it."<sup>28</sup>

The flame of revival kindled the feelings of many with the approval of Wesley. He would not deny his broad parish the strong feelings of an affectionate love for God. To those who feared such open piety he only affirmed that richness of his own devotional experience as one instance among many of his companions.

### **Love Endures But May Change**

There is no guarantee that love for God will always remain the same. It may change, as Kierkegaard also notes in Works of Love. Speaking of the

last days in his Explanatory Notes Wesley quotes Matthew 24:12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will wax cold." He warns, "The generality of those who love God will, like the church at Ephesus (Rev. ii. 4), leave their first love."<sup>29</sup> When one examines the comment he offers on Revelation 2:4 in the Notes, one sees how changeable is love.

But I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love-that love for which all that church was so eminent when St. Paul wrote his epistle to them. He need not have left this. He might have retained it entire to the end. And he did retain it in part, or there could not have remained so much of what was commendable in him. But he had not kept, as he might have done, the first tender love in its vigour and warmth. Reader, hast thou?<sup>30</sup>

Love for God had been a chief mark of this early church. They lost it, but they need not have lost it. Throughout the vicissitudes of the soul, human commitment to God on the moral level accompanies and stabilizes immediate states of feeling. Wesley writes:

the mind itself may be deeply distressed, may be exceeding sorrowful, may be perplexed and pressed down by heaviness and anguish, even to agony, while the heart cleaves to God by perfect love, and the will is wholly resigned to him. Was it not so with the Son of God himself?<sup>31</sup>

The work of the Spirit penetrates deep into the marrow of the personality. The self's mind, passion and moral nature all join in united expression of adoration and love to God. There is no aspect of human nature untouched by the perfection of love. The whole self is devoted to God.

### **Love for God is the Dynamic of Holiness**

Love for God is the principal dynamic which as a fire burns up the dross of sin. Wesley instructs those who have not yet been perfected in love that "nothing should remain in thy heart but the pure love of God alone. Be of good cheer! Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength."<sup>32</sup> In the "Preface" to Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament Wesley describes a sequence which suggests that love works this cleansing process:

this scriptural knowledge will lead you "to love him, because he hath first loved us;" yea, "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Will there not then be all "that mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus?" And in consequence of this, while you joyfully experience all the holy tempers described in this book, you will likewise be outwardly "holy as He that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation."<sup>33</sup>

In harmony with this, Wesley states, "we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness."<sup>34</sup> This is a work of the Spirit of God, who is never far from the conversation about love in Wesley's theology: "I rejoice, because the sense of God's love to me hath, by the same Spirit, wrought in me to love him, and to love for his sake every child of man, every soul that he hath made."<sup>35</sup>

"The expulsive power of a new affection" claims our attention as the chief dynamic of the sanctification of the soul. Love for God subordinates and reorders all lesser loves. This is Christian perfection for John Wesley.

Prayers Directed to the Triune God If love for God is truly central to Wesley's definition of Christian Perfection we should expect to find his spirituality influenced in distinct ways. To test this, although not exhaustively, we study "A Collection of Forms of Prayer, Every Day in the Week," "A Collection of Prayers for Families," and "Prayers for Children."<sup>36</sup>

A characteristic prayer of "A Collection of Forms of Prayer" illustrates Wesley's basic pattern. He first addresses each member of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit offering his "sacrifice of love and thanksgiving."<sup>37</sup> Then he summarizes his prayer to the Trinity as follows:

Glory be to thee, O holy, undivided Trinity, for jointly concurring in the great work of our redemption and restoring us again to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Glory be to thee, who, in compassion to human weakness, hast appointed a solemn day for the remembrance of thy inestimable benefits. O let me ever esteem it my privilege and happiness to have a day set apart for the concerns of my soul, a day free from distractions, disengaged from the world, wherein I have nothing to do but to praise and love thee. O let it ever be to me a day sacred to divine love, a day of heavenly rest and refreshment.<sup>38</sup>

The theme of love for the triune God is characteristic of this passage and most of Wesley's prayers. This consciousness of adoration of the Trinity is again implicit in the prayer for "Friday Evening,"

O God the Father, who canst be thought to have made me only to destroy me, have mercy upon me.

O God the Son, who, knowing the Father's will, didst come into the world to save me, have mercy upon me.

O God the Holy Ghost, who to the same end has so often since breathed holy thoughts into me, have mercy upon me.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, whom in three Persons I adore as one God, have mercy upon me.<sup>39</sup>

Despite Wesley's definite Christological commitments, his own prayers show a love for God which is not "Christo-monism." It would be saying too much to claim that Wesley's theology of perfection is Christocentric. On the contrary, a concerned reading of the texts of Wesley's prayers and his statements about love for God show a trinitarian awareness that pervades his thought and practice of devotion.

### **Love for God-The Root of Love for Neighbor**

One of the most regrettable confusions of our generation occurs frequently when love for neighbour displaces love for God as the "first and great commandment." Wesley speaks rightly upon this issue:

How excellent things are spoken of the love of our neighbour! It is "the fulfilling of the law," "the end of the commandment."

Without this, all we have, all we do, all we suffer, is of no value in the sight of God. But it is that love of our neighbour which springs from the love of God: whether we do "love him because he first loved us."<sup>40</sup>

Wesley's total life and ministry proclaim the urgency and importance of loving service to neighbour, yet he sees the root of such love as "the love of God." In *The Plain Account* he declares: "One design ye are to pursue to the end of time,-the enjoyment of God in time and eternity. Desire other things, so far as they bend to this; love the creature, as it leads to the Creator."<sup>41</sup>

Nothing in the realm of being is exempt from its relation to God, including the love of neighbour. As we serve the neighbour, we do serve God, indeed, Wesley says, "We are to serve him (God) in our neighbour; which he receives as if done to himself in person, standing visible before us"<sup>42</sup>

Wesley, in a remarkable statement, identifies the creation with the Creator, showing that the true ground of love for and valuing of creation is mandated because God is reflected in His handiwork:

The great lesson . . . is, that God is in all things, and that we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature: that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical atheism; but, . . . survey heaven and earth, and all that is therein, as contained by God in the hollow of His hand, who by His intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and activates the whole created frame, and is, in a true sense, the soul of the universe.<sup>43</sup>

The substitution of love for neighbor as the ground of ethics or religion is not properly Wesleyan. If such humanism is perpetuated, it must not be done in the name of John Wesley.

### **Implications of Wesley's Concept of Love for God**

If Wesley's concept of love for God is taken seriously, it appears that certain adjustments need to be made. After due consideration, the following items of our theological agenda deserve careful attention:

1. Theology should be conceived as radically monotheistic. Proper attention needs to be given to Scripture, evangelism, the realization of the Kingdom of God in society, individual self-love, development and academic integrity. But nothing supercedes the priority of "the increase among men of the love of God and neighbour." God is our "ultimate concern." Even love for the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit is relative to the unity of the three persons of the Trinity and to the distinct identity of each person of the Trinity. In short, we will worship the triune God.

We will worship God and not sinlessness or love as ends in themselves. H. Richard Niebuhr remarks that "Though God is love, love is not God..." We may also affirm in sympathy with this, that though God is holy, holiness is not God. The subtle shift of focus from God to man can be made to appear legitimate but it is not.

2. Christian perfection is best defined according to Wesley's grounding concept as love for God that results in love for others and cleansing of the

heart from the old inadequate dreams of an evil imagination which found root in a fundamentally idolatrous attitude toward some thing, or person, or center of value other than God. The initial shedding abroad of love in the heart of the believer is followed by a crisis situation in which the self perceives the upward call of God in Christ Jesus and enters a new level of depth in his-her relationship of love for God. The difference is a matter of degree if the metaphor of love for God is to be consistent. But the difference is real and the degree of change is so significant that a new quality of life begins. Yet it is a beginning again. The second definite work of grace is, in a special sense, only the first step of a journey of growth which will never end. The fire of love returns to its primal source in God.

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#### Notes

- 1 Love for God is not to be confused with love from God. Love of God is somewhat ambiguous, so the phrase love for God is used in this paper to make the issue clear.
- 2 The past issues of the Wesleyan Theological Journal, Insights into Holiness, Further insights into Holiness, The Word and the Doctrine as well as selected works of holiness writers have been studied. These latter include: Leo Cox, Eldon R. Fuhrman, George Allen Turner, Mildred B. Wynkoop and others. Writers from other movements have also been included in this study, including: Harold Lindstrom, Ronald Knox, Albert Outler, Frank Baker, William Sangster and Martin Schmidt. The footnotes will represent other interpreters throughout this article.
- 3 I know of no satisfactory treatment of Wesley's views on this topic. Although the present study could be extended in various ways, it is presented with the confidence that Wesley's writings are represented fairly, although not exhaustively. Special attention has been given to Wesley's sermons and the Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament. (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1958).
- 4 Tenney, Mary Alice, *Blueprint for a Christian World An Analysis of the Wesleyan Way*, (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1953), p. 17.
- 5 See Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1972, p. 1 and Leon Hynson, "Christian Love: The Key to Wesley's Ethics." *Methodist History*, XIV, No. 1, (October 1975), p.45, for comments on the importance of this text.
- 6 Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, V. pp.439-459 and VI, pp. 231-249. Cf. Graeme de Graaff, "God and Morality," *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Ian T. Ramsey (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), pp.31-52, and Richard R. Roach, "Excessive Claim: Rahner's Identification of Love of God with Love of Neighbour," *Studies in Religion*, 5, No. 3, pp.247-257 and No. 4, pp.360-372.
- 7 Reference is made to Jack T. Sanders claim in *Ethics in the New Testament* that "the command to love is so inherently anchored in the

expectation of the imminent end of the age and of God's final victory that the failure of that expectation renders the call of love meaningless." Cited in O. Lamar Cope, "Ethics and the New Testament: A Survey of Perspectives 1970-1980. Word and World Theology for Christian Ministry, p. 179.

- 8 John Wesley, "Plain Account of Christian Perfection" *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d., reprinted in 1972) 11, p. 394; cf. *Works*, 11, p. 368 and many similar statements.
- 9 Wesley, *Works*, 11, p. 390.
- 10 Wesley, *Works*, 11, p. 430.
- 11 Wesley, *Works*, 11, p. 441.
- 12 Wesley, *Works*, 5, p. 115; cf. *Works*, 5, p. 127.
- 13 Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, (London: SPCK, 1957) Part I "What we have here is a purely theocentric love, in which all choice on man's part is excluded." p. 213. Cf. M. C. D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love: Lion and Unicorn: A Study in Eros and Agape*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 1947, p. 312.
- 14 Wesley, *Works*, 5, pp. 268f.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 420.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 330.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 232f.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 208.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 281.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 22
- 21 Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, p. 127.
- 22 Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*; (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 40ff.
- 23 Wesley, *Works*, V. pp. 21ff.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 381.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, p. 113.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 943.
- 31 Wesley, *Works*, 5, p. 399.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- 33 Wesley, "Preface," *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, 1765, 1, p. viii.

- 34 Wesley, Works, 5, p. 115 (My emphasis).
- 35 Wesley, Works, 5, p. 141; cf. Works, Vol. 5, p. 211: "this is the true circumcision of the heart. Let the spirit return to God.... with the whole train of its affections."
- 36 Wesley, Works, 11, pp. 203-272.
- 37 Ibid., p. 203.
- 38 Ibid., p. 203.
- 39 Ibid., p. 230.
- 40 Wesley, Works, 5, p. 278. This study does not discuss self-love in Wesley's thought. However, worth noting is Wesley's comment in the Explanatory Notes on the New Testament on Mark 12:35: "And to love his neighbour as himself-to maintain the same equitable and charitable temper and behaviour toward all men, as we, in like circumstances, would wish for from them toward ourselves, is a ... necessary duty...." Wesley does not clearly promote self-love here, although he does not disapprove of self-regard. A full-scale study of Wesley's concept of self-love on the order of Oliver O'Donovan's *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) would be useful but I am not convinced that Wesley says enough on the topic to make such a work possible. If the material is present in Wesleys' writings in quantity and/or kind to allow such a study, it would certainly be useful to augment the serious consideration of Wesley's doctrine of love in general.
- 41 Wesley, Works, 11, p. 368.
- 42 Ibid. p. 440. Austin Farrer accords with Wesley's theological understanding of regard for neighbour as we see in the following statement from Farrer's article, "Examination of Theological Belief." "The regard we owe him. And yet he is no mere channel through which regard is paid to God, for God is regarded by regard for what He regards, and what He regards is the man." From *Faith and Logic*, ed. Basil Mitchell (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958), p. 20.
- 43 Wesley, Works, 5, pp. 283ff.

**A RESPONSE TO DR. W. STANLEY JOHNSON'S PAPER,  
"CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AS LOVE FOR GOD"**

by  
William M. Arnett

The main thrust of Dr. Johnson's illuminating paper is his growing conviction that love for God is central to John Wesley's idea of perfection. He believes this is a neglected emphasis among holiness writers and interpreters of Wesley. His clearly stated purpose is "to clarify the nature and central role of the concept of love for God in Christian perfection according to Wesley's vision." Various facets of the subject have been presented under ten headings. The writings of Wesley have been probed, so that approximately 34 of the 43 footnotes are references to Wesley's writings.

Though love for God is central in Christian perfection, Dr. Johnson is careful to point out that it is not a mere man-centered achievement. On the contrary, it is man's response to God's prior love. It is God's descending love to persons that makes possible an ascending human love for God.

Perhaps it could have been pointed out more strongly that the initiative is God's. In fact, sometimes God is said to kindle love in man, as stated in Deuteronomy 30:6, "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." As Leon Morris states in his recent book, *Testaments of Love (A Study of Love in the Bible)*, "thus even wholehearted human love for God is not a purely human product, springing from unaided human resources. It is a result of God's love working in men's hearts" (p. 41). "We love," John writes, "because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). And it must be forever emphasized that it is at Calvary's cross where Jesus laid down His perfect life for sinners that we find the true meaning of love (agape—I John 3:16; 4:9, 10).

An interesting aspect of Dr. Johnson's paper is that love for God includes *eros*. In other words, the activity of Divine love is augmented by the self's love for God which involves all the passions and affections of the soul. The word, *eros*, is not found in the New Testament. Dr. Morris in the book previously cited, says *eros* can be beautiful (p. 122). For example, "romantic love at its best is a wonderful, pure love, lofty and ennobling. No



Christian ought to be critical of this love, considering the Bible's teaching on the subject" (e.g., the Song of Songs). He concludes that *eros* has two principal characteristics: it is a love of the worthy and it is a love that desires to possess. Agape, however, is in contrast at both points: it is not a love of the worthy, and it is not a love that desires to possess. On the contrary, it is a love given quite irrespective of merit, and it is a love that seeks to give (p. 128).

Still another significant topic emphasizes that "love for God is the dynamic of holiness. " It is the principal dynamic, which, as a fire, burns up the dross of sin. This brings to mind Wesley's letter to Walter Churchey in 1771:

Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love; love expelling sin, and governing both the heart and life of a child of God. The Refiner's fire purges out all that is contrary to love....

Letters (Telford. ed.) V:223

Thus the heart or core of entire sanctification or Christian perfection is expressed in three words by Wesley: "LOVE EXPELLING SIN." Since the carnal mind (Romans 8:7) is the greatest impediment to heart purity, the aspect of cleansing or crucifixion should be one of the important factors or emphases in Christian perfection. As Charles Wesley wrote:

Refining fire, go through my heart,  
Illuminate my soul;  
Scatter thy life through every part,  
And sanctify the whole.

The outreach of love for God is love for our neighbour. Dr. Johnson rightfully warns that love for neighbour should not be a substitute for love for God, but rather "love of our neighbour springs from the love of God." Furthermore, it is a love utterly regardless of condition or position. Jesus gave an unforgettable illustration of such love in the account of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, whose heart and ministry went out to the poor battered fellow at the side of the road. As Guy H. King points out, that demonstration of love is (1) love for the unknown, (2) love for the unattractive, (3) love for the unprofitable, and (4) love for the unfriendly (New Order, p. 63).

There is one final observation I would like to make. If love for God is made possible by God's love for man, it seems to me there should be a strong emphasis on the sacrificial love of God, expressed supremely in Christ's death on the cross. Divine love pays the price for man's redemption. It was beyond the gate at Jerusalem that Jesus died that He might sanctify the people with His own blood (Hebrews 13:12). Jesus also loved the Church and gave Himself for it in order that He might sanctify it (Ephesians 5:25, 26). These great Biblical truths need to be emphasized again and again in the message of Christian perfection. Love for God—yes! It is significant that both the Apostles, Paul and John, frequently mention God's love for man, and among human responses is love for God and love for our fellowmen (cf. Morris, op. cit., p. 170f.)

# **HERMENEUTICAL BASES FOR THEOLOGY: HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE WESLEYAN INTERPRETER**

by  
George Lyons

## **Introduction**

The assigned title of this paper, "Hermeneutical Bases for Theology: Higher Criticism and the Wesleyan Interpreter," is in need of exegesis. First, even a casual survey of the literature on the subject of "hermeneutics" and "theology" makes it obvious that no generally agreed upon definitions of the terms may be assumed, nor is the relationship between them clarified much by the term "bases." Second, "higher criticism," a designation seldom used by its contemporary practitioners, unfortunately often carries the largely negative connotation of a destructive attack upon the authority of the Bible. And third, the reference to "the Wesleyan interpreter" suggests a non-existent uniformity among those who choose so to identify themselves, whether this uniformity is conceived in terms of presuppositions, methodology, or conclusions. There is no generally agreed upon or distinctively Wesleyan hermeneutic or attitude toward and application of the so-called "higher criticism." Equally competent and committed Wesleyans continue to differ in their judgment on these subjects. John Wesley's (1703—1791) words on a controversial subject of his day are apropos:

Whatever we propose, may be proposed with modesty, and with deference to those wise and good men who are of a contrary opinion; and . . . because so much has been said already, . . . it is scarcely possible to say anything which has not been said before. All I would offer at present, not to lovers of contention, but to men of piety and candour, are a few short hints, which perhaps may cast some light...."

and not merely heat on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hermeneutics**

What is the relationship between hermeneutics and theology? An answer calls for some historical orientation. Wesley does not use the term

"hermeneutics," so far as I have been able to determine, but he does practice it. The practice of establishing principles, methods, and rules necessary for the interpretation of written texts dates from antiquity, although the term "hermeneutics" was first used in this traditional sense in the seventeenth century. The most important contributor was a younger contemporary of Wesley. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768—1834), attempting to overcome the existing division of hermeneutics between the secular and the sacred, proposed instead the categories of general and special hermeneutics. "Following prior practice, Schleiermacher placed [hermeneutics] between grammatico-historical criticism on the one hand and exegesis on the other."<sup>2</sup>

These distinctions and definitions have been so widely and differently abandoned in contemporary practice that the meaning of the term "hermeneutics" has become increasingly ambiguous. Some continue to use "hermeneutics" to refer to the theory that guides "exegesis," and "exegesis" to refer to the practice of the "interpretation" of texts.<sup>3</sup> Others use "exegesis" to refer to the descriptive task of determining the original meaning of a text as over against "hermeneutics" as the concern to expose the present meaning of a text, with "interpretation" comprehending both tasks.<sup>4</sup> All such distinctions become somewhat artificial when it is recognized that the underlying ancient Greek terms, *hermeneia* and *exegesis*, and their Latin equivalents, *interpretatio* and *expositio*, were essentially synonymous.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the profound interrelationship between the historical context of a text and its meaning increasingly have made the clear division of labor between historical criticism and interpretation inapplicable in practice. At the same time, the once fairly manageable set of rules for interpretation have today become a whole series of disciplines.<sup>6</sup>

Another development has been the so—called "New Hermeneutic," which differs from the traditional hermeneutics

in that it is no longer a methodology (as the theory of exegetical method), but a description of what constitutes the phenomenon of understanding as such. It rejects the opinion that a text has meaning autonomous of the interpreter, that the ascertainment of what a text meant in its original setting is a cognitive function separable from the determination of its meaning today.<sup>7</sup>

The "New Hermeneutic," lends philosophical sophistication to the view that interpretation is inevitably subjective, as opposed to the traditional view that the meaning of a text is to be found in the objective intention of the text's author.<sup>8</sup>

In its traditional usage "hermeneutics" is to be understood as a subdivision within Biblical studies. Since the Bible is foundational in Protestantism, "hermeneutics" as explanation provides the raw material for theology. In the new usage, "hermeneutics" as understanding becomes "the overarching category which unifies the theological faculty, moving from Biblical exegesis via systematic theology to practical theology and homiletics." Thus "hermeneutics" is envisaged as "the basis of theology as a whole"<sup>9</sup> or perhaps "theology itself is hermeneutic."<sup>10</sup>

## The Necessity of Hermeneutics

In either usage hermeneutics and theology are intimately related. Although it is difficult to distinguish cause and effect, it appears that it was in part a hermeneutical shift, specifically the abandonment of allegorical exegesis, that gave birth to the Reformation. One wonders whether Martin Luther's (1483—1546) conflict with Rome forced him to reorient his hermeneutics or vice versa. In any case, the Reformers rejected the medieval ecclesiastical hermeneutic which presumed an unbroken continuity between Scripture and tradition and which was in turn supported by the prevailing exegetical mode, the so-called *quadriga* or the fourfold meaning of Scripture. Medieval art, in which Biblical stories are "presented in contemporary settings and dress, even with some contemporary personages appearing next to Biblical characters," dramatically illustrates the disregard for or unawareness of the historical distance separating the Bible from contemporary Christendom.<sup>11</sup>

Implicit in the Reformation insistence upon the principle of *sola Scriptura* and the rejection of the normative authority of tradition and of the fallen Church is the rise of historical consciousness. Hermeneutics in the sense of interpretation became necessary as a result of the recognition of the historical cleavage between then and now. The continuity between the two periods had to be discovered inductively by attentive listening to what Scripture said and not merely deduced from what Church tradition said, ingeniously read back into Scripture by means of allegorical interpretation. Whereas allegorical interpretation ignored the gap between "then" and "now" at the expense of history, Reformation hermeneutics' attempt to bridge the gap made the eventual emergence of historical criticism virtually inevitable. Wesley stands in this Reformation tradition of hermeneutics at the point in time when the foundations of "higher criticism" were being laid. An interesting bit of historical trivia—H. S. Reimarus (1723—1768), the father of modern life-of-Jesus research, was at Oxford briefly five years before Wesley came there.<sup>12</sup>

"Unless Biblical study is to be merely a game for antiquarians," we must, like Wesley, ask about the contemporary significance of the text.<sup>13</sup> The object of hermeneutics as interpretation and exposition is to analyze

the texts of primitive Christianity historically and philologically . . . in such a way as to bring to expression their valid content so that it emerges as a serious alternative for modern times, capable of being decided for or against, without being falsified in the process of translation into modern alternatives.<sup>14</sup>

The most pressing problem of hermeneutics is less the determination of what its object ought to be than how it ought to be achieved.<sup>15</sup>

## Theology

How does hermeneutics provide the basis for theology and practical living? But first, what is "theology"? In contemporary usage the term "theology" is no less ambiguous than "hermeneutics." God, the proper subject matter of "theology" as suggested by its etymology, is not a directly accessible and definable object of study.<sup>16</sup> And yet, "it is a doubtful proceeding to use the concept 'theology' in such a wide sense that any talk

of God and any religious statement whatever may be designated as theology."<sup>17</sup> Such a definition fails to distinguish between theology and confession or testimony or mystical religious fantasy. "Theology" may at times be used to refer to the entire academic/professional discipline of religious studies, as in the distinction between the theology and biology departments in a college. The understanding of "theology" in Medieval Scholasticism, which employed Greek philosophy as the basis for its formal categories of thought, created a dilemma for the Reformers, who recognized these categories as insuperably alien, both formally and materially, to the Bible, newly recognized as the normative basis for Christian faith and practice.<sup>18</sup> This eventually led to the emergence of a new discipline—Biblical theology.

