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Wesleyan Theological Journal

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

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

ARTICLE WRITERS

William J. Abraham

Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University

Dean Blevins

Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, Tennessee

Kenneth J. Collins

Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky

H. Ray Dunning

Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, Tennessee, Retired

Charles H. Goodwin

Cannock, England

William Greathouse

Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri,
Retired

Luke Keefer

Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio

Craig Keen

Olivet Nazarene University, Kankakee, Illinois

Stephen J. Lennox

Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, Indiana

Ian M. Randall

Spurgeon's College, London, England

Wesley Tracy

Editor, *Herald of Holiness*, Kansas City, Missouri

Maxine Walker

Point Loma Nazarene College, San Diego, California

BOOK REVIEWERS

David Bundy, William Kostlevy, Norman Murdoch, Howard Snyder

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The content of this issue is significant and wide-ranging, both in subject and source. Several academic disciplines are represented, along with a sermon on holiness, book reviews, writers from more than one nation, advertising of important new books from four different publishers, the Presidential Address of Wesley Tracy that was delivered to the Wesleyan Theological Society at its 1997 annual meeting, and the honoring of a significant Wesleyan/Holiness leader of recent decades.

Assuming the centrality of biblical authority, Stephen Lennox recalls the patterns of biblical interpretation in the American Holiness Movement and William Abraham presents an illuminating essay based on the 1995 benchmark book by Scott Jones that explores John Wesley's conception and use of Scripture. From the United Kingdom come two historical studies, one by Charles Goodwin and one by Ian Randall.

From the papers delivered at the Tenth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, two are found here. Kenneth Collins affirms that the world surely needs a different kind of power, a kind that is not self-absorbed and oppressive, a kind that builds true community and flows from the very nature of God. Such an alternative, he argues, is set forth in the theology of John Wesley. Maxine Walker inquires about the structure of language itself, exploring the complex world of contemporary linguistic analysis to find fresh understandings of Wesley texts.

There also are found here helpful probings of the arenas of prayer, worship and Christian Education, the changing dynamics of a denominational identity (Brethren In Christ), and the doctrine of holiness. H. Ray Dunning seeks a new paradigm for holiness and William Greathouse shares classic insights about holiness in sermonical fashion. Greathouse was honored by the Wesleyan Theological Society in its annual meeting in November, 1997, with the Society's award, "Lifetime Service to the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition." Included here is the tribute to Greathouse delivered by Rob Staples on this occasion at Mount Vernon Nazarene College in Ohio.

This issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* is being made available in the hope that it brings both fresh insight into what has been and increased clarity on what now should and can be in the church's life.

BLC
April, 1998

KEEPING UP WITH JONES ON JOHN WESLEY'S CONCEPTION AND USE OF SCRIPTURE

by

William J. Abraham

The debate about the nature and value of John Wesley's views on the doctrine of Scripture rumbles on like a low intensity volcano. In part this debate is simply a manifestation of a wider discussion about the interpretation of the Bible in the history of Protestantism. In this regard, Wesley is a key figure in disputes about the intellectual transitions of eighteenth-century England. The debate involves the matter of receiving and evaluating the legacy of Albert Outler in Wesley Studies. On this score, it is extremely difficult to make progress, because Outler enjoys a kind of cult status in some scholarly and populist circles. Until we get more distance in time from Outler, it will continue to be difficult to raise questions about the famous "Quadrilateral" of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. The debate about Wesley's views is in part an argument about the identity of United Methodist, or Methodist, or Wesleyan commitments today. Here Outler was the complete master of ceremonies. He brilliantly succeeded in using Wesley as a vehicle for his own theological proposals, often turning Wesley in the wind to do so, but all the while excoriating others for not working with the real historical Wesley and himself providing a dazzling array of historiographical essays which camouflaged his own partisan intentions and activities.¹

¹See especially the fine set of essays edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden in Albert Outler, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