### **The Necessity of Biblical Theology**

The earliest Biblical theologies produced by Protestant Scholasticism were neither truly Biblical nor theology, but simply collections of proof texts juxtaposed indiscriminately under the headings of the various dogmas to which they were presumed to lend support, something like modern topical Bibles. In opposition to Lutheran orthodoxy the pietists called for a truly Biblical theology which was to be found inductively in the Bible and not to be influenced deductively by dogmatic and philosophical presuppositions. Johann Philipp Gabler (1753—1826), generally considered the father of modern Biblical theology, was a younger contemporary of Wesley. Gabler had as his ultimate concern the establishment of a Biblical foundation for a proper systematic, constructive, or dogmatic theology. "Biblical theology was freed from a *predetermination* by dogmatic theology but remained determined by it with regard to its purpose."<sup>19</sup> Biblical theology was not an end in itself, but had the task of mediating between Biblical religion and dogmatic theology. Gabler's distinction between true and pure Biblical theology amounted to a recognition of the need to separate the particular, human, time—bound, and contingent aspects of Biblical theology in the broader sense from the narrower sense consisting only of the purified, unchanging, divine, and timeless concepts. Wesley shared a similar concern, but with a significant difference, as we shall see.

To some extent Wesley anticipates the insight of Adolf Schlatter (1852—1938) a century later. Schlatter recognized that theology and religion, which Gabler distinguished, were inseparable in the New Testament.<sup>20</sup> Although Schlatter recognized the distinction between the descriptive task of New Testament theology and the prescriptive task of dogmatic theology, their relationship was one of neither dependence nor independence but of "dialectical interaction."<sup>21</sup> Schlatter writes,

The word with which the New Testament confronts us intends to be believed, and so rules out once and for all any sort of neutral treatment. As soon as the historian sets aside or brackets the question of faith, he is making his concern with the New Testament and his presentation of it into a radical and total polemic against it.<sup>22</sup>

Hendrikus Boers correctly observes that " 'theology' is the fundamental reason for most New Testament research, . . . the hidden presupposition which determines it,"<sup>23</sup> and the goal, if not the substance, of hermeneutics.

Academic interest in the New Testament is due invariably to its part in the Scriptures of the believing community. "The question thus arises unavoidably as to what the New Testament means."<sup>24</sup> One cannot be content with the purely antiquarian interest in what it meant originally. "If there were to be no expectation that these writings had something meaningful to say, there would be very little interest in them."<sup>25</sup> And yet, even a casual inspection of the New Testament reveals that although it contains historical narratives, didactic and revelation speeches, pastoral letters, and an apocalyptic account, it contains "nothing that could in any real sense be called a theology."<sup>26</sup> The New Testament authors have certain theological convictions which emerge more in ethos, one's characteristic way of living, than in logos, theoretical abstractions. Thus a theology based on the New Testament must be practical. Paul's pastoral letters, even Romans, which comes closest to anything like theology in the New Testament, do not seem to be either products or presentations of a coherent theological system; they grow out of life and are concerned with Christian living. This is not to deny that Paul's occasional letters to his churches arise from profound theological convictions, some of which are at odds with those of his converts.

### **Hermeneutics and Theology**

In considering the relationship between hermeneutics and theology, another question must be raised. To what extent does one's theological orientation determine his hermeneutic, influence his explanation of Scripture, and his understanding as such? This suggests the question addressed in Rudolf Bultmann's important essay, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?"<sup>27</sup> to which he answers unambiguously, yes and no. It is permissible to describe theology as based upon hermeneutics, whether as the explanation of the intention of Biblical texts in their continuing relevance or as the understanding apprehension of what comes to expression in the language of the Bible. It is also permissible to describe hermeneutics in its overarching sense as inevitably presupposing theological commitments.

John J. Kiwiet thus characterizes the Roman Catholic hermeneutic as ecclesiocentric, Luther's hermeneutic as Christocentric, Calvin's hermeneutic as theocentric, and Anabaptist hermeneutic as anthropocentric/pneumatocentric.<sup>28</sup> In this same sense, Carl Michalson characterizes Wesley's as a "hermeneutic of holiness."<sup>29</sup> Mildred Bangs Wynkoop characterizes it as a "hermeneutic of love."<sup>30</sup> I would suggest still another characterization—Wesley's hermeneutic is soteriocentric. He studied the Bible with one overriding question in mind: What is the way to heaven?<sup>31</sup>

Inevitably one's theology influences the questions he brings to the text. One may not legitimately import alien answers to the text and remain true to the Protestant acceptance of the supreme authority of Scripture. Rather one must approach the text without presuppositions in the sense of "dogmatic prejudices" or presuppositions as to the sense of "dogmatic prejudices" or presuppositions as to the results of exegesis.<sup>32</sup> Wesley and Wesleyans properly insist that whatever is not found in Scripture is not to be made an article of faith.

There is a sense in which James I. Packer is correct that the relationship between theology and hermeneutics is reciprocal—"Every theology

has its built—in hermeneutic, and every hermeneutic is implicitly a total theology."<sup>33</sup> Packer, however, is not referring to the inevitable pre-understanding one brings to Scripture, but to a prior constraint on what Scripture may be taken to mean. He claims to follow Calvin in asserting that Biblical interpretation is for the sake of arriving at an adequate systematic theology, which in turn becomes a propaedeutic for Biblical interpretation. That is, systematic theology is the necessary preliminary instruction for Biblical study.<sup>34</sup> Packer's fundamentalist argument that "in all our Biblical interpretation we should use the concept of inerrancy as a control . . .,"<sup>35</sup> is unacceptable for the same reasons that the historicist exclusion of the possibility of miracles by definition is likewise unacceptable.<sup>36</sup> Even Bultmann insists that historical science as such "may not assert that . . . a faith [in divine intervention] is an illusion and that God has not acted in history."<sup>37</sup> Let us turn now to the matter of "higher criticism."

### Higher Criticism

The designation "higher criticism" was apparently first used by J. G. Eichhorn (1752—1827), another younger contemporary of Wesley, late in the eighteenth century. Eichhorn used the term "higher criticism" to designate the rational examination of the Bible with a view to answering questions about the date, authorship, place of origin, sources, integrity, the literary character of its various documents, etc.<sup>38</sup> Thus "higher criticism" comprehends all the critical methodologies of contemporary Biblical interpretation, such as literary criticism, source criticism, Tendenz criticism, history of religions (i.e., *Religionsgeschichte*, or comparative religions), form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, rhetorical criticism, structuralism, etc.<sup>39</sup> It employs the adjective "higher" to distinguish it from "lower," that is, textual, criticism. This was not intended to suggest that "lower criticism" is either inferior to or less complex than "higher criticism," but rather that it is foundational for it.<sup>40</sup> For various reasons both expressions, higher and lower criticism, have fallen into disuse except among fundamentalists, who reject higher criticism, to be replaced by the designations "historical critical method" or simply "Biblical criticism."

The scope of the present paper does not permit a full description and assessment of the various methods constituting Biblical criticism. Suffice it to say that history has shown both the uncritical rejection and the uncritical acceptance of Biblical criticism to be inappropriate to its object, the Scriptures. Between these two extremes is the possibility of a critical openness to whatever the evidence requires.<sup>41</sup> Historical critical method as a historical phenomenon "must be subject to the same scrutiny, criticism, and revision as any other part of history."<sup>42</sup>

"Biblical criticism is not, inherently and necessarily, hostile to evangelical faith," despite the practitioners who have employed it for negative and destructive purposes.<sup>43</sup> The method itself cannot be blamed for the prejudices of some who use it.<sup>44</sup> The problem is not in the application of criticism to Scripture but in the rationalistic prior constraints that some radical practitioners have imposed on their task. Even those on the conservative side of the spectrum are not without their own rationalistic prejudices. It appears that "there is an undefined point on the higher critical

scale—varying from one evangelical community to another—beyond which, by virtue of some mystical consensus, critical inquiry may not go."<sup>45</sup> Apparently, it is assumed that appeals to inspiration and/or inerrancy can settle historical and literary questions. But can they?

Numerous contemporary voices, including some prominent Biblical critics such as Brevard Childs, James Sanders, Peter Stuhlmacher, Walter Wink, Reginald Fuller, and Paul Minear, are now calling for a reformation of Biblical criticism to bring it into subservience to a hermeneutic which is appropriate to its object, the Bible as canonical Scripture.<sup>46</sup> Gerhard Maier's "obituary" announcing The End of the Historical Critical Method,<sup>47</sup> however, appears to be premature. Even if we may be said to live in the post—critical period, this may not be taken as aid and comfort for those who are nostalgic for pre—critical naivete. As Wayne McCown recognizes, post-critical hermeneutics presumes the results of earlier historical critical research but goes beyond such criticism "to more constructive endeavors."<sup>48</sup> This is what Wesleyans who have employed Biblical criticism have been doing all along. The fundamentalist position of those who claim to adhere to the historic position of the Church, that is, the position of the Church for the nearly eighteen centuries before the discovery of Biblical criticism, after this far—reaching hermeneutical revolution has taken place, is not really the same as that of those who lived earlier, before there existed a serious alternative other than scepticism.<sup>49</sup> In the same way, Wesleyans cannot simply appropriate Wesley's hermeneutical method and assumptions and remain true to Wesley.

As a Wesleyan I have some serious reservations concerning the post-critical hermeneutical approach known as "canonical criticism."<sup>50</sup> I for one am not prepared to accept the implications it has for "lower criticism" in New Testament studies. Wesleyans are inveterate "primitivists," and properly so. I am not prepared to ignore the fruit of earlier generations of textual critics as little more than historical trivia. Are those who welcome canonical criticism with open arms prepared to accept, for example, the last twelve verses of Mark—which are clearly part of the canonical text of the Gospel—despite all the difficulties this creates? Are they really prepared to recognize the texts of the post—Constantinian Church as of greater normative authority than those of the primitive authors and editors? My questions register my reservations. On the positive side, however, one value of canonical criticism is the modern application of the Reformation principle of Biblical interpretation, which Wesley followed—the analogy of faith. It is, according to Raymond E. Brown, the reminder that

despite the meaning they have in themselves, the individual books of the Bible are not normative taken alone. (Indeed, a good case can be made that any major book of the Bible taken by itself and pressed to its logical conclusion will lead to heretical distortions.) These books did not come down to us separately but as part of a collection [and sub—collections]. And they were not accepted as authoritative by the Jewish and Christian communities in isolation but as normative collections."<sup>51</sup>



Historical criticism serves as an essential reminder that we are separated from the original setting of Paul's letters, for example, temporally, geographically, politically, culturally, sociologically, situationally, and in other significant respects as well. "They cannot possibly be automatically, and without remainder, applicable to US in our situations."<sup>52</sup> We are reading someone else's mail and must never forget it. Some object to critical studies of the Bible on the basis of the misunderstanding that, although the original readers cannot have had all the scholarly tools of the Biblical critics, they understood adequately and so should we. This argument fails to take seriously the "tacit dimension" in language,<sup>53</sup> the fact that what Paul's readers knew automatically as children of the age and culture which they shared with Paul, we can know only imperfectly at best, and only through painstaking historical study. Paul J. Achtemeier argues that "critical studies have been made necessary by the sheer complexity of the phenomenon under investigation, and no amount of pious rhetoric or fiery attacks can change that fact."<sup>54</sup> We are not untrue to our Wesleyan heritage when we acknowledge that the scholar is in a better position to understand what Scripture meant than is the simple, devout Christian. We are untrue to our tradition only if we are content as scholars to stop with academic description.

### **The Wesleyan Interpreter**

Let us look more closely at the Wesleyan precedent as it relates to criticism and hermeneutics. The editor of Wesley's standard sermons, Edward H. Sugden, contends that "Wesley was a critic, both higher and lower, before those much misunderstood terms were invented."<sup>55</sup> This correctly recognizes that although Wesley "wrote in pre—higher—critical times," he was not uncritical in his approach to Scripture, nor was he unconcerned with the questions subsequently addressed by higher criticism.<sup>56</sup> Although his view of Scripture as the book of God allowed him to be "unhindered by any questions of date or authorship,"<sup>57</sup> he does not ignore such questions even in his Explanatory Notes in which he deliberately sets aside critical questions to give plain truth for plain people. George Allen Turner is correct that "to classify Wesley as a 'critical' scholar represents a vain attempt to 'modernize' him."<sup>58</sup> Few in England during the eighteenth century were in close touch with German scholarship where the pioneering work in higher and lower criticism was being done.<sup>59</sup> If we admit that Wesley was not a modern Biblical critic, can he properly be made an advocate of Fundamentalism?

At times Wesley does sound like a Fundamentalist, for example, when he dismisses the possibility of errors of any kind in Scripture with the observation, if there is one error there might as well be a thousand. Yet Wesley insists that apart from a commitment to certain "fundamental doctrines," he is willing to think and let think and claims no assistance from the Spirit in his "private opinions."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Wesley's list of "fundamentals" is hardly that of Fundamentalism. They include the deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith alone, original sin, the Trinity, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Turner writes that Wesley takes a mediating path between the Calvinists and the Friends, a balance between the formers' emphasis on the Spirit's illumination of the word and the latter's intuitive immediacy of the Spirit's witness to truth.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, Wesley's Arminianism and his open attitude toward Johann Albrecht Bengel's (1687—1752) controversial text critical proposals clearly sets him apart from the reactionary rejections of Biblical scholarship characteristic of modern Fundamentalism.<sup>62</sup> He wrote of his Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament: "It is not part of my design to save either learned or unlearned men from the trouble of thinking.... On the contrary, my intention is, to make them think, and to assist them in thinking."<sup>63</sup> "Hermeneutical theory, like all other theory in the later part of the eighteenth century, obeyed the slogan: Dare to think."<sup>64</sup> This Wesley did and encouraged his Methodists to do likewise.

Wesley also distances himself from a Fundamentalist approach to Scripture in the large place he assigns Christian experience. He writes in his Plain Account of Christian Perfection that if he were convinced that none had experienced the perfection in love he maintained to be witnessed to in Scripture, he would be convinced that his interpretation was mistaken and would be constrained to teach differently.<sup>65</sup> Wesley writes, "Whereas it is objected that experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine unsupported by Scripture: We answer, experience is sufficient to confirm a doctrine grounded on Scripture."<sup>66</sup>

It is in this context that Wesley's acceptance of the Reformation emphasis upon the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit" is to be understood. The Spirit does not free men from the hard work of study and thinking nor does He inspire correct objective interpretations of Scripture. Nor does the Spirit act in the capacity of some kind of heavenly imprimatur giving the divine *nihil obstat* that either Scripture or one's interpretation of it is free from error. Rather the Spirit subjectively validates the truth of Scripture in its spiritually transforming intent. As Paul M. Bassett argues, "The Spirit does not convince men of the authenticity of the Scripture. Rather, the Spirit applies 'and enables man to receive with faith the illuminating and saving meaning of God's revelation.'<sup>67</sup> Man comes to experience salvation, through personal, existential encounter with the Living Word, Jesus Christ, through the instrumentality of the written Word. One can correctly grasp the meaning of Scripture without being grasped by its intent. The Spirit's role in the hermeneutical process does not give license to ignorance or indolence on the part of the Spirit—filled; it is rather a call to ethical seriousness.

Wesley accepts the Reformation hermeneutical rule known as "the analogy of faith," by which Scripture is understood as its own interpreter. His object is not that of the Fundamentalist, to harmonize diversity, but to criticize non—Scriptural doctrines.<sup>68</sup> Wesley considers the simple, historical literal meaning of Scripture the "firm foundation on which the spiritual meaning can be build."<sup>69</sup> By "spiritual meaning" Wesley does not suggest that he adheres to a twofold meaning of Scripture, an abbreviation of the medieval fourfold meaning. He refers rather to the practical, edifying corollaries to be deduced from Scripture—an insistence upon the necessity of moving beyond what it once meant to what it now means.<sup>70</sup> To carry out this edifying task, Wesley considered it advisable for every minister to be, in his words, a "critical master" of Greek and Hebrew.<sup>71</sup> It is not clear precisely what Wesley meant by the term "critical;" it is clear that the

knowledge of Scripture he expects of the professional clergy is both intensive and extensive. He raises the following questions for self—examination:

Am I acquainted with the several parts of Scripture; with all parts of the Old Testament and the New? Upon the mention of any text, do I know the context, and the parallel places? . . . Do I know the grammatical construction of the four Gospels; of the Acts; of the Epistles . . . ? Do I understand the scope of each book, and how every part it tends thereto?<sup>72</sup>

Wesley shares the concerns of Biblical criticism to set Scripture within its proper historical context and to bring reason to bear on revelation. He insists that, although "not absolutely necessary," it is "highly expedient" for one who "would thoroughly understand the Scriptures" to have a first hand "knowledge of profane history, likewise of ancient customs, of chronology and geography."<sup>73</sup> The interpretive task makes it "equally expedient" to have a "some knowledge of the sciences also" such as logic, metaphysics, natural philosophy, and geometry.<sup>74</sup> Wesley finds skill in the use of logic especially useful. "It is good for this at least," he says, ". . . to make people talk less; by showing them both what is, and what is not, to the point; and how extremely hard it is to prove anything."<sup>75</sup> He is fully as aware as any sound modern critic that in most things one deals with probabilities not certainties. Wesley recommends a "knowledge of the Fathers" of the ancient Church, whom he considers "the most authentic commentators on Scripture"<sup>76</sup> --a view shared by many modern advocates of canonical criticism. He also considers a knowledge of what we would call "psychology" and "sociology" to be essential to the task of applying Scripture individually to the needs of each hearer. He asks in self—examination: "Have I any knowledge of the world? Have I studied men, (as well as books) and observed their tempers, maxims, and manners?"<sup>77</sup> Have I "an eminent share of prudence? that most uncommon thing which is usually called common sense?" And do I have "all the courtesy of a gentleman, joined with the correctness of a scholar"?"<sup>78</sup> Wesley's approach to Scripture, despite the scholarly tools he brings to the task, is not academic but intensely practical in its objective. In his 1756 "Address to the Clergy" he insists that the clergyman requires a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, because they "teach us how to teach others," and most importantly how "to make a suitable application of all to the conscience of his hearers."<sup>79</sup> For Wesley critical knowledge must lead to practical application.