Such developments create interesting dilemmas and tensions for a younger generation of students of Wesley. On the one side, there is still a huge debt to be paid to Outler for his labors, his ingenious suggestions, and his extraordinary rhetorical skill. It is essential and natural to build on the work he and others have done. On the other side, the real issue in the end is not the theology of Albert Outler, but the theology of John Wesley. The latter clearly exists in its own right, and Outler's proposals have to be tested against the historical reality, as best we can reconstruct it.² In this context, Scott Jones' book, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*,³ is a landmark study which will easily become the standard work on its assigned topic for the foreseeable future.⁴ Taken together with Rex Matthew's unpublished Harvard dissertation⁵ on Wesley's epistemology, the student of Wesley has both a mine of information and a benchmark for future research. In this essay I want to review Jones' work, bring out its main strengths, and identify crucial areas in need of further exploration.

Jones breaks new methodological ground in the study of Wesley's views on Scripture. Rather than simply identify and examine Wesley's conception of Scripture, that is, Wesley's own avowals about the nature of Scripture, Jones examines carefully Wesley's actual use of Scripture. He takes very seriously the adage that actions may speak louder than words. The labor involved in this task is admirable: Jones has gone through the whole of the original writings of Wesley, compiling no less than 1,230 references to Scripture and theological method. Within this, he is careful to set aside virtually all works edited or abridged by Wesley. We have

²This is not the place to enter into debate with current skepticism, fueled by forms of postmodernism, as to whether this way of framing the issue is either possible or desirable.

³Scott J. Jones, *Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

⁴The other main study recently is Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as Model for Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

⁵Rex Dale Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined": *A Study in the Theology of John Wesley* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1985). Unfortunately Matthew's dissertation remains unpublished in book form. It is a model piece of work of its kind. For a superb recent rendering of Wesley in context, see Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment, A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), I, chap. 5.

here a kind of ruthless inductivism; we have a form of hermeneutical empiricism which would have warmed the heart of Wesley himself.

Jones' work is nicely governed by the central thesis developed in the book as a whole. While Wesley held to the authority of Scripture alone, Scripture did not stand alone, but was held in tension with four other factors: reason, Christian antiquity, the Church of England, and experience. There is in fact but one authority with five aspects. Generally speaking, this thesis, claims Jones, is corroborated by Wesley's explicit doctrines on the nature of Scripture and by his actual use of Scripture. This is the core of Jones' proposal. He examines carefully the relevant avowals and usage of Wesley to back it up. The evidence is laid out carefully, systematically, and judiciously. Furthermore, Jones supplies a relevant summary of Wesley's convictions about the nature of interpretation and a corresponding chapter on his interpretative practices. While these come as something of a tailpiece attached to his central chapters, they are entirely in place.

Jones is not just interested in Wesley as an eighteenth-century theologian, but also as a mentor for today. Hence, this is an exercise not just in history, but in historical theology. At this juncture Jones clearly thinks that there is still much intellectual mileage in Wesley's doctrine of Scripture. This is not, of course, a novel thesis, but, given Jones's clear sense of the intellectual distance between the eighteenth and late twentieth centuries, he has certainly set himself a formidable challenge. One is tempted at this stage to say that Jones loses his nerve. While at the outset he makes much of the fact that Wesley is thoroughly negative towards tradition and that Wesley's position requires a fivefold rather than fourfold matrix of authority, at the end he lamely suggests that the Quadrilateral invented by Outler is in good shape after all. This is where the distinction between conception and use pays off. While in conception Wesley was negative towards tradition, in usage he goes well beyond the appeal to Christian antiquity and the Church of England. In usage he is committed to tradition. To some readers Jones will appear to be splitting hairs at this point, yet many will gladly welcome the fact that the position of Outler remains intact.

More generally, many will welcome Jones' closing effort to offer Wesley's subtle and complex matrix of authority as serviceable in the current debate about the nature and authority of Scripture. As Jones sees it, a genuinely Wesleyan understanding of Scripture would satisfy five criteria. It would take a high view of the authority and inspiration of Scripture,

within that contending for reliable access to divine revelation. It would foster a ready use of all relevant approaches to knowledge outside of Scripture, correlating them with Scripture. It would seek out the whole message of Scripture, focusing on its soteriological content. It would use the best critical tools. And it would aim at articulating the understanding of the whole Christian church.