### **Conclusion**

Perhaps more important than whether or not Wesley used "higher criticism," thus authorizing Wesleyans to do so, is the recognition that he used the interpretive principles and methods generally accepted by his contemporaries, and was not reluctant to accept the fruits of new critical methods. Wesley's unqualified endorsement of Bengel is noteworthy in this regard especially in view of the controversy surrounding his text critical innovations. Furthermore, in Wesley's utilization of then contemporary exegetical methods, he was following, unwittingly perhaps, clear Biblical precedents. Several recent studies, perhaps most accessibly Richard N. Longenecker's *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*,<sup>80</sup> illustrate the extent to which

New Testament writers were conversant with, if not experts in, the methods of Biblical interpretation of their day. Few of us would assume that our acceptance of Biblical authority would entail an obligation to employ the Biblical writers' exegetical methods. I agree with Longenecker that this is neither necessary nor possible. Both the Wesleyan and Biblical exegetical methods establish a more important precedent. Unless we are content to live in a theological ghetto in which we address only ourselves, Wesleyan interpreters too must be willing to become familiar with the current methods, results, and practice of "higher criticism." Certainly we cannot uncritically swallow all its naturalistic and rationalistic assumptions, but neither can we ignore its more numerous values. If we expect to be taken as anything other than quacks and obscurantists in the world of serious Biblical scholarship we must be critical masters of "higher criticism," but not for the sake of academic respectability alone. Edification in holy love must be a central objective.

Wesley shows a clear awareness of the gap that exists between his time and that of the primitive church.<sup>81</sup> And yet he insists that Methodism ought to be "the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England."<sup>82</sup> Such "primitivism" led to the charge that he was an "enthusiast"—a charge he justifiably denies. Unlike the "enthusiasts" Wesley accepts as methodologically sound the need to distinguish between the aspects of the New Testament Christianity which uniquely applied to the earliest Christians of the Apostolic age and those which apply to Christians in all ages.<sup>83</sup> But he insists that even if certain Biblical texts "primarily belong to the Christians of the apostolic age," that does not exclude them from belonging to all in a secondary sense.<sup>84</sup>

The gulf that exists between then and now has grown larger since Wesley's day as a result of both modern technology and a greater understanding of how truly "primitive" the primitive church was. The difficulty of the hermeneutical task of bridging that gulf must not detain us from placing this among our highest priorities as Wesleyan interpreters. I suspect that, if Wesley were to reappear on the contemporary scene, he would not be entirely happy with either his liberal Methodist sons and daughters, nor with his children of the conservative Holiness Movement. He would probably bump our heads together, insisting once again that critical thought and holiness of heart and life are not to be divorced.

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#### Notes

1Wesley's remarks on predestination are recorded in Sermon 58, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 v019. (Grand Rapids: Baker; reprint of the 1872 ed.), 6:226 (hereinafter cited as Wesley, Works).

2Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976), p.73. See Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, new ed. (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1883), pp.17—21.

- 3See e.g., Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 47.
- 4See e.g., David Stacey, *Interpreting the Bible* (New York: Seabury, 1977).
- 5See James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," *The New Hermeneutic*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., *New Frontiers in Theology*, No. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 1—7; and Anthony C. Thiselton, "Explain, Interpret, Tell, Narrative," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), pp. 573—84.
- 6See Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *The Biblical Interpreter: An Agrarian Bible in an Industrial Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), pp. 8—11.
- 7Soulén, p. 74.
- 8A position ably defended by E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967). See also Soulén, p. 75.
- 9James M. Robinson, "Basic Shifts in German Theology," *Interpretation* 16 (1962):95—96.
- 10Idem, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," p. 67.
- 11Hendrikus Boers, *What Is New Testament Theology? The Rise of Criticism and the Problem of a Theology of the New Testament*, *Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 17.
- 12See Charles H. Talbert, ed. *Reimarus: Fragments, Life of Jesus Series* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), "Introduction," pp. 1—43.
- 13Rohrbaugh, p. 13.
- 14James M. Robinson, "The Future of New Testament Theology," *Religious Studies Review* 2, 1 (1976):17.
- 15This problem is not restricted to the sterile scholarship of secular higher critics. See Robert Traina, "Inductive Bible Study Reexamined in the Light of Contemporary Hermeneutics: Part II: Applying the Truth," *Interpreting God's Word for Today: An Inquiry into Hermeneutics from a Biblical Theological Perspective*, eds. Wayne McCown and James Earl Massey [hereinafter cited as *Hermeneutics*], pp. 85—109, esp. p. 106.
- 16Maurice Wiles, *What Is Theology?* (London: Oxford, 1976), pp. 1—6.
- 17Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith*, trans. J. W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), p. 93.
- 18Boers, pp. 16-22
- 19Ibid., p.37.
- 20Adolf Schlatter, "The Theology of the New Testament and Dogmatics," (1909) *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, trans. Robert Morgan (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1973), pp. 161—66.
- 21Boers, p. 70; cf. p. 73.

- 22Schlatter, p. 122.
- 23Boers, p. 7; cf. also p. 87
- 24Ibid., p. 59.
- 25Ibid.
- 26Ibid., pp. 9—10.
- 27Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden, Living Age Books, No. 29 (New York: Meridian, 1960), pp.288—96; and notes, pp. 315—15.
- 28John J. Kiwiet, "Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective," *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 16 (1974):7—11.
- 29Carl Michalson, "The Hermeneutics of Holiness in Wesley, " *Hermeneutics*, pp. 31—52.
- 30Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, "A Hermeneutical Approach to John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 6 (Spring 1971):21; idem, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), p. 101. She is followed by Larry Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (Spring 1981):41.
- 31Wesley, *Works*, 5:3. See Shelton, pp. 39—40.
- 32Bultmann, p. 290.
- 33James I. Packer, "Preaching as Biblical Interpretation," *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, ed. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), p. 196.
- 34Ibid., p. 188.
- 35Ibid., p. 199.
- 36See Robert W. Lyon's ("Evangelicals and Critical Historical Method," *Hermeneutics*, pp. 141—54) critique of the presupposition defended by Bultmann (pp. 291—93).
- 37Bultmann, p. 292.
- 38W. Neil, "The Criticism and Theological Use of the Bible, 1700—1950," *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. S. L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1963), pp. 270—73, George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), pp. 37—38.
- 39Soulén, pp. 27—28.
- 40See Soulén, pp. 102; 26; 78; and similarly J. Barton Payne, "Higher Criticism and Biblical Inerrancy," *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), p. 86.
- 41See Robert Traina, "Inductive Bible Study Reexamined in the Light of Contemporary Hermeneutics: Part I: Interpreting the Text,"

Hermeneutics, pp.74—79; John Culp, "The Impact of Modern Thought upon Biblical Interpretation," Hermeneutics, pp. 127—31; Lyon, pp. 135—64; Frank W. Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs Versus Sanders," Hermeneutics, p. 184.

42Lyon, pp. 142—43.

43Wayne McCown, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic," Hermeneutics, p. 9; cf. on the other side, Richard S. Taylor, *Biblical Authority and Christian Faith* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1980), pp.70—71, 89.

44Raymond E. Brown, *The Critical Meaning of the Bible* (New York: Paulist, 1981), p. 25.

45Harry R. Boer, *Above the Battle? The Bible and Its Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 42. Pragmatic philosopher Richard Rorty "suggests that truth is what our peers will let US get away with saying." Alvin Plantinga, "How to be an Anti—Realist," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 56 (1982):64.

46See the discussion in McCown, pp. 10—11.

47Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, trans. Edwin W. Leverenz and Rudolph F. Norden (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977).

48McCown, p. 26 n. 39.

49So Neil, p. 310; and Brown, p. 26.

50See Spina, pp. 165—95

51Brown, p. 32.

52Victor Paul Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), pp. 15—16.

53See Perry B. Yoder, *Toward Understanding the Bible* (Newton, KS: Faith & Life, 1978), p. 31.

54Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals, Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), pp. 153—54; quote from p. 154.

55Edward H. Sugden, ed. *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley* (London: Epworth, 1935), 1:21.

56W. E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection. An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley 's Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (New York: Abingdon—Cokesbury, 1943), p. 35. Cf. also George A. Turner, "John Wesley as an Interpreter of Scripture," *Inspiration and Interpretation*, ed. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 161: "His view would now be described as pre—critical, as would the view of most eighteenth—century writers."

See e.g., Wesley's comment on the so—called OT historical books, Joshua through Esther: "It seems the substance of the several histories was written under divine direction when the events had just happened, and long after put into the form wherein they stand now, perhaps all by the same hand." *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, cited in Sugden, p. 22.

57Sangster, p. 36; cf. Turner, p. 160.

58Turner, p. 162 n. 11.

59Neil, p. 272; cf. 280: "In a strict sense higher criticism did not become a live issue in England until the second half of the nineteenth century...." Yet Hans W. Frei's suggestion should caution us from assuming too quickly that Wesley was entirely pre-critical, for he writes: "If historical periods may be said to have a single chronological and geographical starting point, modern theology began in England at the turn from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century." Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven Yale University, 1974), p. 51.

60Wesley, Works, 8:101.

61Turner, pp. 157—58.

62Ibid, pp. 160 and 162.

63Wesley, Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament (1765),1:1x; cited in Turner, p. 172.

64Frei, p. 94.

65Wesley, Works, 11:366—446.

66Ibid, 5:132f.

67Paul M. Bassett, "A Study in the Theology of the Early Holiness Movement," *Methodist History*, 13 (May 1975) :81.

68See e.g., Wesley, Works, 10:490: "Have I a full and clear view of the analogy of faith, which is the clue to guide me through the whole?" 10:482: "Scripture interprets Scripture; one part fixing the sense of another." See Shelton, p. 42.

69Ibid, 10:482; cf. 10:491 and 493.

70Ibid, 10:483. On the literal and spiritual senses, see Frei, pp. 38—39, 55—56. On the influence of Bengel in this, see pp. 175—179. See also Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1964), pp. 216—17, 234, 243—44 (Spiritual exposition "makes the sacred pagas edifying"), [243], and 258.

71Wesley, Works, 10:491; cf. 10:483.

72Ibid, 10:490—91.

73Ibid, 10:483; cf. 10:491

74Ibid, 10:483; cf. 10:491—92.

75Ibid, 10:492

76Ibid, 10:484; cf. 10:492.

77Ibid, 10:492.

78Ibid, 10:485

79Ibid, 10:482—83. See 10:490: "Have I, (1) Such a knowledge of Scripture, as becomes him who undertakes to explain it to others, that it may be



a light in all their paths?" 10:491: "And have I learned to apply every part of the sacred writings, as the various states of my hearers require?"

80See Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

81Wesley, *Letters*, II,206: "I apply no Scripture phrase either to myself or any other without carefully considering both the original meaning and the secondary sense, wherein (allowing for different times and circumstances) it may be applied to ordinary Christians." Cited in McCown, pp.8—9 and 25n.36.

82Wesley, *Works*, 7:423. In using Num. 23:23 as a text, Wesley writes, "We need not now inquire, in what sense this was applicable to the children of Israel. It may be of more use to consider in what sense the words are applicable to ourselves" (7:419—20).

83Ibid, 8:87ff.

84Ibid, 8:92.

## A RESPONSE TO GEORGE LYONS

by  
Morris A. Weigelt

Thank you for the paper, for the research, and for the issue with which you are struggling. The integration of our theological position and our Biblical methodologies is indeed crucial.

Allow me to define the purpose or thrust of your paper, as I see it, as a setting for my observations and responses. The paper is an attempt to identify the role of "Higher Criticism" or "the historical—critical method" in a Wesleyan system under the umbrella of the interaction of theology and hermeneutics. The careful work of definition in each of these areas is crucial. The solution which your paper proposes, as I see it, is three—fold.

A. Biblical criticism is a necessary and a crucial element in the whole understanding of the Word. The incisive use of the concept of distance between then and now is valid.

B. Wesley is an excellent model, for he broke out of traditional interpretation to use the contemporary Biblical criticism of his day.

C. The use of philosophical understanding enables us to glean the valuable from any and all contemporary Biblical criticism while screening out the invalid due to inadequate presuppositions.

Allow me to respond to the paper as a whole.

A. The problem is articulated and the dilemma raised to help us face the issue. The delineation of significant positions and the history of the problem are instructive and helpful.

B. The use of Wesley as a model is also instructive, but not binding as Lyons implies. Wesley provides patterns, but justification for employing these techniques and methodologies must rest on a more viable basis than simply imitating someone else who used them.

C. The necessity for Biblical criticism due to the increasingly apparent gap between the meaning for the first audience and the meaning for the contemporary audience faces all who dare to stand under the authority of the Word and proclaim its good news for contemporary man.

D. The primary issue with the paper, then, is the significance of a Wesleyan theological stance for guidance and identification of boundaries granted the unavoidable necessity of wrestling with Biblical criticism. I propose that the crucial and freeing elements of the Wesleyan stance can be found in the understanding of the nature of Biblical authority and the

nature of inspiration. The Wesleyan understanding of the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit in both the validation of the authority of the Word and in the inscripturating of that Word frees us to intersect with Biblical criticism in quest of meaning and understanding. We are then freed to move directly from that understanding to the application for contemporary man through the process of Biblical theology. Dr. Lyons has given us a good case for the nature of, and the necessity for, Biblical theology as a control factor to avoid subjective exegetical anarchy. An extreme concern for application often creates such anarchy.

The freeing and enabling element for Wesleyans is the dynamic of the Holy Spirit flowing through the whole process. We are freed from the necessity of trying to squeeze the last drop of exegetical juice from the holy orange through a rigid fundamentalistic methodology on the one hand, and from a subjectivism which only seeks existential application without regard to the meaning for the first audience, on the other hand.

Further, the same freedom enables us to find the boundaries of interpretation. A slavish submission to a Biblical authority which has no boundaries is a terrible tension under which to operate.

The boundaries for a Wesleyan's use of Biblical criticism are defined and controlled by a number of elements:

A. The constant willingness to bring our presuppositions under the authority of the Word for correction and enrichment. The Word continually intersects with favorite beliefs and forces growth in understanding.

B. The traditions of the Church including the church fathers and the checks and balances of our contemporaries in the Body of Christ provide excellent guidance.

C. The internal witness of the Spirit "validating the truth of Scripture," as Dr. Lyons states, freed Wesley to take a mediating position between the Calvinists' emphasis on the Spirit's illumination of the Word and the Friends' emphasis on intuitive immediacy of the Spirit's work.

D. The constant concern for the Biblical—theological whole provides a context for understanding individual doctrines and Scriptures.

E. The widest possible use of the methodologies of Biblical criticism, as Dr. Lyons suggests, enables us to gather light from all quarters.

F. A further boundary is found in the emphasis upon experience in the Wesleyan tradition. Such an emphasis continually brings us back into the intersection of the Gospel and the traumas of a bleeding world (soteriological hermeneutics or spiritual exposition). That intersection soon disposes of superficial or non—applicable interpretations of the Word. Dr. Lyons' point about the distinction between the descriptive and the prescriptive is well taken.

The question of the use of Biblical criticism in Wesleyan theology is not only not dangerous, but is absolutely necessary. As Dr. Lyons has maintained, the use of Biblical criticism is a privilege enriched by the Wesleyan stance.

# THE WESLEYAN AND THE STRUGGLE TO FORGIVE

by  
R. Duane Thompson

Let me set forth in broad strokes the concerns of this paper(1) Deeply buried aspects which are in the warp and weft of one's personal being and which express themselves in twisted ways are not compatible with authentic personhood or the image of Christ. (2) Entire sanctification does marvelous things, for Christ's sufferings were and are efficacious. When a person submits to "his mild yoke," the power of the indwelling Spirit provides cleansing, preserving, enabling, and motivating toward growth and progress toward the perfection of the personality. (3) However, not everything is done in the crisis. The *imago dei* is as much promise and culmination as present actuality <sup>1</sup> (4) Forgiveness is hard work (a struggle) and even one who is entirely sanctified must undergo this process. As Wesleyans some of us may find it hard to acknowledge the reality of the struggles, darkness, and emotional tangles of our lives when we are supposed to be living on the victorious side with joy, peace, magnanimity, and success undiminished and unruffled. (5) Nevertheless, when Wesleyans perceive, explore, and exploit this dimension of their experience as an ongoing element in the process of holiness, the result is greater joy, fulfillment, and growth toward authenticity and wholeness in Christ.

This paper will follow the simple pattern of first stating and unpacking Max Scheler's concept of *ressentiment*. Scheler's work is not so widely known, and his emphasis upon relationships is helpful in understanding the role of forgiving and being forgiven.

The second step will set forth the manner in which *ressentiment* can be turned into something manageable. This will explore the five stages of forgiveness as explained in the work of Matthew and Dennis Linn. The healing of relationships is the goal of this process.

Let us now examine Scheler's treatment of *ressentiment*.

*Ressentiment* denotes an attitude which arises from a cumulative repression of feelings of hatred, revenge, envy and the like. When such feelings can be acted out, no *ressentiment* results. But when a person is unable to release these feelings against the persons or groups evoking them, thus developing a

sense of impotence, and when these feelings are continuously re-experienced over time, then *ressentiment* arises. *Ressentiment* leads to a tendency to degrade, to reduce genuine values as well as their bearers. As distinct from rebellion, *ressentiment* does not lead to an affirmation of counter—values since *ressentimentimbued* persons secretly crave the values they publicly denounce.<sup>2</sup>

The key aspects of *ressentiment* thus appear to be the following: (1) genuine feelings of hatred, revenge, and envy; (2) repression of such feelings; inability to act them out; (3) accumulation of such repressions; (4) sense of impotence arising from accumulative repression; (5) reduction of values as a result of arising impotence; i.e. the values are scorned since the person recognizes that they can never be enjoyed; (6) and the secret craving of the values scorned.

Particular places in the social structure especially produce *ressentiment*. One primary place is the feminine role with its assigned passive responses, along with the spinster role where one is deprived of male prestige and denied even certain feminine satisfactions (basically in sexuality). In societies where age is honored there is no *ressentiment* of the older citizens, but where age is not honored there tends to be a slipping away of power, prestige, and pleasures; and *ressentiment* begins to build up. The social structure of the family is productive of *ressentiment*: the relationship of the first born to other siblings, of the older wife to the younger husband, and of the mother—in—law to the son— or daughter—in—law.

Finally, moving into the sociology of religion, Scheler shows that the priest is especially predisposed to *ressentiment* as a result of being condemned to repress his negative affects and to present the image of peacefulness and harmony to the world. He must participate in the struggles and contentions of community life and yet stand above the battle, renouncing those earthly weapons which are at the disposal of the laity.<sup>3</sup>

According to Scheler's analysis of Nietzsche, (from whom Scheler derives the basic meaning of *ressentiment*) the roots of forgiveness are right in this dimension of experience, for it grows out of impotence and inability to retaliate; forgiveness is essentially the inoffensiveness of the weak. It lies in Nietzsche's famed "slave revolt in morality": "the *ressentiment* of beings to whom the real reaction, that of the deed, is denied, who can only indulge in imaginary revenge . . . every noble morality springs from a triumphant acceptance and affirmation of oneself."<sup>4</sup>

Thus forgiveness for Nietzsche arises not out of the power and affirmation of oneself which is the very principle of life itself, but out of the weakness and sickness of twisted lives. It arises from being locked in to an existence which is interpreted as a destiny. Now Scheler is not necessarily agreeing completely with Nietzsche on forgiveness, but he does regard Nietzsche as providing some basic insights into the *ressentiment* which really does afflict most, if not all, human beings.

In *ressentiment* there is a self—poisoning of the mind when one is dominated and continues to serve without freedom. This is very much like

the hell of Sartre's play *No Exit*. In the play the fundamental meaning and reality of hell is that there is no escape, no exit. Envy is the strongest source of *ressentiment*.<sup>5</sup> Value delusion lies at the heart of *ressentiment*. "When we feel unable to attain certain values, value blindness or value delusion may set in."<sup>6</sup>

Scheler sees a profound example of *ressentiment* in what he calls "the apostate."

An "apostate" is not a man who once in his life radically changes his deepest religious, political, legal, or philosophical convictions—even when this change is not continuous, but involves a sudden rupture. Even after his conversion, the true "apostate" is not primarily committed to the positive contents of his new belief and to the realization of its aims. He is motivated by the struggle against the old belief and lives only for its negation. The apostate does not affirm his new convictions for their own sake, he is engaged in a continuous chain of acts of revenge against his own spiritual past. In reality he remains a captive of this past, and the new faith is merely a handy frame of reference for negating and rejecting the old. As a religious type, the apostate is therefore at the opposite pole from the "resurrected," whose life is transformed by a new faith which is full of intrinsic meaning and value. Tertullian . . . asserts that the sight of Roman governors burning in hell is one of the chief sources of heavenly beatitude. Nietzsche rightly cites this passage as an extreme example of apostate *ressentiment*. Tertullian's sentence . . . "credo, quia absurdum" . . . is also a typical expression of his apostate *ressentiment*. It pungently sums up his method of defending Christianity, which is a continuous vengeance taken on the values of antiquity.<sup>7</sup>

Now it would be possible to pursue this line of penetration into the subterranean dimensions of the psyche of specific religious types who have engaged in "harangues against materialism." Often such people proclaim the heavenly bliss of giving to God and the church so that God and the church (of which they are a part) can enjoy these gifts. Others tend to engage in a "harangue against perfection." The point is that the concept of *ressentiment* seems to be alive and well when we can observe quite clearly that we often condemn what we secretly most deeply long for but have limited access to.

Earlier in holiness history ministers spent large amounts of their time and energy keeping the women in specific line, observing the clothing and keeping an incredibly close eye on all the girls to make sure that they did not fail in any manner with respect to modesty. While one should not stereotype the concern for modesty as having devious roots, one may suspect that occasionally some huge sexual hang-ups are masked (or revealed) by all the attention and energy. Here I am assuming the same amount of sexuality in Wesleyan circles as in other normal human types; i.e., I am not assuming that Wesleyans are "eunuchs" for the sake of the kingdom of heaven nor that they are Bohemians or nymphomaniacs. The former would fall under the Nietzschean condemnation of the denial of life values and the

latter would fall in the direction of the idolatrizing of a preliminary value rather than worshipping the ultimately valuable. In sum, sexuality is a strong human reality which thus may emerge in proportion to the lack of realization of its power, and the less the realization the more the fanaticism.

But I do not wish to pursue this line of concern. What I wish to examine is the fact that we may have a tendency to emphasize the bright, victorious, and well—adjusted while neglecting the dark side, the anger, anxiety, fear, guilt, and unforgiveness which have ways of being embodied in human emotions and experiences. We can bury our emotional realities and head toward emotional instability or we can work through them toward health.

As Wesleyans it may often be hard for us to acknowledge the presence of the struggle, darkness, and emotional tangles which seem to be a genuine part of our human ascent to God when theologically we are supposed to be living in a continuous state of joy and victory. Maybe Wesleyanism has cultural elements within it of celebration of the ethos of WESTERN MAN with emphasis on self—sufficiency, autonomy, and frontier success or triumphalism. And while I am fully prepared to identify with Wesleyanism with its emphasis upon joy and victory in Christ and in this world, some of the avenues which this theology has taken and some of the implications which this has produced in many of our churches and colleges must receive Biblical, rational, historical, and experiential critique if it is to become adequate for human needs. And we must take responsibility for the fact that many of our people fail to understand our position. We can say it is perfectly clear in itself and that only the most ignorant could misunderstand, but maybe we can do some adapting which will produce greater clarity. In brief, we need to take a fresh approach to the role of darkness and struggle if we are to avoid superficial analyses in Wesleyanism and if Wesleyanism is to survive the culture of success of which it is at least partially a part.

Let us notice several examples of darkness. These samplings are varied perspectives and images of darkness, but they reveal a locus of insight not obtained in fullness of light.

O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,  
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,  
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,  
The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,  
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,  
Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark,  
And dark the Sun and Moon, and the Almanach de Gotha  
And the Stock Exchange Gazette, the Directory of Directors,  
And cold the sense and lost the motive of action.  
And we all go with them, into the silent funeral.  
Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury.  
I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you  
Which shall be the darkness of God.<sup>8</sup>

Darkness, trouble, and struggle are present in the universal human condition. But out of such depths true value and heights of victory can arise.

All is prepared in darkness. Enormous light  
is but the fetus of big—bellied night.  
The image hatches in the darkened room:

the cave, the camera, the skull, the womb.  
Future and past are shut. The present leaps:  
a bright calf dropped between two infinite sleeps.<sup>9</sup>

I will give you treasures from dark vaults,  
hoarded in secret places,  
that you may know that I am the Lord,  
Israel's God who calls you by name.  
Isaiah 45:3 NEB

Even though one is entirely sanctified, floating in one's psyche there are elements which one would want to recognize, deal with, grapple with, struggle with, work through, and come to some higher level of handling of those emotions, attitudes, views, and predispositions than one has achieved up to this point in time.

Now the question is, If I have not adequately worked through all the elements in those experiences, how can I come to be the sort of person which I desire to be? and how can I come to grips with something so buried in myself, and how can I move from the fragmentation which unforgiveness produces to the wholeness which my own "journey to selfhood"<sup>10</sup> has established as its entelechial target? This study does not give a full answer to such a vast agenda, but the five stages to be examined are a partial answer. The concern is not to dredge up the sewer of human lives. I personally identify with the emphasis on the bright attitude toward life. But there must be an effort to faithfully/realistically confront both observations and experiences which Wesleyans have. Do you now discover either in introspection or in an examination of your relationships any problems with envy, ambition, anger, conflict, or unforgiveness? Maybe not! But review your own history. Have you ever seen people who seemed to be struggling with such matters, or have you yourselves at times had to badger and buffet your own being in order to find deliverance and forgiveness? Maybe not in your specific case. But I believe that most of us either have had problems, are having problems, or will have problems. As David Seamands says in one of his sermons, we all either have a problem or have to live with a problem.

What I am getting at may not be that different from what has been said by the general evangelist at the most popular levels in holiness circles: the deeper the death the fuller the life. The only critical difference may be the emphasis in this paper upon the inability of the crisis to complete the depth of death and fullness of the resurrection. As Heraclitus put it, "the way up and the way down are one and the same." Isaiah concludes one beautiful servant passage:

Yet the Lord took thought for his tortured servant and healed him who had made himself a sacrifice for sin; so shall he enjoy long life and see his children's children, and in his hand the LORD's cause shall prosper. After all his pains he shall be bathed in light, after his disgrace he shall be fully vindicated; so shall he, my servant, vindicate many, himself bearing the penalty of their guilt, Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall share the spoil with the mighty, because he



exposed himself to face death and was reckoned among transgressors, because he bore the sin of many and interceded for their transgressions.  
(Isaiah 45:3 NEB)

The problem is that in the history of Wesleyanism too many people are proclaiming that they cannot live it, when that is precisely the only thing one can do—namely, to live it. What they really seem to be saying is that the life of holiness is such a high life, such a victorious life that they are not living on that plain. But if we acknowledge that the life of holiness is not a plain but rather a cresting and valleying experience, then one who is in the valley is just as much living it as one who is on the mountain. Furthermore, one who uses his valleys for healing and growth will recognize all experiences as progress rather than retrogression or just marking time. We are in God's hands. In His hands, nothing is common or profane. We are no further from God in the valley than we are on the mountain. However, if we see ourselves as guilty in the valley, then our opportunities for growth will be reduced, and our crests will be shallow and insignificant. We shall not be truly living the Christian life but rather immaturely pivoting around the entrance to it through manufacturing pseudo—guilt and going through whatever cleansing is available for such experiences and needs.

Whether we are up or down, it is extravagant felicity just to be in God's hands in eternal security (not of the unconditional sort). And nothing can pluck us from those secure hands. The way up and the way down are one and the same, insofar as the reality of His salvation is concerned. And it is this confidence which needs to be instilled in the hearts of Wesleyans. Nevertheless, it must not be instilled there without emphasis upon the possibility of human relationships deteriorating even between two such persons who are secure in Christ.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12 KJV). What is the relationship between forgiving and being forgiven? It could be a form of self—righteousness. Since I forgive others, Christ must forgive me. Or it could have an opposite causal relationship: since God has forgiven me, I must be forgiving others.

As such in either case logically we are tied into Aristotle's excluded middle; either I am forgiving or unforgiving. Since the deduction from Scripture is clear, there is now no problem: I am forgiven and I forgive. But what happens when life seems to run deeper than logic, even the logic of deduction from Scripture? When I want to insist that I have been forgiven but have difficulty in forgiving?

Part of the answer is that we are forgiven to become channels of His love and mercy. There is no rigorous or legalistic one—to—one relationship. Rather there is the foundation and power for a whole new life—style. When God through Christ forgives us, we are truly and deeply forgiven. But this does not make our own attitude and acts of forgiveness automatic. Forgiveness of other human beings is an expression of being forgiven by God, but it is something which we must do as well as be and have. Thus the words "I forgive you" are performative. When you say "I do" you really do, and/but you spend the rest of your life doing it.

While perfection or salvation may frequently be thought of as individual (whether appropriately or not), love and forgiveness must be thought of

as relational. Since holiness is perfect love for most of us, there is no way we can avoid the struggle and victory of relating to others.

Let us now look at the Five Stages of Death and Dying by Elisabeth Kubler—Ross as adapted to forgiveness by Dennis Linn and Matthew Linn.

It may be that the five stages are basic to the acceptance of any reality. Maybe this is why they apply both to death and forgiveness. As such, this means that both death and forgiveness are simply aspects of human experience and not related on some other level. But for whatever reason, seeing the comparison and working through these stages is extremely perceptive and therapeutic.

### **Stages In Dying And In Healing a Memory**

<i>Stages</i>	<i>In Dying</i>	<i>In Healing a Memory</i>
Denial	I don't ever admit I will die	I don't admit I was ever hurt
Anger	I blame others for letting death hurt and destroy me	I blame others for hurting and destroying me
Bargaining	I set up conditions to be fulfilled before I'm ready to die	I set up conditions to be fulfilled before I'm ready to forgive
Depression	I blame myself for letting death destroy me	I blame myself for letting hurt destroy me
Acceptance	I look forward to dying	I look forward to growth from hurt <sup>11</sup>

We should not absolutize these stages but rather use this as providing helpful insights into forgiveness. It may well be that acceptance arrives much earlier than anticipated.

In beginning the process of healing it is very helpful to ask oneself the questions which the Linns pose to us:

Am I like the disciples at Emmaus willing to face with Christ the fears, frustrations, anger, rage, and self—hatred that I have buried through the years? Am I willing to let Christ show me through the Scriptures that I like to nurse grudges, feel sorry for myself, look down on another, feel taller, and have a narrow view of what another is doing? What I don't want to share with anyone else, can I still share with Jesus? Am I ready to be healed, or do I just want to smile and pretend everything is O.K.?<sup>12</sup>

Thus can the process of healing of memories begin.

Rollo May suggests that any moment/event can be taken in one of two ways: (1) as a blessing for growth or (2) as a curse that cripples. We can bury our emotional realities and head toward emotional instability or we can work through them toward health.

The denial stage can be healthy both in terms of the rejection of a reality which is beyond one's capacity for coping and also in terms of coming to grips with something buried which gifts us as we patiently become aware of it and work through it.

Denial can be healthy. Breakdowns can come when we are forced to face something we need to deny. Until we can deal with a hurt, it is best not to face it. Jesus was very much aware of the limitations of human acceptance

of reality when He said, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (John 16:12 RSV) Denial prevents us from being overwhelmed by too much anxiety, disapproval, or insecurity crippling our ability to bounce back.<sup>13</sup> Also we must not push others to face a reality which is beyond their capacity.<sup>14</sup>

Something in us prevents us from remembering, when remembering proves to be too difficult or painful. We forget benefits, because the burden of gratitude is too heavy for us. We forget former loves, because the burden of obligations implied by them surpasses our strength. We forget our former hates, because the task of nourishing them would disrupt our mind. We forget former pain, because it is still too painful. We forget guilt, because we cannot endure its sting. Such forgetting is not the natural, daily form of forgetting. It demands our cooperation. We repress what we cannot stand. We forget it by entombing it within us. Ordinary forgetting liberates us from innumerable small things in a natural process. Forgetting by repression does not liberate us, but seems to cut us off from what makes us suffer. We are not entirely successful, however, because the memory is buried within us, and influences every moment of our growth. And sometimes it breaks through its prison and strikes at us directly and painfully.<sup>15</sup>

A lengthy passage from the Linns is very instructive in helping us to understand the stage of denial and the next stage, anger.

In German concentration camps, for example, angry prisoners were punished until they learned to fear and bury their anger in order to survive. But frustrated anger initiated regression to patterns of immediate gratification (fighting for food and wolfing it down), fantasy (dreaming of miraculous rescues), and identification with the aggressor (helping the guards to intimidate the new men), and ended the apathy. Victor Frankl, psychiatrist and founder of logotherapy, relates how his fellow prisoners chose either to feel the concentration camp horrors and become angry or to feel none of the brutality and bury their anger in apathy. The inmates who continually chose to insulate themselves from feeling any hurt became totally listless and refused to move for roll call, dinner or even the bathroom, until eventually they died. Nothing frightened them any longer and they hardly seemed to feel a bloody beating.

Thus denying anger is unhealthy and can destroy us. Feeling anger, on the other hand, is as healthy a reaction to being emotionally hurt as feeling pain is to being physically hurt. When emotionally hurt, people who love themselves get angry; people who don't love themselves get depressed and even suicidal as in Frankl's concentration camp. Because depression is often displaced anger turned against oneself, a good psychotherapist treats the depression by helping the client express anger in a healthy way and at the proper target. Many depressions being to lift when answering, "Who or what makes me angry?"

Feeling anger enables me to identify the hurt and heal it in a healthy way. When the emotional hurt isn't felt, it becomes like a cancer that grows wildly until it is exposed and its hidden dimensions are cut away. . . .

Anger not only helps me love myself by pinpointing what hurts and beginning to heal it, but it also helps me love the person who hurt me. Once I am able to recognize my denial and begin to get in touch with my hidden anger and my need to forgive, I can choose either to forgive little by denying another's weakness and saying, "You're not so bad; I forgive you," or to forgive much by allowing my anger to see another's weakness and saying, "I see the worst that is in you, the hurts in myself and yet I love you as Christ does." Anyone can love the smiling side of a person, but anger allows my love to deepen into forgiving even the wounding side of another. I can accept the anger and weakness in another's wounding side only to the degree I can recognize and accept my own angry feelings and weaknesses as does Christ— Anger, therefore, stretches me to love more as Christ until I can forgive even the weakness in myself and in another....

Therefore thank God for feeling anger, often a sign that we love either the person hurting us or we love ourselves enough to dislike getting hurt. To be in touch with our angry feelings is always healthy, but how we deal with our angry feelings can cripple us or give us new freedom to walk boldly. It's human and not wrong to feel pain or anger. What becomes right or wrong is how we express our pain or anger.<sup>16</sup>

The third stage is bargaining. The primary characteristic is the setting up of conditions which must be met before I am willing to forgive. The Jacob of the Hebrew Bible was apparently quite a bargainer, and he was caught in the web of his deceiving and bargaining with both God and other humans. Nevertheless, Jacob is a prime example of one who went vastly beyond his bargaining stage into the position of prevailing with God as a prince. But he had to come to the point of the facing of reality with God, himself, and his brother in order to prevail

In bargaining, I set up the conditions with respect to forgiveness. I say to the other, if you will come to me on your hands and knees, then I will forgive you. Or I say that I will forgive you if you go to the psychiatrist or apologize publicly or something else.

As their pastor I became aware of a couple in middle age who were drawing apart as he was becoming involved with a young lady half his age. I discovered that their relationship had been cold to the point of near death for many years. They had just bought a new refrigerator and a new freezer, and he informed me that it was just as romantic to put his arms around those as to try to embrace his wife. He expected a level of intimacy and passion with his wife that she was unable/unwilling to give, and she demanded that he visit a psychiatrist if she were to remain with him. Maybe such bargaining was not what each really wanted, but in the final analysis neither could live the other what would enable them to remain together.

The fourth stage is depression, anger turned inward. We have already seen this in the prison camp quotation. We must press beyond this stage to the final one if full healing is to occur.

The fifth stage is acceptance, in which I look forward to growing from the hurt which has come into my life.

Those who follow in the Nietzschean mode insist that forgiveness is weakness to the extent of impotence. But rejecting this, I in turn believe that forgiveness is a power rather than a weakness. To forgive someone is not to be in a reduced and inoffensive weakness of relationship, but it is one of the most powerful relationships possible.

A great amount of healing must be involved in forgiveness. It is important for us to realize that we must go deeper into our own and other persons' dealing with certain phases of experience if we are going to express adequately the power of forgiveness.

Churches are divided, and persons are divided. Is it possible for us to receive greater help and to help our people go through their feelings until they can really love each other and embody a greater ministry of reconciliation and healing in the community? When they are torn by the same strife and confusion as people to whom they are attempting a witness, they are guilty of self—deception and maybe even a false witness. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35 KJV). But this is a reality to be expressed, not just an ideal to be assumed or forgotten.

One of the key areas needing forgiveness is the parent—child relationship. Even a good Wesleyan has parents, and conflicts may be obvious or buried with accompanying disastrous results. The Biblical command to "Honor your parents" goes to the very root of the matter of personal identity and wholeness. Maybe one cannot admire what one's parent or parents have been, but honest facing of this reality (or acceptance) goes a long way toward establishing my own personal identity and advancing me in my journey to selfhood. Some of us can honor our parents and grow into what we wish to become only by excessive strides in forgiveness and generosity of attitude toward our parents.

The healing of relationships and personal characteristics by working through the five stages provides a significant attack upon *ressentiment*. Thus personal and social recalcitrancies are turned into manageable matters. But these aspects of our beings are so personal and individual that only through facing them in genuine integrity will we be able to make the most progress on the way to the celestial city. Neither crisis, nor theology, nor the common lot of humankind can take the place of my own toil toward personal realization.

William E. Hulme gets at the heart of what I am endeavoring to suggest.

While admittedly in the realm of conjecture, I would imagine Job saying that no answers can be given to the sufferer apart from the struggle in the sufferer's own soul. It is the struggle itself that leads to the experience of knowing. Whatever answers are pertinent to the sufferer come through his own involvement in the knowing process. The pastoral counselor

is a support in the struggle to bring to birth, though by labor and travail. To attempt to spare the sufferer the ordeal of his own struggle with God is to disrespect his individuality as a person. It is one thing to hear of God by the hearing of the ear; it is another to see him with one's own eyes. Only then can he know.<sup>17</sup>

What Hulme thus expresses in general terms I am attempting to apply to the matter of forgiveness. It is only by the patient (sometimes impatient) work upon our own spiritual maturity involving the community of which we are a part that we shall arrive at the peaks of relationship with others and at a higher and higher level of power and glory in forgiveness.

Listen to the beautiful lines from the greatest writer in English.

Portia. The quality of mercy is not strain'd;  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest. It becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown.  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God Himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore,  
though justice be thy plea, consider this  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.<sup>18</sup>

When forgiveness and greatness of soul are believed in, encouraged, and cultivated, people are greatly blessed. And I join with you in appreciation for the fact that such is a solid dimension in our great heritage.

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#### Notes

1Cf. Thomas Merton, *The New Man (A Mentor—Omega Book. Published by The New American Library, 1963)*, p. 44. Merton's delightful passage reads as follows: "The image of God is the summit of spiritual consciousness in man. It is his highest peak of self—realization. This is achieved not merely by reflection on his actual, present self: one's actual self may be far from 'real,' since it may be profoundly alienated from one's own deep spiritual identity. To reach one's 'real self' one must, in fact, be delivered by grace, virtue and asceticism, from that illusory and false 'self' whom we have created by our habits of selfishness and by our constant flights from

reality. In order to find God, Whom we can only find in and through the depths of our own soul, we must therefore first find ourselves."

2Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, Lewis A. Coser, ed., trans. by William W. Holdheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 23—24.

3Ibid., pp. 27—28.

4Ibid., p. 44.

5Ibid, p. 52.

6Ibid, p. 59

7Ibid., pp. 66—67.

8T. S. Eliot, East Coker, *The Four Quartets*.

9Dilys Bennett Laing, "The Apparition," in *Birth Is Farewell* (Duel Sloan and Pearce. 1948).

10Cf. the title of Mark C. Taylor's book, *Journeys to Selfhood, Hegel and Kierkegaard* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).

11Dennis Linn, S.J. and Matthew Linn, S.J., *Healing Life 's Hurts: Healing Memories through Five Stages of Forgiveness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 11.

12Ibid., p. 83.

13Ibid, p. 91.

14Ibid, p. 243, n. 1 on Chap. 7.

15Ibid, pp. 92—93, quoting Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now*.

16Ibid, pp. 106—108.

17William E. Hulme, *Dialogue in Despair: Pastoral Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 152.

18William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV. Scene I. Lines 84—202.

## **THE INTERPRETIVE CONTEXT FOR STRUGGLE**

### **A Response to R. Duane Thompson**

by  
Major John G. Merritt

"Because we are present to the world, we are condemned to meaning." So said French philosopher Maurice Merleau—Ponty. Whatever that meaning is, it is only open to those who interpretively grapple with it. Not everyone chooses to engage reality in this manner and that is one reason why so many find existence in the world to which they are "present" a meaningless experience. But even those who take up the challenge of being in the world by trying to interpret reality often find the effort painful and frustrating.