Our summary cannot begin to do justice to the immense amount of careful research that has gone into this book. Jones has provided an invaluable service in ferreting out the nooks and crannies of Wesley on Scripture. Throughout he keeps his critical wits about him, noting, for example, that for Wesley the doctrine of the Trinity is tied to his account of the *ordo salutis*, and that the modern disciple of Wesley will be hard pressed to argue that Wesley's views on the content of Scripture as focused essentially on the *ordo salutis* can be sustained today. Moreover, Jones does a fine job in relating his account of Wesley to wider developments in biblical criticism. Wesley is really caught between two worlds; he is a traditionalist who cracks open the door for criticism, accepting but not really welcoming the human side of Scripture.

I want now to raise three questions as a way of furthering the debate about the content and value of Wesley's account of Scripture. Let me begin with the normative significance of Wesley for today.

1. There is at the heart of Jones' account of Wesley an obvious incoherence which is never really faced.

. . . part of Wesley's view is that the Bible is the sole source and sole norm for Christian faith, teaching, and practice. Wesley is clear on this point and insists on it many times and in many ways. This view must be qualified, however. While Wesley says that scripture is the "whole and sole rule of faith" he also relies on other authorities. Scripture stands in a complex relation to reason, Christian antiquity, Christian experience, and the Church of England. While scripture is in one sense the only authority, a comprehensive statement of his doctrine must account for these others.[34]

The obvious problem here is that Wesley and Jones want the impossible. In one moment they want a sole source and norm; the next they want to smuggle in three or four others, depending on how we count and what we are counting. This is simply incoherent if we are to use the Eng-

lish language as it stands. We cannot claim that *x* is a *sole* source and norm and then turn around and add other norms. "Sole" is not an adjective which admits of qualification. This is one reason why it is common to prefer the claim that Wesley is committed merely to the primacy of Scripture. It permits room to speak of other warrants for justification in Wesley. Jones does not and cannot really use this term because the evidence he marshals against it is so strong. Wesley really is a traditional biblicist. In his own way, he is even committed to dictation.

Furthermore, note what is offered as additional items on the list of norms. We have reason and Christian experience, which are epistemic terms, and we have Christian antiquity and the Church of England, which are not epistemic terms. The former is a historical construct, reflecting Wesley's idiosyncratic and unjustified idealism about the church before Constantine, and the latter is an institution. This is a very odd list of items to put together. They do not belong to the same category at all. Nor, for that matter, does Scripture fit with reason and experience, although in this case we can understand its inclusion, for Scripture here stands proxy for revelation, which is an epistemic notion.

The confusion in this whole terrain surfaces in Jones' own efforts to rescue Wesley. Jones' strategy is to insist that these five items represent "a single but complex locus of authority" [103]. In fact, "these authorities are not really five but one." "When properly used, all five have the same content." Together they provide "a unified witness to the truth of the Christian faith." By the end we are lost in a confusion about numbers. "For Wesley, these five form a single witness to the truth when they are rightly used" [216]. "Whereas his [Wesley's] conception of a fivefold but unified locus of authority is clear, his use indicates a fourfold but unified locus of authority" [218]. How many items do we have here? One, four, five, or six? And what items are we counting: source; or norm; or truth; or witness? Moreover, why does Jones, in the final summing up, privilege usage over conception in his reading of Wesley? He provides no substantial argument for this crucial choice. Is this a political move to soften the blow of his deep and explicit undermining of the Quadrilateral in the first part of the book? Or is it an occasion to try and rescue the Quadrilateral, giving him a chance to deploy the standard but question-begging argument that every theologian really relies on the Quadrilateral whether they like to acknowledge it or not?

We need to dig deeper here. In sorting out Jones' exposition of Wesley we need another layer of epistemological concepts. To be fair to

Jones, he has cast the issues in conventional theological categories, that is, in terms of authority, source, norm, witness, truth, and the like. This way of proceeding is entirely understandable, for it relates Wesley naturally to the standard concepts in the field. It is a sure sign that these no longer work, however, when we find ourselves puzzled and perplexed once we stop and stare at what is before us. Jones, perhaps without entirely realizing it, has brought the difficulties more fully into view.