There are at least two reasons for this often excruciating experience: First, the context of our "condemnation to meaning" is history—and this means change: change in what trust is perceived to be (even though Truth itself may be unchanging), in the modes of penetrating it, and in the ways it is to be articulated and shared. Second, the change which history entails is experientially encountered—and this means ambiguity: ambiguity about how theological affirmation and existential nitty—gritty coalesce, how their sometimes polarized relations are to be understood, and the means whereby these two foci are to be jointly communicated in ways that are Biblically valid, doctrinally sound and theologically honest.

The problems inherent for Wesleyans in this interaction of change and ambiguity within a theological/historical context are seen and felt in the issues which Professor R. Duane Thompson has addressed in his provocative paper, "The Wesleyan and the Struggle to Forgive." In this essay, it appears to me that the matters which Dr. Thompson treats revolve, by implication, around such questions in the life of holiness as crisis and process, purity and maturity, holiness and humanity—questions so perennial in Wesleyan circles that they have become a bit wearisome. Fortunately, however, Dr. Thompson's approach is not a rehash of these issues, for he takes us at least one step beyond banal restatement toward resolution in a way that honors the mystery surrounding our relationship with God who is holy and the Lord who calls us to holiness. But in maintaining that sense of mystery in his discussion, he keeps any final answers at least one step beyond our reach.



Since I agree in many ways with Dr. Thompson's overall thesis, I would like, in my response, to suggest what, in part, may be involved in a theological and historical perceiving and an honest feeling of those concerns with which he is inviting us to interpretively grapple.

Picking up on my introductory comments, I believe that one of the basic factors which lies at the heart of the problems Professor Thompson pinpoints centers in change—doctrinal change. As Jaroslav Pelikan, the Lutheran historian of dogma at Yale University, and others <sup>1</sup> have so correctly noted, doctrinal change does occur, is quite complex and is doubtless inevitable. Thus the question which Professor Pelikan asks in both his *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena* and *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* <sup>2</sup> is this: When is doctrinal change a healthy development and when does it exceed the limits of legitimate growth?

I know that this problem comes as no new revelation to any of you, but I call it to your attention because I think Mr. Thompson's analyses and tentative proposals involve doctrinal development, if not change. I perceive these developments and/or changes to be on at least two interlocking levels. First, there is the more surface (though not superficial) level of popular understanding and articulation of what is to be expected from the experience of entire sanctification. Here development and/or change involves trying to make sense out of the descent of darkness which may envelope an entirely sanctified believer, the struggle to forgive which may rage within a person who professes to be made perfect in love, and the unwelcome discovery that in the heart on which the image of God is supposed to have been deeply stamped there may be elements which are not exactly Christlike. Dr. Thompson expresses this dimension of his paper by saying: "As Wesleyans some of us may find it hard to acknowledge the reality of the struggles, darkness, and emotional tangles of our lives when we are supposed to be living on the victorious side with joy, peace, magnanimity, and success undiminished and unruffled" (page 81).

Professor Thompson's means of tackling these very real problems take us to a second, sometimes sub—surface, level of possible development and/or change. This is the level of theological presupposition and affirmation, which is reflected in at least three crucial statements: (1) "Entire sanctification does marvelous things. . . , however, not everything is done in the crisis" (page 81); (2) "Even though one is entirely sanctified, floating in one's psyche there are elements which one would want to recognize, deal with, grapple with, struggle with, work through, and come to some higher level of handling of those emotions, attitudes, views, and predispositions than one has achieved up to this point in time" (page 85); and /3) "What I am getting at may not be that different from what has been said by the general evangelist at the most popular levels in holiness circles: the deeper the death, the fuller the life. The only critical difference may be the emphasis in this paper upon the inability of the crisis to complete the depth of death and fullness of the resurrection" (page 85, italics supplied).

The factor which underlies these propositions is the concept of resentment which is articulated by Max Scheler in his slender volume by that title. Although an illuminating motif, the term, as explicated by Scheler and summarized by Lewis A. Coser, editor of the book.<sup>3</sup> seems to combine

elements which Wesleyans traditionally have associated, on explicit Biblical grounds, with indwelling sin and factors which, though perhaps not sin in the strictest sense of the word, are yet expressive of humanity marred by the Fall. Thus the idea of resentment must be employed with discretion and caution, which Dr. Thompson obviously has endeavored to do.

Together these two interlocking levels of concern raise questions about the perennial issues earlier indicated. The first is the matter of crisis and process in the fully sanctified life. Does the process before and after the crisis of holiness indicate that God's sanctifying intentions are not fully accomplished even in entire sanctification? That is, does something(s) remain to be done before and after the crisis of entire sanctification which must be realized along processive rather than punctiliar lines? If that is so—and I think it is—are the areas upon which Mr. Thompson touches those aspects that God's sanctifying act does not resolve in that crisis? Are these remaining elements, then, to be dealt with by means of death in the distinct sense that inbred sin is to be slain? If they are not, is Dr. Thompson accurate concerning the inability of the crisis to complete the depth of death to which he has referred? I suggest that, at this point, he may not be quite accurate. For, in trying to relate the correct observations he has made concerning the problems which remain after the experience of entire sanctification with the Wesleyan witness to the radical cleansing which does occur in the experience, I would question whether entire sanctification as a work of grace—that is, as an indispensable component in the process of salvation—does handle these kinds of issues or that it is even intended to do so. By asking these questions and proposing this answer, I would come down on Professor Thompson's side of the issue without, at the same time, limiting the depth of death that does occur in the moment of being wholly sanctified.

Intersecting with this focus on the aims of entire sanctification is the time—frame within which these goals are reached, with these two components always being inseparable in Wesleyan theology. It is at the point of this intersection that Dr. Thompson's analysis of forgiveness, which arises out of his utilization of Scheler's concept of resentment, is of particular concern for my response. Professor Thompson's use of the captivating study of forgiveness, *Healing Life 's Hurts: Healing Memories through Five Stages of Forgiveness*, by Matthew and Dennis Linn <sup>4</sup> is a crucial choice for a Wesleyan. I say that, for if the Linns are correct in placing the process of forgiveness through which a person must struggle in analogous parallel with Dr. Elisabeth Kubler—Ross's schema of the process through which a dying person usually gropes, then this question is raised for the Wesleyan believer: How do we relate the process which inheres in the fact of struggle—a struggle through which one may have to go many times throughout life because of the relational nature of interpersonal contacts—with the crisis liberation attributed to entire sanctification?

Perhaps an even more important question is how a heart made perfect in love could ever have such a struggle, let alone a conflict that is resolved in processive terms rather than in a crisis experience. It may be that an episode in the life of Paul is instructive at this point. In Acts 15:36—41, Paul has a "sharp contention" with Barnabas over Mark's aborted ministry—a kind of interpersonal relationship that Paul negatively evaluates in his

Hymn to Perfect Love in 1 Corinthians 13 by stating that love "is not irritable or resentful." All of us know the outcome of this tense incident: two persons who doubtless had been made perfect in love went separate ways. Yet in 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul later requests the presence of Mark because "he is very useful in serving me." Obviously Mark eventually proved his true worth and Paul had forgiven him. Knowing the intensity of Paul's character, I strongly suspect that such forgiveness involved Paul in no little inward struggle over a period of time. Could this be an example of struggle—even to forgive—not being necessarily foreign to a believer with a holy heart?

In proceeding to the Wesleyan formula of purity and maturity, I wish to say that I believe this traditional distinction must be taken with utmost seriousness and must be kept near the surface of our theological, homiletical and didactic consciousness at all times in the ministry of Scriptural holiness. In light of this indispensable dichotomy, it is possible to suggest that the areas touched upon by Dr. Thompson do not constitute moral impurities or evidences of it. These elements may not be fully Christlike, but are they thereby to be classified as impurities? In fact, we may ask: Are Christlikeness and spiritual maturity fully synonymous? If they are not, then are these elements aspects of immaturity until they become moral issues in terms of the believer's sensing the need to rectify them by the assistance of God's grace? I think that the first question may be answered negatively and the second affirmatively, if we posit that areas of inadequacy, weakness and instability—which doubtless do not always refract the image of Christ—are not necessarily and always sin or evidences of moral impurity. I know that I may be walking on a bed of hot coals instead of solid ground in making this proposal, but I think the validity of such distinctions may be reflected in the life of Paul, whom we generally say knew the blessing of a clean heart.

This assertion brings me back to the Apostle's life for a second Biblical example in my argument. For several years, I have been intrigued by the response of Paul, as a supposedly sanctified believer, to a difficult situation preserved for us in 2 Corinthians 2:12—17. In this segment of the epistle, Paul witnesses to the door of service that God had opened for him in Troas. However, he could not bring himself to go through that door because of the inner turmoil of mind over the delay of Titus' arrival with news the Apostle desperately desired to receive. But immediately after saying that he could not go through the door because his anxiety sent him off looking for Titus, Paul—the anxious one who, in another context, admonished the Church to "have no anxiety about anything" (Philippians 4:6, RSV)—has the audacity to praise God for the triumph that he and other believers have in Christ. But, strangely, he does not confess any disobedience to God's guidance and providence. If I had been counseling Paul (!), I think I probably would have said: "Look, Brother, I know you are concerned (dare I say "worried"?) but you must learn to trust God and avail yourself of the opportunity for ministry He has provided. Just commit Titus and Macedonia to God's keeping and get on with the job at hand, which happens to be right here in Troas! "

I am sure that from a purely exegetical standpoint, this is not the main thrust of 2 Corinthians 2:12—17—even as my relating of Acts 15. 1

Corinthians 13 and 2 Timothy 4 does not express the primary concern of those portions of Scripture. However, does not such a reaction by Paul reveal that holy people at times also may manifest what could be called inadequate—and hence less than Christlike—responses in difficult situations and still be called holy people? Thus can we call these areas of inadequacy sin? The Bible does not give an explicit answer to this question; thus we must be cautious in our answer. However, the Bible does give possible examples of such an issue, which also requires us to be cautious in looking negatively at parallel situations. For when we compare the basic New Testament witness to heart purity which comes in a critical moment with the inadequacies of those who apparently possessed such purity, we do have grounds for suggesting that a clean heart and areas of personality which, through their inadequacy are less than Christlike, can exist in the same person—a situation which is doubtless best explained from the perspective of the Wesleyan distinction between purity and maturity.

But when this distinction ceases to be the vantage from which we view very human people as inwardly pure or liberated from inbred sin, at least three things happen: First, we bring the component of glorification in the structure of salvation to bear on the present life of the believer in a way that is foreign to its content and timing in the New Testament, thereby causing Biblical distortion. Second, we cloud the awareness of the believer's full liberation from inbred sin by a false sense of guilt, thereby creating spiritual confusion. And, third, because of the preceding two issues, we remove ourselves from the line of doctrinal continuity with our historical Wesleyan roots, thereby causing theological aberration.

This third statement, of course, turns us from any digression in which I may have indulged back to my basic concern with doctrinal development and/or change. But in returning to this central focus, I again yield to my propensity to be heavy on questions and light on answers, which I now will amply demonstrate with two questions! First, How are we to evaluate the components of Dr. Thompson's analysis of the problems he isolates in trying to relate the difficulties he perceives with the Wesleyan understanding of entire sanctification? Second, How are we to evaluate those emphases by some Wesleyans which seem to rule out struggle and darkness—calling them evidences of sin—in relation to our doctrinal roots in John Wesley? In the light of what I have said, such evaluations must be done within the context of the principles, processes and implications of doctrinal development and/or change. This is a broad context, for it reaches back to historical roots and theological presuppositions of our Wesleyan tradition and reaches forward to the present.

But in saying this, I must be careful to immediately emphasize that the historical roots and the presuppositions of a theological tradition are not to be construed as representing absolute norms which are exempt from criticism. Rather they are, indeed, susceptible to the evaluation of the Biblical revelation for the verification of their truth—claims—and constantly must be subjected to the judgment of Scripture if we are to remain among those who are heirs of the Reformation as well as sons and daughters of Wesley.

However, there are times when we may question the legitimacy of a doctrinal development which produces marked tension within the broader theological expression of a religious tradition. Thus, when the development

of a certain major point within a theological tradition is reformulated in a way that is inconsistent with the implicit assumptions of that tradition and/or is not in harmony with one or more explicit expressions of the tradition, doctrinal integrity is thereby weakened. Therefore, any development which weakens doctrinal integrity may mean either (1) that the development is an aberration or (2) that the theological presuppositions which are challenged by the development are themselves in error.

This produces a dilemma: What does one do if one's Biblical reflections constrain one to take a road that leads to a doctrinal change or reformulation? If the development does not challenge the basic theological presuppositions of the tradition, then there is no radical or serious problem. But if the change does constitute an illegitimate development by the standards of the tradition, then one is faced with the further dilemma which may have ethical overtones: Should one persist with the development which, though sincerely held and honestly expressed, does weaken the doctrinal integrity of the tradition and thus over a period of time may transform the tradition into something else? If we are committed to Him who is the Truth, then we must be open to the possibility that such persistence may be a valid, hence, ethical course of action.

I pose these two dilemmas because of the fact that doctrine has a history (contrary to the unfounded assumption that it has no real historical rootage because the truth it expresses is of divine origin, from which it is deduced that doctrine does not and cannot change if it is to remain the truth). Because it does have an actual history, doctrine reflects the phenomenon of change across time. The history of the doctrine of holiness thus did not start with Wesley or Booth or Brengle—or with any of us; and it did not stop with them—nor will it do so with any of us.

However, for the creative involvement in this historical process, those who prefer the more traditional understanding and expression of the doctrine of holiness must make sure (1) that they do not equate their understanding of the truth of sanctification with the Truth as it is in Jesus, lest they become guilty of doctrinal idolatry and (2) that their desire to conserve this understanding and expression does not blind them to the reality of change inherent in history, thereby running the risk of unknowingly restricting their participation with Christ in the history of which He is Lord—the One who is continually doing a "new thing."

But this is not the only "however." For the creative involvement in this historical process, those who prefer newer understandings and expressions of the doctrine of holiness must make sure that they are not blind to the possibility that the changes they suggest may not be the legitimate outgrowth of the historical roots and theological presuppositions of the community of faith of which they are a part and in which they officially serve as ministers of the truth. And it is here that they confront the existential question within this historical/theological context by the necessity of asking themselves if the new tradition which they are helping to shape contributes more adequately towards molding us in the image of Christ than did the older tradition.

By raising the immediately preceding question, I am prepared to suggest that it could be that much of what Dr. Thompson proposes expresses refreshing fidelity to our theological and historical roots because the

potential which those proposals have for an intellectually honest liberation from indwelling sin is more consistent with the spirit of the emancipating message of John Wesley than are other approaches within our tradition which, I think, often—though unintentionally—bind and confuse seekers after and possessors of entire sanctification.

I personally believe quite strongly that the interpretation of entire sanctification as a "second work of grace" which thoroughly cleanses the believer from inbred sin subsequent to conversion faithfully reflects the witness of Scripture—and it was primarily this which drew me to the holiness movement in general and The Salvation Army in particular at the age of 27 when I was a minister in a Keswick—oriented rather than Wesleyan-focused denomination. However, I have largely approached this problem of development in the doctrine of holiness from the perspective of historical and theological concerns rather than primarily Biblical ones, because there is much more involved in doctrinal development and/or change than new exegetical probings of Scripture. Consequently, the Biblical studies that raise the possible necessity for fresh formulations and expressions of the doctrine of Christian perfection within the holiness movement cannot be separated from the historical/theological context within which they have been carried out. To be unaware of or to ignore that context when arriving at new and perhaps different interpretations has ecclesiological and ethical ramifications, for Biblical exegesis does not happen in a vacuum. And whether we know it or like it, we all are involved in some way in the interaction of context and content. Thus we must try to keep in balance (even if not too successfully) the interplay between the shaping of Biblical interpretation by its historical/theological context and the possible reshaping of that context by Scriptural exegesis.

Facing these issues can be and is a very painful experience—one to which we are "condemned" if we at all think historically and theologically in the process of reflecting Biblically. Doubtless, we will encounter these dilemmas more than once. As we do so throughout our ministry of Scriptural holiness, let us in desperation depend upon the Spirit of Truth for His discernment and enablement in order that we may more adequately know, express and proclaim Him "who of God is made unto us . . . sanctification."

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#### Notes

- 1See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Continuity of Christian Doctrine*. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981); Peter Toon, *The Development of Doctrine in the Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979).
- 2Jaroslav Pelikan, *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1969) and *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971).
- 3Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*. Lewis A. Coser, ed.; William W. Holdheim, trans. (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).
- 4Matthew Linn and Dennis Linn, *Healing Life 's Hurts: Healing through Five Stages of Forgiveness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

# TOWARD A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF THE KINGDOM

by David L. Cubie

## I. Sanctification and the Possibility of Social Change

The Biblical doctrine of sanctification is a teaching which proclaims that God purposes to change men from being sinful into being holy. Sanctification is the means, the process (both in instants and extended periods of time) by which God makes holy: transforming the individual into Christlikeness, building up those who are "added daily" (Acts 2:47) into one body in Christ, and changing the kingdoms of this world into His kingdom Holiness is Christlikeness. This means mercy—truth—compassion—meekness—humility—love—and justice to others on the personal, social and societal levels.

There is initial as well as entire sanctification. Christlikeness has its partial and complete expression. Likewise, the kingdom is both inaugurated in Christ's first advent and consummated in His second advent. Both Christlikeness and the Kingdom have decisive moments of beginning and completion. So also each has progress toward the goal with varying degrees of completion and possibilities of reversal.

Those addressing the question of change in society take two general views, whether they be theologians, sociologists or psychologists. There are those whose principal concern is the ability of the individual or society to function and there are those whose concern is the transformation of the individual or society toward an ideal. In theological terms, the first sees Christlikeness and the kingdom as being impossible, and thus impractical to pursue, while the second sees these as necessary goals. Stan Gaede, from the perspective of sociology, describes these different views as the Functional and Conflict theories.<sup>1</sup> The functionalist seeks to maintain integration in society, while the conflict theories seek transformation. Margaret Polomo, another sociologist, makes a similar distinction, but names them the naturalistic and the humanistic.<sup>2</sup> In her analysis, the naturalistic view is that man is the product of society while the humanist believes that man can change society. According to her, Comte is the model for the "functional—naturalistic" view, while Marx is the model for the "conflict-humanistic" view.<sup>3</sup> Psychologically speaking, the first is interested in self-acceptance, while the second is concerned for transformation.

Though the Christian church is united in its value goals, it is divided at the point of possibility. By some, man and society are seen as incurably sinful. Even where the individual is seen as transformable, his transformation is to enable him to function peacefully both with himself and with society. By others, both man and society are seen as transformable toward an ideal norm. This perspective holds that though we do not live in the best of all possible worlds, the individual and society can and must be changed. The point at which evangelical Christians disagree is whether change is possible short of Christ's second coming. One would hold that this world cannot be changed. The other would hold that the responsibility of the church is to seek to change the individual and society toward the image of Christ and the Kingdom. The logical conclusion of imputed holiness is that man cannot be changed, while that of imparted holiness is that transformation into Christlikeness and the Kingdom is God's purpose and thus is possible.

The Church, not without justification and not without Biblical support, tends to be more pessimistic about social than about personal change. Different views regarding society have failed, whether one accepts theories which are functionalist—naturalist or conflict—humanist, whether one accepts things as they are as normal, or seeks to bring about radical change. Economic liberalism, which fits into the functionalistic model, has justified economic inequalities by arguments from natural law. By this, the Manchester School of Economics, an early proponent of capitalism, sought to justify the subsistence wages given the workers. Its teaching was for good reason called "the dismal science." Marxism, in contrast, attempts to bring about change, but its attempt at inaugurating a selfless utopia by the annihilation of the selfish classes has itself resulted in a selfish few controlling the many, a continuation of what Molten has called, "the dictatorship of sin and death." The Church, both in theory and practice, has usually conformed to the status quo. The Church, though it has fairly consistently taught personal transformation, has less often espoused social transformation. When it has, it also has failed, for it has used force, either to retain the past or to usher in the future. The Spanish Hapsburgs sought to maintain Christendom by the Inquisition, and Cromwell sought to introduce a Commonwealth of the Saints.<sup>5</sup> Both failed. Neither introduced the Kingdom.

The New Testament contains teaching which could be described as functionalist in perspective: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God" (Rom. 13:11).<sup>6</sup> "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21). Yet in contrast to this, God is described as being the One who "has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree" (Luke 1:52), and Satan is referred to as the "ruler of this world" (John 14:30) and Christians are commanded, "Do not love the world" (I John 2:15). Throughout all the gospels, a confrontation between the Church and the World is seen as inevitable.

## II. Eschatology

The Christian community expresses three views regarding the Church and the world in relationship to eschatology. It can view the world as being in total resistance to God's reign. The Church is God's Ark of safety, a



lifeboat rescuing the few out of the world but with no concern for the world itself. As such, the Church waits for its Messiah but does nothing to transform the world or prepare for Messiah's return. The Church can also view its task as conquest and change, but by human strength and means. Eschatological language, if used, is merely symbolic of human activity. Jesus is reduced to moral influence but is not the cosmic Lord overcoming the forces of evil. A third view, expressed by Paul, is that Christ is reigning until all His enemies, "every rule and every authority and power," including the world, "are under His feet" (I Corinthians 15:23—28). From this perspective, the Church is Christ's militant body, marching to the orders of its Head, who carries the battle to the very gates of death (Matt. 16:18).

The above three outlooks could be characterized as (1) pessimistic, (2) optimistic and (3) militant hope. The last of these, militant hope, seems to be most in harmony with the Wesleyan doctrine of Entire Sanctification. The Bible knows man's sin, but it also declares the power of God. Hope knows the tragedy of sin, but it lives in the context of the resurrection.

Regarding Millennialism, the Wesleyan doctrine of Entire Sanctification does not fit comfortably into either pre—millennialism, at least in its pessimistic form, or post—millennialism. Its knowledge of God's working includes transformation by both process and crises, both our striving and God's mighty energizing (Col. 1:29). "Sanctification," according to Paul, is both reward and "free gift" in relationship to our pursuit of righteousness (Rom.6:19,22—23). Similarly, Jesus taught that the rewards of the Kingdom are subject to God's timing. We are to seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33), and wait patiently for His sure response.<sup>7</sup> Consistent with these, our millennial expectations ought to occur in the context of the pursuit of the Kingdom. We must "prepare the way of the Lord" (Matt. 3:3). Yet we must recognize that the final eradication of evil and establishment of righteousness will only take place at His return. We must prepare for Christ's appearing with Kingdom deeds.

### III. The Kingdom Beyond Us

New Testament morality is essentially eschatological, that is beyond our sin—marred knowledge and ability, whether this be the Sermon on the Mount or the various ethical affirmations of the Apostle Paul. God is not only the God of the future in terms of time and the unfolding of His purposes in time; He is also the God of the future in terms of righteousness and holiness. He both makes us saints and calls us to be saints, that is to be sanctified in body, soul and spirit, in every part of our nature (I Thess.5:23). We are sons of God, but all creation waits for the full manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). As John said, "We are God's children now, and it does not appear what we shall be, but when we see him we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). When God adopts us into His family, making us sons and daughters, He does so not because we are holy but because He purposes to make us holy, that is, "He . . . has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Christ is the "first—born" of those who image God, but He is not the last. For as Paul adds, He is "the first—born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). The firstbornness of Christ is not only in terms of time but also in moral expression. In Him Sonship (or in social terms, the Kingdom) was fully present. And in that holy, moral firstness, He is God's eschatology, fully realized in time, which He promises to fulfill in all of our times and racially, at the end of time.<sup>8</sup>

Because it is eschatological, it is never realized in its fullness in either a first or second work of grace, but it is always that to which we are being called. As Karl Barth, commenting on Romans 8:24—25, said, "If Christianity be not altogether thorough—going eschatology . . . there remains in it no relationship whatever with Christ. Spirit which does not at every moment point from death to the new life is not the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup> Christlikeness is the Christian's hope, the realization of which requires not only the crisis experiences, but also our continuous concern for righteousness, that is for perfect alignment with God's calling for us, which is to be like Christ. We are to purify (I John 3:3) and conform (Rom. 12:2) ourselves to the image that was in Christ.

The Biblical moral code is utterly impossible in human terms, but from the perspective of God's grace, it is not only possible, but is purposed for US in Christ (Rom. 8:29). That New Testament righteousness and holiness are only possible through God's grace, must be affirmed against every form of humanistic optimism. That they are possible by grace must be affirmed against every form of pessimism.

Biblical morality is eschatological not only in relationship to man's moral ability but also in relationship to man's moral understanding. Sin has both destroyed man's ability and corrupted man's understanding. In fact, lack of understanding and inability have a negative influence on each other. A man's world view, including his coherent understandings of morality, is derived from his total experience, including his inabilities. The result is that the best that man is able to do in himself becomes the human measure of what is right. Knowledge and ability are intertwined. The *psuchikos* man,<sup>10</sup> however we translate that term (natural, spiritual, or a Christian who still measures morality by the society to which he belongs), Paul says, "does not receive the things of the Spirit" (KJV, I Cor.2:14). He represents the temptation of the Christian and the Church to choose as its standards the best righteousness of this world. As such, the Sermon on the Mount, and other equally demanding passages in the New Testament, are seen as hyperboles and not to be obeyed literally. In not taking these "Christlike" commands seriously, we do not enjoy the full gospel privileges. "The transformation of the mind," occurs in choosing that which is beyond us, that is of proving "what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). This is the promised transformation into Christlikeness. Knowledge and ability are intertwined because knowledge ("the perfect will of God") is only known in doing and proving its gracious possibility.<sup>11</sup>

A number of different interpretations have been given regarding the difficulty of the divine law revealed in the Sermon on the Mount: the Lutheran—to convince us that we are sinners; Schweitzer's—an eschatological ethic for an eschatological age that never came; and a common interpretation shared by many—an ethic for the perfect but not for the average Christian (Matt. 19:11, 21). All of these tend to reduce God's demands to our competency. God's law must be seen as eschatological, that is, beyond the ability and understanding of natural man, yet nevertheless as every man's calling. We are called unto holiness (Lev. 11:44—45; I Peter

1:15) and commanded to be Perfect, that is, to love and be merciful as does our Heavenly Father (Matt. 5:44—48; Luke 6:27—36). We are to go beyond the natural through the transformation of both understanding and will by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 5:5, Col. 1:29).

When a Christian reads the Sermon on the Mount, he is convicted of any "falling short of the glory of God," but he is also sustained by the promise implied in this command, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." The command stated as a promise is "when we see him, we shall be like him" (I John 3:2). Though one may be convicted, one also may be a partaker of the glory of God. The Christian partakes not only of God's justifying and forgiving grace but also of His sanctifying and transforming grace. The old static perfection of law is past. Instead, "we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (I Cor. 3:17). Increased understanding requires daily forgiveness, but it results in continuous transformation.

The eschatological nature of the ethic of the Kingdom is captured in Jesus' words to Peter, "You cannot follow me now, but you shall follow me afterward" (John 13:36) and to the disciples, "you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12—13). Present inability and future gracious ability are both kept in focus. Jesus' words are directly contrary to that hymn of American (and Pelagian) optimism, "Lord, we are able," which reminds us of Peter's bold assertion, "I will lay down my life for you" (John 13:37). The ethic of the Kingdom is eschatological, precisely because it is beyond our ability. Peter's inability was both prior to and after Pentecost. Pentecost prepared him so that he spoke boldly, but Pentecost by itself did not prepare him to go to the household of Cornelius. Even that awakening was not sufficient to prepare him for Antioch. The ethic of the Kingdom transcends our human abilities; nevertheless, it is placed upon us as command and given as promise and fulfillment. Awakening to a new truth brings conviction, repentance and then enabling. As Peter, possibly reminiscing, said, "Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (I Peter 4:1).

#### IV. The Eschatology of Love

The Church, as well as the individual, must be an example of Christian perfection. Hers is that of pressing on toward the perfection of love: true oneness, equality and sacrificial service.

Because love is the supreme ethic of the Kingdom, the eschatological fulfillment of love is the perfection of social relationship. The goal is "that they might be perfected into one" (*eis hen*) (John 17:23). Even sacrificial service is aided through identifying the other person with yourself. Our neighbor is to be loved "as yourself," the meaning of which Paul makes plain by stating, "He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it" (Eph.5:28—29). Identifying with the other person creates sympathy and empathy, but identifying the other person with me, calls forth my defense of him and my sacrifice of myself on his or her behalf. The corporate, social nature of final perfection is expressed in that "we all . . . are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (II Cor. 3:18), and "we are to grow up in every

way . . . into Christ" (Eph. 4:15). We are one body through faith and redemption. We are adopted into unity, that is into the family of God, but we are to grow up into the unity of love. Even regarding the second crisis, though God may give His perfect love unto us, it is only perfected through practice. As John reminds us, "whoever keeps his word, in him truly God's love is perfected" (I John 2:7); "if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (I John 4:12).

Though we proclaim and claim a personal perfection of love, do we have teleological vision that this love can and is meant to break down all barriers so that neither "Jew nor Greek, . . . slave nor free, . . . male nor female" exist any longer in any divisive or oppressive sense? That is, so that hostility and inequality have ceased and all are "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:23). "He is our peace," Paul said, "who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of two, so making peace" (Eph. 2:14—15). Though this vision of Paul's has been covenanted with us through the cross, yet its interpersonal fulfillment is not yet. That it can take place is demonstrated by the union of persons with diverse backgrounds into those local and international fellowships which we call churches. But these fellowships though they may be advanced beyond infantile self—centeredness, still bear the character of adolescent cliques which include or exclude according to the interests or narrow dogmas, "the commandments and ordinances," of the group. By thus blaming human nature or sinfulness and proclaiming the impossibility of the task, we advance division rather than unity. Because we have "fear of [communal] death," we even go so far as treating each other with hostility or uncivil coolness instead of recognizing our brotherhood in Christ. Thus we remain in "life—long bondage" (Heb. 2:14—15). The task of the Church is to go on unto perfection until we are "perfected into one" (John 17:23).

Instead of waiting passively for the Kingdom, we are to be like the last of the prophets, who cried "prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Luke 3:4). We must remember that Paul's description of perfection, presently possessed, is "I press on toward the goal for the prize [the perfection, vs. 12] of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). This means that instead of pessimistically or self—centeredly accepting division, we must press the gospel call of the universal Lordship of Christ and that which follows, the end of division both within the Church (I Cor. 1—4) and among all men (Eph. 2:11—22). The eschatological vision must be love, expressed in its perfection by the breaking down of all divisions.

## V. Anti—Christ: Impatience and Violence

The message regarding Christ always opens the door for anti—Christ. To proclaim the message of unity through Christ always creates the possibility of a false unity through anti—Christ. Anti—Christ is manifest not only through denying that Jesus is the Christ but also, in some measure, through reducing the Kingdom to the pious few or by expanding it to an inclusive uniformity through violence and deceit. Jesus indicated that lack of love is central to all anti—Christ. "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth" (John 8:44). Unity, the interpersonal goal of love, can only

be attained through love. Only love can make unity out of diversity and still retain liberty. Anti—Christ seeks to create unity through force. The result is regimented uniformity. Anti—Christ takes the impatient route of bringing to pass all his social promises by using violence and deceit. Even Christians may grow weary of watching and waiting and join the ranks of false Christs and begin to oppress their neighbors. Jesus described the servant who says, " 'My Master is delayed in his coming' and begins to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk" (Luke 12:45). Habakkuk also juxtaposes vision and slowness of coming, over against a failure of spirit which results in arrogance and self—indulgence; "He whose soul is not upright in him shall fail but the righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:3—5), or as the Jerusalem Bible translates this, "by his faithfulness."<sup>12</sup> As Jesus said, "Because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). The Pharisaic attempt to usher in the Kingdom partakes of this same failure of nerve. The Pharisees redefined Israel by excluding the poor, the *anahim*, whose lives could not be easily regimented into their codes, and counted the Samaritans who disagreed with them over place of worship as being among the enemies of God. They nevertheless had their patterns of self—indulgence. Jesus described them as "lovers of money" (Luke 16:14). Both violence and exclusion of others express failure in love.

Jesus' repeated message regarding the Kingdom is patience. When the disciples just prior to His ascension asked, "Will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?", Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons... But you shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses (my *martures*) in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:7—8). Because love is central to the Kingdom, the Kingdom's coming cannot be rushed or coerced. It must come with the patience of love. Love makes patience possible. To use Phillip's translation of 1 Corinthians 13:7, "Love outlasts anything."

## VI. Kingdom Force

To suggest that the Kingdom's coming cannot be coerced is not to say that it does not come by force. The language of power is used throughout the New Testament, but it is a different power than that used in this world. As Paul said, "For though we live in the world (*sarki*), we are not carrying on a worldly (*sarkika*) war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to tear down strongholds" (II Cor. 10:3—4). By this power Paul claims paradoxically, "we destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete" (II Cor. 10:5—6).

This power given by God is resurrection power. It is "the Lamb who was slain . . . [who receives] power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). It is those who "die in the Lord" whose "deeds follow them" (Rev. 14:13), not just believers who happen to die, but those who die in the context of witness. In the book of Revelation the witness takes evil upon himself rather than inflict it upon another. As the "loud voice in heaven" proclaimed,

Now the salvation and power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ has come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death' (Rev. 12:11).

The early church recognized this power, even to the point of making a fetish out of it. Even at a very early day, they collected the bones of the martyrs, such as Polycarp.<sup>13</sup>

Love also has its wrath but it is not the wrath of the sword, but rather the wrath of the consciences of those who wield the sword. Thus the book of Revelation speaks paradoxically about "the sword from the mouth of the Word of God" (Rev. 19:13—15) and about the "wrath of the Lamb" (Rev.6:16). Paul's statement about "wrath and fury" (Rom. 2:8) is related to conscience which "also bears witness . . . on that day when . . . God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus (Rom. 2:15—16). By retaliating with love, the sons of God "heap burning coals" on the oppressors, the death of Christ leaves men without excuse (Rom. 1:20; 3:25—26), and the persecution of Spirit—filled witnesses "convicts men of sin of righteousness and of judgment" (John 15:26—16:2, 8). Similarly the Christian's life must have that divine aroma, love, which is both life unto life for those being saved but also death unto death to those who are lost (II Cor. 2:15—16). There is no escape from the One who "enlightens every one who comes into the world" (John 1:9). He is the source and end of every conscience. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). In the last days all the power brokers of the world will call "to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide US from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb' " (Rev. 6:16). Yet God's servants, the followers of the Lamb, "shall see his face" (Rev. 22:4). As men are confronted with the witness of God's love in Christ, God will cause "every knee . . . [to] bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10—11). The power of the powerless, the judgment of the one who did not come to judge and the wrath of the Lamb who did not come to condemn but to save, is a constantly repeated theme of the New Testament. This power of sacrificial love, of true righteousness (Rom. 13:9—10), is manifest in those who are truly God's sons and daughters. As James said "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects" (James 5:16).

## VII. The Unity of the Church: The Way of the Kingdom

What is the way to the kingdom? The Early Church described itself as "The Way," and that is literally what it is. H. R. Niebuhr describes the Church as being in a "position of leadership in the task of integrating humanity."<sup>14</sup> If the goal of the kingdom is the universal sway of interpersonal love, then the Church which is called to unity in Christ must show the way. In this sense, as in all others, it must be the "salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). Though the world is portrayed as existing in darkness and hostility, every man potentially being against his neighbor, yet the normative nature of the Church is always portrayed as unity. It is the body of Christ which is founded upon unity ("one body . . . one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all," (Eph. 4:4—6) and which is

working toward unity ("until we all attain to the unity of the faith," Eph. 4.13), whatever the past and present divisive realities may be. Though not of the world, the Church should be a witness to the world.

The Church's unity probably should not be that of organizational unity, at least of the hierarchical type. The temptation to fulfill one's personal vision of the Kingdom by coercing others into it would be too strong. Nevertheless, each church should at least develop an appreciation for the vision which Christ has given to the other churches. Tension will exist as each church seeks to pursue the vision which God has given it, but each should communicate this vision not only to the individuals whom it is calling out of the world but also to Christians in other denominations, until all are built into the unity that is in Christ, a unity of equality and love.

The international churches should not reflect the division of the nations but rather the brotherhood of all mankind, under the universal kingship of Christ. One of the most difficult tasks of modern missions is the need to transcend the loyalties of the homelands, including their political and economic systems, and to participate not only in the theological and ecclesiastical visions of others, but also in their visions of social and economic justice and equality— In this age when so many pasts are being wiped out and so many new tomorrows are beginning, the Church should be especially sensitive to the varied ways in which the Kingdom may be coming. Sanctification does not require uniformity. What each is called unto is the liberty and unity of love.

The international churches can become vehicles for the unity of the world in the same way that the denominations became agents toward unity in the United States<sup>15</sup> In the United States, instead of the colonial policy of each colony having an established church, such as the Episcopal in Virginia and New York or the Congregational in Massachusetts and Connecticut, the Baptists and some Presbyterians, allied with Thomas Jefferson, forced a disestablishment of the churches. Thus each denomination was free to grow with the nation as it expanded across the continent, competing with one another for converts, and yet cooperating as part of the larger Church in the task of Christianizing and civilizing the nation. Thus, instead of the Church of Massachusetts, in distinction from the Church of Virginia, contributing to states' rights and national disintegration, the spread of Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches throughout the land contributed to national unity. The people of God were not limited to local or county or state face—to—face relationships. Instead, each person was in contact with others throughout the land Even the further pluralization of the churches in the revivals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries furthered this face—to—face contact throughout the country. Thus those divisions which at first seemed to be destructive were urged by God to build the unity of a nation, which, at least in its unity, is a partial witness to the unity which God is purposing in the Kingdome of His Son.<sup>16</sup>

These same denominations serve to unite mankind throughout the world, creating friendship and bonds of love between persons residing in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, who otherwise would be total strangers— Though the ultimate goal is the complete unity of the Church and of all mankind in Christ, the denominations have become forces to unite

mankind across the national, ethnic, regional, cultural, and language barriers which exist. Though the denominational barriers came into existence, in part because of hostility and misunderstanding, nevertheless, to quote the words of Joseph to his brothers, "you meant evil . . .; but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). The vision of spreading the gospel, even competitively, at least spread the gospel and not just among one's own people, but around the world. Christian pluralism is now contributing to the social organization of people into one world, even as it did to make a nation. Though too much must not be claimed for denominations, for they too are expressions of man's hostility, nevertheless, in God's providence they have multiplied the international contacts of love and affection and are both prophecy and preparation for that day which is to come, when mankind shall be one under the reign of Christ.

The gospel does not permit the Church to rest short of any unity except perfect unity. The day must come when denominational, ethnic and national barriers are broken down. Then the Church shall be truly one in the end of its history as it was in its beginning. The question must be asked, though, does the unity of the Church wait for the unity of the Kingdom? The question must be rephrased into a statement regarding the Church's goal and mission. The unity of both Church and world must be the Church's ongoing task because the two goals of one Church and one world meet and in their fulfillment are one.

#### VIII. The Renewal of the Vision

It should be recognized that the preparation for the age of Christ is in danger of being used for the anti—Christ. The fullness of time for one is also the fullness of time for the other. Just as Paul can say, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20), so also, though in a more limited sense, we can say that where grace abounds, sin abounds. Any unity creates power whether in Church or State and that power when seized can become fearfully demonic. The unity created for Christ can be claimed by anti—Christ. Though Satan cannot make the good, he can seize the good for his own ends. Love and cooperation create unity. This unity, whether of two or three persons or a billion, creates power. Despite the good purposed in the United States or in the United Nations, either can become the throne of anti—Christ. Similarly, as we prepare the Church for Christ, anti—Christ may come and claim the Church.

The potential for distortion and decay is present in everything that is done, even by the most saintly. All our varied attempts at organization and reorganization to be more the Church or more the Kingdom, are subject to decay. As Paul reminds us, "Our outer nature is wasting away" (II Cor. 4:16). Socially as well as individually "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (II Cor. 4:7). But by this the Church is not excused from pressing toward the goal any more than is an individual. Once the eschatological vision of equality in love is present, the Church cannot go back to the lesser. Despite the potential for decay or for anti—Christ, we should remember that the final word is Christ, "that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). As Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of death shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). God is the one who can make



good out of all things" (Rom. 8:28). He can make good out of nothing and that which is less than nothing (Rom. 4:17; 5:25).

One of the great blessings of the ages is that generation follows generation. The Church always has the privilege of putting away the failures of the preceding generation. Youth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit can refashion the decayed vision of the past into a more perfect tomorrow. As John Wesley said, describing the means by which God brought to pass the evangelical revival, "God raised up a few young men."<sup>17</sup> It is true the vision is frequently constricted by the realities of time. Even the sainted John Fletcher, while still trusting in God, seems to have reduced his eschatological vision from the Kingdom to "a truly pentecostal church" and from the Church to that of the individual who through repeated Pentecosts can come to "the perfection of suffering and glory."<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, God transcends the decay of each age and renews the vision in every new generation. The word of the Lord through Habakkuk is a message to every generation:

Write the vision;  
make it plain upon the tablets,  
so he who runs may read it  
For still the vision awaits its time;  
it hastens to the end—it will not lie  
If it seems slow, wait for it;  
it will surely come, it will not delay  
Behold, he whose soul is not  
upright in him shall fail,  
but the righteous shall live by his faith

(Habakkuk 2:2—4)

God, in His time, will as surely sanctify the Church into His perfect bride, and the nations of this world into His Kingdom, as He sanctifies His children into His saints. The scoffers and those afraid will undoubtedly say "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation" (II Peter 3:3—4). The Church must not listen; instead, it must respond to Christ's call. Each generation must repent of the decayed vision of the past and return to its first love until the vision is both renewed and fulfilled.<sup>19</sup> Christ calls the Church from its fears, from retreat, from fulfilling its own desires, and from its worldliness to seek the new age. It must seek first the Kingdom itself and be both the unified and unifying witness to the age which is soon to come.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Stan Gaede, "Functionalism and Conflict Theory in Christian Perspective: Toward an Alternative View of Order and Conflict," *A Reader in Sociology: Christian Perspectives*, ed. by Charles P. DeSanto, Calvin Redekop and William L. Smith—Hinds (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1980), pp. 184—186. See Appendix 1 for Gaede's summary of these two theories.

- 2Margaret M. Poloma, "Theoretical Models of Person in Contemporary Sociology: Toward Christian Sociological Theory," (Ibid., pp. 202—208).
- 3Of these two Christian sociologists, Poloma is more concerned with maintaining objectivity in social observation while Gaede's concern is for change toward an ideal.
- 4Jurgen Moltmann, et al. *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. by Frederick Herzog (New York: 1970), p. 28.
- 5Wesley's observation on this subject: "See how those Christians love one another! . . . Nay, . . . Protestant churches too know how to persecute, when they have power in their hands even unto blood." ("Sermon on the Mount" No. 2. [1939], Works V, p. 277.) .
- 6Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the Reuised Standard Version.
- 7Notice Wesley's teaching in contrast to that of the modern holiness movement, that "the manner and time of God's bestowing his sanctifying grace" vary and that his "reasons are undoubtedly hid from the children of men." ("Sermon LXIX, "The Imperfections of Human Knowledge," [date?] III, 5; Works, VI, p. 349). Similarly in 1761 he wrote in his "Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection," "God usually gives a considerable time to receive light, to grow in grace . . . but . . . sometimes he 'cuts short his work'." ("A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," 25, Q. 25; Works XI, 423; for date see "Journal" December 21; Works III, 76.) The eschatological nature of sanctification in Wesley's teaching is very evident, especially in the above allusion to Jesus' saying that "the times or seasons . . . the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7).
- 8Ritschl similarly states, "He is that being in the world in Whose self-end, God makes effective His own eternal self—end" (Alhrecht Ritschl], *The Christian Doctrines of Justification and Reconciliation* [Edinburgh: 1902], p. 451).
- 9Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Transl. by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: 1933, 1965), p. 314.
- 10In Greek speculative religious thought, men were identified as being of three kinds, the *pneumatikoi* the *psuchikoi* and the *sarkinoi* The lowest of these are the *sarkinoi* whom Paul includes in Christ as babes. The *psuchikoi* seen in this light, are Christians whose moral thinking is still governed by the old moralities of Greek and Jew. For them the cross is still foolishness and a stumbling block (I Cor. 1:23). Like Peter, they affirm, "Thou art the Christ," but reject the cross as a personal reality (Matt. 16:16, 21—26), which must be appropriated if we are to be His disciples.
- 11Ritschl emphasizes the importance of knowing the goal if the kingdom is to be realized: "love to men and good works do not follow directly from faith in so far as faith experiences reconciliation with God as an individual and social possession, rather do they follow directly from faith in so far as it appropriates the final end of the kingdom of God" (Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*), p. 522.
- 12Jerusalem Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966.

- 13 "The Martyrdom of Polycarp." XVIII; Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1952), II, 337.
- 14 H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: 1929, 1957), p. 264.
- 15 See Donald G. Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780—1930." *Religion in American History: Interpretive Essays*, ed. by John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1978), pp. 199—217.
- 16 See Donald G. Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780—1830." *Religion in America. Interpretive Essays*, ed. by John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1978) pp. 199—217. Also see Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: 1962). "Many old—timers who attended the assembly at Pilot Point [the assembly which united holiness advocates of North and South], remembered how after the unanimous vote for union had been announced, a wiry little Texan started across the platform saying, "I haven't hugged a Yankee since the Civil War, but I'm going to hug one now." At once Brooklyn's William Howard Hoople, his 275 pounds adorned with a glorious handlebar mustache, leaped up from the other end of the platform and met the Texas near the pulpit. Their embrace set off a celebration. The gap between North and South was closed forever" (p. 223).
- 17 Wesley, "The General Spread of the Gospel," 13; "The Signs of the Times," II, 10; *Works*, VI, pp. 281, 311.
- 18 John Fletcher, "Portrait of St. Paul," ii, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher* (Salem, Ohio: 1974), III, p. 197. "Letter to Henry Brooke 1785, in Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor* (New York: 1883), p.553
- 19 Notice Wesley's continuing vision as it is expressed near the end of his life in the sermon, "The General Spread of the Gospel" [1780—85?].

"19. And in every nation and under heaven, we may reasonably believe God will observe the same order which he hath done from the beginning of Christianity. 'They shall all know me,' saith the Lord 'not from the greatest to the least . . . but, from the least to the greatest;' that the praise may not be of men but of God. Before the end even the rich shall enter the Kingdom of God" (*Works*, VI, 283).

"20....Then shall 'the times of universal refreshment come from the presence of the Lord.' The grand 'Pentecost' shall, 'fully come' and 'devout men in every nation under heaven,' however distant in place from each other, shall 'all be filled with the Holy Ghost;' and they will 'continue steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship and the breaking of bread, and in prayers;' they will 'eat their meat' . . . 'with gladness and singleness of heart . . . and they will all be of one heart and of one soul.' The natural, necessary consequence of this will be the same as at the beginning of the Christian Church. 'None of them will say, that ought of things which he possesses is his own; but they will have all things common.' " (*Ibid.*, p.284). [§ 23 describes the Gospel's spread to the nations of the world, *Ibid.*, p. 276.]

- "25. And so all Israel will be saved." [The promises to Israel are applied to the Church.] (Ibid., p. 286).
- "26. At that time will be accomplished all those glorious promises made to the Christian Church, which will not then be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth." (Ibid., p. 287).
- "27. This I apprehend to be the answer, yea, the only full and satisfactory answer that can be given to the objection against the wisdom and goodness of God, taken from the present state of the world. It will not always be thus: These things are only permitted for a season by the great Governor of the world that he may draw immense eternal good out of this temporary evil" (Ibid., pp. 287—288).

## **APPENDIX**

### **Functional and Conflict Theories As Summarized by Stan D. Gaede**

#### **The Structural—Functional**

Relying on Parsons, Merton, and Davis, van den Berghe reduces the structural—functional position to these seven postulates:

1. Societies must be looked at holistically as systems of interrelated parts.
2. Hence causation is multiple and reciprocal.
3. Although integration is never perfect, social systems are fundamentally in a state of dynamic equilibrium, i.e., adjustive responses to outside changes tend to minimize the final amount of change within the system.
4. As a corollary of #3, dysfunctions, tensions, and "deviance" do exist and can persist for a long time, but they tend to resolve themselves or to be "institutionalized."
5. Change generally occurs in a gradual, adjustive fashion, and not in a sudden, revolutionary way.
6. Change comes from basically three sources: adjustment to exogenous (or extra—systemic) change, growth through structural and functional differentiation, and inventions or innovations by members of groups within society.
7. The most important and basic factor making for social integration is value consensus, i.e., ... broad aims or principles, which most members of a given social system consider desirable and agree on (van den Berghe, 1963: 696).

#### **Conflict Theory**

By "conflict theorist," we mean those such as Mills, Dahrendorf, Gouldner, Moore, and Horowitz who have followed Marx in identifying "the underlying reality in all groups" (Friedrichs, 1970:45).

1. Societies are not functional systems, but settings within which societal sub—units (classes, parties, interest groups, etc.) are in constant conflict and struggle.
2. Social conflict arises from the antithetical interests of societal subunits, each of which is struggling to maintain or achieve advantage.
3. Social equilibrium is brief and temporary, arising from the dominance of one sub—unit and the false consciousness of disadvantaged sub—units.
4. Social change is inevitable and tends to be sudden and cataclysmic.
5. Change is dialectical, the product of conflict between polarized societal sub—units and the continual replacement (or threat thereof) of dominant sub—units by previously disadvantaged ones.
6. The most important factor contributing to social conflict is the domination of power, goods and services, and prestige by one sub-unit and the disadvantaged position of other societal sub—units relative to these items.
7. Material inequality results in value disensus between societal subunits and social disintegration.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stan D. Gaede. "Functionalism and Conflict Theory in Christian Perspective: Toward an Alternative View of Order and Conflict." *A Reader in Sociology: Christian Perspectives*. Ed. by Charles P. DeSanto et al (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: 1980), pp. 184—186.

## A RESPONSE TO DAVID CUBIE

by Charles E. Baldwin

In the recent issue of *The Preacher's Magazine*, Wesley Tracy, in his fine editorial, discusses change. He states there is a danger when an article begins with "We live in a time of change"-the danger of yawns and disgust! I hope that is not the result here, because he goes on to say that whether we like it or not... we must face and cope creatively with change.<sup>1</sup> This is precisely what Dr. David Cubie has creatively attempted to do. What has been given here is only part of a much larger and thorough work entitled *Sanctification and Revolution-Social Transformation toward a New Age*. Though he does not use the words of Wesley "I look upon the world as my parish"-our author has undertaken an ambitious, but relevant task of developing a Wesleyan theology of the Kingdom and attempting to relate the Biblical doctrine of sanctification to the broad social needs of this age. For this excellent work he is to be heartily commended.

Dr. Cubie is perceptive and sensitive to the troublesome revolutionary times in which we live and aptly understands the cutting edge of today's liberation theology. In the larger paper he sets out to explore "the relationship between social transformation, the concern for liberation theology, and the doctrine of sanctification." He desires that his material will cause those of us in the Wesleyan tradition to be more deeply sensitive to the broader scope of the social struggles of the poor and oppressed and catch a glimpse of the possibilities of divine grace for social transformation.

At the heart of his treatment is the present paper on developing a Wesleyan theology of the Kingdom. Against the background of the ideas of sociology, psychology, humanism, et. al, the Church faces the need for and the possibility of social change. Since all would agree that individual man and society are sinful Dr. Cubie poses two questions:

1. Is society capable of transformation towards an ideal norm?
2. Regarding the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification what is the potential for social reformation?

Our author has a clear perception of the philosophies and failures of the likes of humanism and Marxism to bring about needed change. He also sounds a proper note of warning and indictment against the Church in conforming to the status quo. The Church, though teaching personal experience and inner transformation, has not adequately proclaimed the possibility of transforming society.

Against this there is the proclamation that God's purpose is to change men from being sinful into being holy. Christlikeness in unity is properly perceived as the ultimate goal with love as the only way in which unity can exist. Love is the force which seeks to change those structures and concepts which are not of love. This proclamation is set in the tension between false views of social change on the one hand, and the eschatological hope of final, eternal change on the other. It is here that Dr. Cubie is grappling with a proper Wesleyan theology of the kingdom and bringing that to bear upon sinful humanity for proper social change. There is a vast area of concern between the present experience of sanctification coupled with a life of holiness based upon Christ's words "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5.43-48, RSV), and the final eschatological hope echoed in 1 Jn. 3.2

"... it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (RSV).

As I understand it a theology of the kingdom involves the present social age, but obviously reaches into a total future fulfillment. Dr. Cubie is reaffirming and broadening our horizons by showing the ramifications of sanctification in contemporary society and relating that to eschatological hope. He sounds a strong, Biblically based note for true social change. New Testament righteousness and holiness are possible through God's grace and not man's self efforts. This is the sharp spear of truth that must be hurled at false humanism and pessimism. The ethic of the kingdom, which is holy love, transcends human abilities, but it must be seen as a command and a promise that can, by God's grace, be fulfilled.

I sensed that Dr. Cubie's main concern is to bring a theology of the kingdom to bear on present day society. A correct thesis is set forth when love is presented as the supreme ethic of the Kingdom. The eschatological fulfillment of that love is the perfection of social relationships. This, of course, means identifying with others, breaking down all barriers and removing all hostility. Though we have not yet arrived and there is a better day coming, I find difficulty discerning the difference between Dr. Cubie's understanding of the present possibilities and responsibilities and the kingdom's coming.

Though I am in basic agreement with the essential theme of the paper and share in its burden, there is one area of concern. It is true the church is the "salt of the earth" (Mt. 5.13) and should embrace and work towards the goal of the kingdom, i.e., the universal sway of love. Theology of the kingdom in relation to sanctification involves unity, and Dr. Cubie's position is that the international churches can become vehicles for unity in the world. Denominations serve to unite mankind. It is agreed that the multiplicity of denominations are forces to remove ethnic and cultural barriers. However, I have serious difficulty with the seeming equation of church unity with social change effected by sanctification. I fully agree with the author's statement-"The day must come when denominational, ethnic and national barriers are broken down" but I must ask, When is this to be? Does a proper Wesleyan theology of the kingdom, the fullness of sanctification make it a realistic goal in these times? How is this to be worked out?

Can the Church Universal really be one in unity and be the vehicle of true social change on a Biblical basis when much of modern Christianity neglects, denies and actively opposes the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification? Dr. Cubie asks, "Does the unity of the church wait for the unity of the kingdom?" Good question! It needs, however, to be further explored and delineated so that a more adequate answer could be hammered out which would better explain the relationship between the power of sanctification in social change now, and the ideal, perfected Church in the millennium.

Dr. Cubie has served us well in this paper by calling attention to the needs of humanity in these "changing times," and the hope and possibility of what sanctification can do. He has given a clarion call to those in the Wesleyan tradition to a sharper belief in the power of love and to have a loftier vision of that love doing for both the Church and the world what Christ desires. I, for one, feel we should listen!

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<sup>1</sup>Wesley Tracy, *The Preacher's Magazine* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, Dec.-Jan. 1982-83).



## BOOK REVIEWS

Edward H. Madden and James E. Hamilton. *Freedom and Grace: The Life of Asa Mahan*. Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982. 273 pp. Reviewed by Harold E. Raser, Assistant Professor of the History of Christianity, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri.

The latest offering in the important "Studies in Evangelicalism" series under the guidance of Kenneth Rowe and Donald Dayton is this long needed biography of Asa Mahan. Edward Madden, now retired from teaching at the State University of New York (Buffalo), and his former graduate student, James Hamilton, now of the Asbury College Philosophy Department, have collaborated to produce the first full-length critical study of a person who, though his life spanned nearly the whole of the nineteenth century and he played a central role in some of the most significant American religious, intellectual, and social movements of that century, has yet been strangely neglected in the chronicling of the prominent. His close associate and friend, Charles Finney, has captured the scholars' attention much more often. Mahan's many writings have been readily available, his *Autobiography: Intellectual, Moral and Spiritual* (1882) being a primary biographical source, but students of American history are only now beginning to mine the unpublished collections housed at Oberlin College and elsewhere, and to offer scholarly assessments of Mahan. For leadership in this effort we certainly owe thanks to Madden and Hamilton.

*Freedom and Grace* in an unembellished way sets out the facts of Mahan's rather colorful life (1799-1889). To some extent the straightforward prose adopted by the authors clashes with the often lively subject matter. Mahan's life was nothing, if not lively. Finding himself intellectually at odds with the prevailing "hyper-Calvinism" of his upbringing, even as a youth, he moved from one series of embroilments to another; "dismissed" from his first pastorate in New York (which Madden and Hamilton attempt to place in the most favorable light), he moved "out west" to Cincinnati only to come under charges of "heresy" by Presbyterians for his "new school" views, and to take the role among the trustees of champion of the abolitionist students at Lane Seminary during the famous "Lane Rebellion" (1834). From there Mahan moved to the presidency of the pioneering educational institution at Oberlin, which became the hub of many "radical" causes, among them abolitionism (Oberlin was an important stop on the "underground railroad" spiriting escaped slaves northward), women's rights (granted the first bona fide A.B. degree to a woman, 1841), health

reform (Grahamism and homeopathic medicine), temperance, educational reform (away from the classical curriculum toward something more akin to modern "liberal arts"), and the holiness movement (Oberlin was the chief non-Methodist center of activity). Here Mahan constantly battled those who either opposed the causes to which he was committed, or whose own commitment registered less intense than his own. The eventual result was a forced departure from Oberlin.

Next it was on to Cleveland where Mahan helped to found a visionary university which for numerous reasons never fulfilled its early promise and utterly collapsed within a period of six years. This was followed by a brief period of "catch-as-catch-can" during which he acted for a time as president of the Western Homeopathic College in Cleveland, gave public lectures at the Melodeon, taught at a mercantile college, and preached where opportunity was presented. In 1855 he removed to Jackson, Michigan to pastor a Congregational church, where his appointment was opposed because of his holiness theology, and from there to Adrian, where he eventually became president of the small Wesleyan sponsored college. During a stormy tenure there Mahan introduced numerous curricular reforms, oversaw the transition of the school from Wesleyan to Methodist Protestant control, dabbled in progressive politics, tried his hand at Civil War military strategy (he was granted a session with President Lincoln to explain his views), and wrote his holiness classic, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (1870). In 1872 he went to England where he became active in the infant English holiness movement, and lived out his last days as an English citizen editing holiness papers, writing, and preaching. Madden and Hamilton tell this story cogently, if not always compellingly.

The greatest strength of the book is in its mastery of the various written materials relating to Mahan's life. Previously unpublished as well as published sources have been meticulously analyzed to provide a fresh detail here or interpretive perspective there. Attention to the better known pre-Oberlin and Oberlin career has been balanced with almost equal attention to the less familiar Cleveland, Michigan, and British years, the facts of which are often fascinating! The section on Mahan's involvement in the English holiness movement deserves special reading if only for the fresh light it sheds on the careers of Robert Pearsall and Hannah Whitall Smith.

A weakness of the book is that in its commendable attention to detail, it ultimately, in my view, fails to capture the essence of the man, Asa Mahan. One comes away knowing a great deal about the course of Mahan's life, but not really having been exposed to Mahan as a living, breathing, feeling, decision-making person. One reason for this is the authors' tendency to continually attempt to justify Mahan's well-attested irascibility and the interpersonal problems he encountered in nearly every one of his administrative positions. It is stated several times that Mahan was a complex person, and yet his complexity is not given full play in the efforts to always smooth his rough edges and place his actions in the best possible light.

Another problem is in the handling of Mahan's holiness views. For one, the Oberlin holiness advocates (Mahan, Finney, Cowles, etc.) developed a distinctive holiness theology within the context of a "New Light" Calvinism at the same time that others, like Phoebe Palmer, were at work within

the Methodist theological tradition. The interplay and distinctions between the two are very significant for understanding the history of the holiness movement in America, yet they are hardly considered. Related is the matter of Mahan's role in the evolution of the "Pentecostal motif" in American holiness theology as suggested by Donald Dayton and others. Madden and Hamilton have an opportunity to illuminate this issue, but rest content to simply acknowledge it and then affirm (but not demonstrate) that Mahan did not change his views significantly between the 1830s Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection and the 1870 Baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is not very satisfactory.

Some criticism does not detract from the value of *Freedom and Grace*. All things considered, it is a solid study of Asa Mahan and the many movements and causes to which he gave his life. It should receive wide reading.

*Did Christ Die for All? (The Five Points)*, by George E. Failing. Marion, Indiana: Presence, Incorporated, 1980, 23 pp. \$1.25. *An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology*, by William M. Greathouse and H. Ray Dunning, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1982, 126 pp. Reviewed by William M. Arnett Frank Paul Morris Professor of Christian Doctrine, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

This small volume, *Did Christ Die for All?* was first published under the title, *For Whom Did Christ Die?* (1978). It provides a judicious contemporary discussion of "The Five Points" of controversy between Calvinists and Wesleyan-Arminians. Even though it is rare to run across "Calvinists without reserve," as Clark H. Pinnock asserts in *Grace Unlimited*, there are reasons for continued polemical discussion in the opinion of both men. By means of an acrostic, A-B-C-D-E, Failing suggests and discusses "The Five Points of Arminianism": (1) Atonement for all; (2) Believers Alone are elected; (3) Convicting Grace; (4) Deliverance from sin; and (5) Endurance of believers. Through a printing inadvertence, chapters five and six are reversed, but that does not detract from the value of this modest volume. In contrast to Calvinism's interpretation of God's decrees and "double predestination," the author strongly asserts that "Christ died for all men though believers only are benefited."

*An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology*, a well-written volume, had its origin in a series of short articles written by William M. Greathouse for the *Adult Teacher*, a Sunday School publication of the Church of the Nazarene. Subsequently, it was edited and enlarged by H. Ray Dunning to approximately twice its original length, then edited and approved in its final form by Dr. Greathouse.

It begins with a "Prologue" on "Revelation and the Bible," then follows the main body which is divided into three parts, including ten chapters on basic Christian doctrines. It concludes with an epilogue" on "The Return of Christ." Each basic belief is discussed biblically historically, and systematically, and the three parts encompass the doctrines of God, Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit, Man, Atonement, Divine Grace and Human Response, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church and Sacraments. A brief glossary of terms, a bibliography, and indices of subjects, authors,

and Scripture texts, are also included. Both the novice in theology and the more advanced student will be informed and challenged by this small volume.

In the discussion concerning the Holy Spirit's activity in the production of the Holy Scripture, the authors call attention to the importance of the restriction set forth in the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene which emphasizes the written Word as "inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation." In other words, inerrancy is restricted to matters "necessary to our salvation." Furthermore the authors insist that the "Bible is not a book of science or of secular history." Inferentially, there appears to be room for the possibility of scientific or historical errors. While the Bible is not a book on science or secular history, it should be pointed out that Scripture does not make such an arbitrary distinction between spiritual and theological matters over against scientific and historical content in regard to authenticity or accuracy. On the contrary, "all scripture is inspired by God" (II Tim. 3:16). As Everett P. Harrison states, "the history of Biblical interpretation shows that the abandonment of the inerrancy of Scripture in non-doctrinal items has a tendency to make criticism of the doctrinal data much easier" ("Criteria of Biblical Inerrancy" in *Christianity Today*, January 20, 1958, p. 18).

The discussion on "Sanctification" in chapter 8 relates it to justification, regeneration, growth in grace, initial and entire sanctification. Frequent reference is made to the writings of John Wesley. Not all would agree with the assertion that "in Wesleyan terminology, regeneration is synonymous with "initial sanctification" (p. 86). Many would prefer to say that they are inter-related and concomitant, but not synonymous. Crisis and process are given emphasis in the discussion of holiness.

Undoubtedly the most unusual aspect is that the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene is not mentioned in the entire chapter on sanctification. In the "Preface," Dunning is careful to point out that the volume is not "a commentary on the creedal affirmations," nor is it "an official document of the church in the same sense as the Articles" (p. 8). Nevertheless, "at appropriate points, reference is made to parts of the Articles of Faith in the Manual" (p. 7). Thus twelve of the fifteen Articles of Faith are mentioned in the discussion of various aspects of Christian beliefs. Obviously the question arises in regard to why it was not "appropriate" to make any reference to the Manual on Entire Sanctification, particularly in the light of the fact that the discussion affirms in substance what this particular article sets forth. Both authors, however, are "committed churchmen in this tradition" (p. 8) and will undoubtedly clarify for their readership in general, and to the Church of the Nazarene in particular, what is their motive or conviction in regard to this important issue. The volume as a whole is a valuable contemporary discussion of "the faith which was once delivered into the saints" (Jude 3).

*A Celebration of Ministry: Essays in Honor of Frank Bateman Stanger*, edited by Kenneth Cain Kinghorn. Francis Asbury Publishing Company Inc., 1982, 148 pp. Reviewed by Frank G. Carver, Professor of Biblical Theology and Greek, Point Loma College, San Diego, California:

Frank Bateman Stanger retired from the presidency of Asbury Theological Seminary May 31, 1982, after 20 years of distinguished service. A cross-section of his many friends have prepared a delightful Festschrift in his honor. Presented are twelve essays concerned with both the theological foundations and the practical aspects of the Christian ministry followed by "A Bibliographic Introduction to the Writings of Frank Bateman Stanger" compiled and annotated by D. Willima Faupel, Director of Library Services at Asbury Theological Seminary. As we attempt to give some clue to the content and direction of each essay and the variety of "issues in ministry" covered the significance of the Festschrift will hopefully be evident.

Earl G. Hunt, Bishop in the United Methodist Church, opens with a much needed call to Wesleyans in "Toward a Recovery of the Sacred" (pp. 11-21). With Isaiah 64, "a prayer on the part of the faithful for a universal theophany" (p. 11), in the background Hunt seeks "to focus the attention of the contemporary church community upon the timeliness and, indeed the urgency of a new outcry on the part of the faithful for divine self-disclosure in our moment of history" (p. 12).

He does this by thrusting before us four pathways. First is the task of Christian liberal arts education to build an awareness of the Holy back into its perspective and curricula-the glory of the lighted mind! Second, Hunt sets forth the responsibility of the church to be indeed the church, "willing to pay the price involved in the recovery of its authentic character in our contemporary world " (p. 16). This is a most probing section. Third is the necessity of the individual pursuit of holiness by those spiritual disciplines which God has honored through the centuries. Fourth, he calls us to an interpretation of the gospel as "purely and simply God Himself" (p. 19)-forked lightning! Hunt's words are challenging far beyond their brevity to mind, heart, and will-"we believe also in the possibility and probability of an immanent new epiphany, a fresh divine disclosure" (p. 21). He speaks to my hunger.

Harold B. Kuhn, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at Asbury Theological Seminary, stretches the mind with "Michael Polanyi, Modern Pioneer in Epistemology" (pp. 22-32). Kuhn presents Polanyi as a "pioneer in epistemology" over against the dominant epistemological dualism which is founded in the philosophical system of Immanuel Kant. He asserts that the Kantian view of knowledge and reality leading to the distinction between pure reason and practical reason is now seen by many thinkers as "destructive, not only of rational thought in general, but of all valid religious knowledge" (p. 23).

Polanyi (1891-1976), a physicist and chemist, after World War II turned to epistemology undertaking what can be called "a discovery of discovery" (p. 26). His emphasis on heuristic epistemology, a knowledge theory based on discovery, led him to recognize belief as the source of all knowledge: "all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is personal knowledge " (p. 30). Thus he asserts the unity of all knowledge which means that theological truth must be part of it. Kuhn concludes that Polanyi's "post-critical epistemology" opens the door to a deliverance from the Kantian model "and a rediscovery of the essential unity between knowledge and Christian faith" (p. 32). Yet, even as a layman in philosophy, I wonder if the Kantian model is as detrimental to Biblical faith as Kuhn alleges, despite the attractive usefulness of Polanyi's pioneering work.

Significant for Wesleyans in this day of the inerrancy watershed is the chapter by William J. Abraham, . . . (where is he now?), "The Concept of Inspiration in the Classical Wesleyan Tradition" (pp. 34-7). As he examines Wesley's conception of divine inspiration, "a feature of Wesley's doctrine of Scripture that does not fit the versions of historical Christian orthodoxy now currently available" (p. 34), Abraham opens some fascinating new avenues for our continued exploration.

Abraham sees an unresolved tension in Wesley between his deductive and inductive approaches to scripture. On the one hand Wesley is committed to dictation in a way that appears to place him with contemporary inerrantists. But on the other, with his attention to the actual phenomena of scripture in which he admits the possibility of error, he can also be viewed with those who find the authority of scripture "in its ability to bring people into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ" (p. 34). Wesley's famous "man of one book" passage clearly points in that direction. Wesley does not himself address this unresolved tension between his commitment and his research. Abraham asserts that to identify Wesley as a modern fundamentalist in his understanding of scripture would be seriously to distort his intention.

Abraham then explores, after citing Luther and Calvin, the considerable Wesleyan discussion of inspiration from Wesley's day until the present—Clark, Watson, Nast, Pope, Miley, Wiley, etc. With perhaps the notable exception of the German, William Nast (1807-1899), in Abraham's view "the classical Wesleyan tradition shares the confusion that generally pervades the Protestant heritage" (p. 44), the treating of inspiration and revelation as more or less identical. In other words the tension was relieved by the dominance of the deductive approach with even H. Orton Wiley failing "to inhibit modern conservative Wesleyanism from taking over the position of Warfield on inspiration" (p. 43).

Abraham concludes that the Wesleyan heritage is rich and complex from which much can be learned. He suggests that although it is deficient, a deficiency "due in large measure to a failure to reflect sensitively on the meaning of religious language" (p. 44), yet "the recovery of the riches and genius of our tradition is surely one of the great tasks that confronts us in the immediate future" (p. 44). The message I hear in Abraham's provocative essay is that our Wesleyan tradition calls for the task that will fulfill the hope imbedded within it, the construction of an approach to scripture that will do full justice to the nature of scripture.

Howard Snyder, Educational Coordinator, Wesleyan Urban Coalition, invites us to think again about the church in his contribution, "The Church and the Language of Sacrament" (pp. 48-59). Beginning with the inadequacy of the distinction between the visible and the invisible church and the church seen as paradoxically combining both institutional and charismatic elements" (p. 49) Snyder explores the possibility of help in the third model of Avery Dulles (*Models of the Church*, 1974): the church as sacrament.

After first defining the idea of sacrament, four New Testament words and ideas important for the understanding of sacrament are discussed: sign, covenant, thanksgiving, and mystery.

The crux of the essay comes in Snyder's application of the Anglican definition of sacrament to the church: "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof" (p. 53). With some attention to dangers involved in a sacramental understanding of the church Snyder concludes that the church is a sacrament "in the sense that as the community of God's people she is a sign, symbol, and servant of the Kingdom of God on earth . . . a means of grace" (p. 55). This he spells out in ways that contribute to an adequate Wesleyan ecclesiology.

Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, Professor of Church History at Asbury Theological Seminary, illumines the perplexing issue of infant baptism among contemporary Wesleyan evangelicals from a historical perspective in "The Wesleyan Understanding of Baptism" (pp. 60-66). His study of Wesley shows that Wesley had "two different views of baptism-one for infants and another for adults" (p. 64) making Wesley both a catholic churchman and an evangelical evangelist. In the light of Wesley's position Kinghorn concludes his essay with some personal observations which give theological perspective to the practice of infant baptism as truly Wesleyan.

The contribution of Dennis F. Kinlaw, Representative at large for Asbury College (should this be updated?), is a brief statement concerning "The Christian Scholar" (pp. 67-69) from the perspective of a trained Biblical scholar who has also served as president of a Christian liberal arts college.

"Administration as Ministry" (pp. 72-79) is a slightly longer discussion by one who also has served as a college president, David L. McKenna, President of Asbury Theological Seminary. McKenna utilizes Biblical precedents as he seeks to show the scriptural legitimacy and nature of administration as ministry.

Robert E. Coleman, Professor of Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, knows how to probe our spiritual consciences in his discussion of "The Prayer Life of the Christian Minister" (pp. 80-87). He motivates, informs, and illustrates his theme in a penetrating way. The way our daily quiet time "is kept is likely the best index we have to spiritual vitality...Really it is not a matter of time so much as priority" (p. 83).

Continuing the practical vein is James Earl Massey, Radio Speaker for the International Christian Brotherhood Hour, with helpful comments on "The Preacher's Rhetoric" (pp. 88-99). It is the text and its truth that shapes the rhetoric.

The most concretely practical of the essays is that of George W. Hunter III, Executive for Evangelism in the United Methodist Church, who gives six specific suggestions for "Equipping Church Laity for Evangelistic Ministry" (pp. 100-113). Starting with "Identify Your Church Strengths in Ministry" (p. 101) his suggestions are comprehensive, give evidence of coming from actual experience in the local congregation, and impress the reader with their workability and adaptability.

The essay which I most like to ponder further is that by Morton Kelsey, Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame (is he still there?), on "Christianity and Wholistic Health" (pp. 114-125). He defines the problem, sketches the history in the church, reminds of the changing attitude of medicine, discusses the "six emotions which have a devastating effect

upon the human psyche"-fear, anger, stress, depression, loneliness, and psychic infection, and concludes with his proposal for the facilitation of effective wholistic healing in the churches. Indicative of his perspective is his comment dealing with depression: "The only final healing for this emotion which slows down or shuts down all bodily processes comes as we are touched by a center of meaning and concern which is transcendental. Jung put it well: 'The approach to the numinous is the real therapy' " (p. 123). An appropriate reminder for the "holiness' tradition!

The final essay is "The Pastor's Ministry to Ill Persons" (pp. 126-140) by Laurence W. Wood, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary. Wood's chief concern is "the problem of anxiety which underlies the whole of human existence" (p. 126).

With some help from Tillich, Wood first defines the problem of anxiety as it afflicts ill persons in terms of the four dimensions of human experience: the physical, the moral, the personal and the religious. Second, Wood outlines the pastoral resources available for ministry to such persons. Here he discusses the ministry of listening, the proclamation of the Word, sacramental sources, and prayer as a pastoral resource. On listening he talks about leading the sufferer to the hill of Calvary for "at the Cross we know and feel God listens to our deepest distress" (p. 132). In conclusion he describes the pastor as a spiritual friend who "provides the right environment for healing to those who suffer anxiety in times of illness" (p. 139). I find Wood's contribution both encouraging and informative as one who seeks to be "in ministry" to others.

This volume of varied essays is a fine tribute to a man who spent so many years preparing men for the ministry. There is something here for every reader dependent on where one's interests and calling are. There is stimulation and help for most of us in both theological and practical essays. The editor is to be commended in the balance displayed in his choice of contributors.

*Christianity Confronts Modernity*, eds. Peter Williamson and Kevin Perrotta. Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1981. Reviewed by Albert L. Truesdale, Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Christian Ethics, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri.

Attempts by Christians to offer a proper response to modernity (secularity) are legion. And the various types of responses are hardly less numerous. They range from unqualified rejection of the secular mood, to death of God theology as represented by Paul van Buren and William Hamilton. Today, many theologians are reassessing what was once believed by many to be the hegemony of secularism's claim that the world is "closed." (We recognize that secularity must not be equated with secularism.) The reassessment of secularism is being forced upon us by the "reappearance" of the sacred in modern life (often in bizarre forms), even in those institutions-such as the university-which have till now been considered the citadels of secularism.

In *Christianity Confronts Modernity*, Evangelical and Roman Catholic theologians take up the question of the church's response to secularity as it



appears in the latter part of the twentieth century. By inquiring into how the modern spirit has influenced Evangelical Protestantism and Roman Catholics the contributors avoid the error of pitting a "sacred church" against a "secular world."

Although the mood of the book reflects the more sober assessment of secularity that came along after such books as *Honest to God* and *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* it nevertheless attempts to recognize in the modern geist those changes in humankind's understanding of itself and the world that have had and can continue to have salutary consequences, and which should be embraced and guided by the Christian faith.

Most of the chapters succeed in identifying the distinguishing features of the modern spirit and in stating the central evangelical, and nonnegotiable, elements of the Christian faith which seem to be most directly affected. They also succeed in showing the often subtle ways in which the alien aspects of secularity and its child, technological society, have altered the church's understanding of its theological foundations, life, and mission.

Although in chapter one at some points Mark Kinzer's (senior elder of the Free Church Fellowship, Ann Arbor, Michigan) account of the formative influences of mass technological society is too simplistic, it does provide a fair and insightful description of how modern technological society has influenced social change and Christian identity. His four "pastoral responses to modernity" avoid "knee-jerk" reactionism and point us in a direction that can lead to a truly distinctive Christian life and witness in the world.

In chapter two, "Ideology Vs. Theology," Dale Vree, editor of the *New Oxford Review*, delivers a warning to the church against easy identification with any ideology-right (the Christian New Right) or left (Marxism).

Although he too closely identifies liberation theology with Marxism and Pelagianism, Vree's description of how the cardinal doctrines of evangelical faith can be reduced to a political ideology fundamentally alien to the Christian gospel should put a shot across every Christian bow, whether the ship flies its flag to the right or to the left.

The book's most penetrating analysis of one particular aspect of the modern temper is Paul C. Vitz's description of contemporary secular psychology, and more especially, the pop-psychology of the *Your Erroneous Zones* and *I'm Okay; You're Okay* variety. He skillfully distinguishes secular psychology's orientation towards naturalism, reductionism, individualism, relativism, subjectivism, and the fixation on self-realization, from the Christian commitment to the worship of God (as opposed to narcissism), to community, and to the end of self-sovereignty.

But Vitz's contribution is not simply polemical. He boldly points the way to what he calls a "Christian psychology." "In the long run," he says, "it will be possible to baptize large portions of secular psychology so as to permanently remove its anti-Christian thrust" (p. 142). According to him Christian psychology will be one that (1) is based on the existence of a trinitarian God; (2) has a clear and well worked out morality and value system; and (3) that introduces fundamental new concepts and practices into psychology and counseling such as prayer and fasting, forgiveness, responsibility for one's actions and the Holy Spirit as healer.

Steven B. Clark's chapter discusses the impact of modern methods of

historical research on Biblical studies and on our understanding of Biblical authority (he is overall coordinator of The Word of God, Ann Arbor, Michigan). Clark's delineation of what he designates as the three modern approaches to scriptural authority (the traditional or theological method; the secular-historical approach; and the historical-Biblical approach) is generally accurate. Although his judgment of the historical-critical method is unnecessarily severe he is correct that whenever exegesis is reduced to a branch of history interpreted in positivistic and reductionistic terms the Scriptures are emptied of their "core content-the supernatural intervention of God in the world in Christ." A positivistic approach to the Bible "undercuts its authority by denying and ignoring the authoritative revelation of God as expressed in the teachings of Christ and his apostles" (p. 165). While expressing his appreciation for the historical-critical method he insists that it does not complete exegesis. The historical-critical method must become a part of the "historical-Biblical" approach to the Scriptures. In addition to critical analysis of the text exegesis must also take full account of the church's confession of faith regarding the God of whom the Bible speaks, of His mighty deeds in creation and redemption. Exegesis must include both critical analysis and understanding of the faith affirmation(s) voiced in a particular text and in the Scriptures as a whole. Otherwise, the exegete has not yet encountered the text. What Clark describes as the "historical-Biblical" method sounds much like canonical criticism as advocated by James Sanders, and, somewhat differently, by Brevard Childs.

Clearly, the most comprehensive and imaginative chapter of the book is written by Donald Bloesch, "The Challenge Facing the Churches." On the one hand Bloesch rejects any tendency to identify the church with ideologies (which he defines as "a complex of ideas designed to reorganize society in such a way as to serve or protect the vested interest of a particular group in society," p. 205) and on the other hand he rejects any response to modernity which sets Christ against Culture. His suggestions regarding the church's attitude toward the modern geist are clearly patterned after Christ the transformer of culture.

Bloesch rejects as non-redemptive and non-Christian "theologies that substitute secular panaceas for the Biblical gospel" (p. 215). Rather, he appeals for a prophetic-redemptive ministry to our era by evangelical Protestants and Catholics. The evangelical witness for which Bloesch calls will hold to a view of salvation that affirms the full incarnation of God in Christ "that climactic act that signifies the culmination of the salvific process" (p. 212), and that directly relates Calvary and Pentecost to the Second Advent of Christ.

A "new evangelical alliance" must reaffirm "the objective, historical focus of salvation" which, while it does not minimize the subjective role of salvation, avoids the error of equating salvation with either liberation from economic and political oppression, the "realization of human potential," the "creative advance into novelty" (process theology), the breakthrough into meaning and freedom (existentialism) or with entering the depth dimension of existence (neo-mysticism).

Bloesch believes that the church will minister redemptively to our era only if its theology is thoroughly theocentric, and by that he means

Christocentric. Such a theology, according to him, rules out a "narrow biblicism (in Protestantism)" that appeals to the Bible without "focusing attention on its center and divine content-Jesus Christ (p. 208)," and a "narrow ecclesiasticism (in Roman Catholicism)" that exempts the church from a criticism by the gospel. Furthermore, a Christocentric theology will just as adamantly oppose all forms of subjectivism that reduce "God, sin and faith" to anthropocentric, subjective states and judgments (as for example when God is viewed as "a creative force or energy," when sin is understood as "instability and alienation" rather than as revolt against God, and when faith is seen as "the creative potential within mankind," rather than as absolute dependence on and worship of God).

Such a theological commitment, Bloesch believes, will lead to a renewed commitment to evangelization of the non-Christian world, or more correctly, to "the conversion of both parties [he has discussed the present prominent dialogic mode that often characterizes communication between Christianity and other religions] in the dialogue to Jesus Christ, since he represents the negation as well as the fulfillment of all religions, including the Christian religion" (p. 214).

The "new evangelical alliance" envisioned by Bloesch would yoke "Bible-believing Christians in all branches of Christendom." It would aim at "convergence" among evangelicals-Protestant and Roman Catholic rather than at further division. Such an alliance would unite around a confession that speaks a "new word from God that stands in continuity with His past words but that calls the whole church to a fresh doctrinal stance and also to a style of life in keeping with the gospel" (p. 2163).

The two respondents to Bloesch's chapter, Peter Hocken (a Roman Catholic priest from England) and Richard Lovelace (Professor of Church History, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary<sup>3</sup>) warmly embrace Bloesch's appeal. Hocken suggests that such an alliance as is called for by Bloesch will need to give more attention (than has Bloesch<sup>3</sup> to the work of the Holy Spirit as the One who brings the Word to life in the hearts of believers. In saying this, Hocken probably voices a suggestion that Wesleyans would make in their response to Bloesch. Both Hocken and Lovelace point out that Bloesch should have specifically named the Wesleyan tradition as a vital part of the called-for alliance.

This reviewer welcomes the appeal issued by Bloesch. Bloesch's doctrine of Biblical authority is thoroughly Christocentric and should be acceptable to Wesleyans.