In light of this, we need to go back to the drawing board in epistemology and deploy a richer set of concepts than are currently in vogue. Thus, to speak of a single locus of authority with four or five aspects is to invoke a notion where the perplexity which drove us to this notion breaks out all over again. There is in fact no single problem of authority in theology. The idea of authority harbors a host of logically distinct questions which are too readily run together. We have to go back inside these notions, so to speak, and explore afresh what is at stake. Most importantly, we need to unpack the deeper epistemological problems that lurk in the neighborhood. Within this we can no longer simply confuse Scripture with revelation, or norm with witness, or any of these with truth. Until this fresh epistemological work is done, and until Jones' work is carefully examined with an eye that looks to, but also goes beyond, Matthew's work on Wesley's empiricism, any account of Wesley on Scripture is liable to be confused and incomplete.

2. This leads naturally into a second observation. Jones is right that any proposal must do justice to all the data available in Wesley. Especially must it find a way to take into review both his appeal to Scripture and his appeal to reason, Christian antiquity, and the like. It is also fair to ask that we proceed on the principle of charity, that is, we should attempt to provide a reading which gives *prima facie* place to consistency in an author who valued consistency both logically and autobiographically. We need, however, to pursue several hypotheses. One such hypothesis is the one offered by Jones; Wesley has one locus of authority with four or five aspects.

Another hypothesis is that Wesley accepts the authority of Scripture for matters of faith and practice, a proposition in turn backed up by an account of inspiration and revelation, and that the other elements, however we identify and number them, are norms not for the truth of Scripture but for the right interpretation of the truth given by God in Scripture.

This is a much cleaner and simpler analysis of Wesley. Jones himself supplies evidence in favor of this position, but he never really gives it the attention it deserves.

Yet another hypothesis is this. It was a central feature of medieval theology that one normed one's doctrinal proposals by Scripture or divine revelation. Theology was a form of *scientia* in which one derived one's premises for argument from the highest knowledge available, namely, divine knowledge given in revelation. This goes a long way to explain the doctrine of *sola scriptura* in medieval theology and in classical Protestant theology, including classical Anglican theology. Such an epistemology of theology, did not, however, preclude an appeal to reason or tradition or experience. In fact, in arguments with others these were readily invoked, most famously in the five ways of Aquinas. Yet these did not constitute norms for the science of theology; they were essentially apologetic strategies to move a person towards belief and the concomitant salvation of their souls.

Clearly this hypothesis may also fit the data available on Wesley. In conception, he falls naturally into the medieval schema, broadly understood. In practice, as an apologist and a skillful polemicist, he naturally deployed any argument at his disposal which did not undermine his own integrity. What has misled us here is the thought that we can uncover Wesley's epistemology by the simple expedient of counting. We add up the various epistemic entities, like reason and experience, which show up in Wesley, and we presume that the sum of them is his epistemology of theology or his account of authority. Wesley himself may not help here, for as James Hutton of the Fetter Lane Society once remarked, "John Wesley was a level-headed Briton, with a mind as exact as a calculating machine."⁶ This whole approach, which we clearly owe to Outler, really misses the epistemological moves being made, and Jones has inadvertently exposed the confusion involved.

These two hypotheses, taken singly or together, go a long way to providing a plausible reading of Wesley in his context. They certainly avoid the confusion manifest in the account given by Jones. Yet, of course, we may have to reckon that Wesley really was confused. Or as

⁶Quoted in Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 442.

Ronald Knox once provocatively suggested: “. . . altogether he [Wesley] is not a good advertisement for reading on horseback.”⁷

3. This judgment would not in the end trouble Jones. His commitment to Wesley is critical and conditional. Much as he values Wesley as a mentor, he is prepared to take what he can and move on. In fact, his positive recommendations become very general in the end, and he advances them with considerable caution. There is not the same enthusiasm for detail which one finds, for example, in the work of Randy L. Maddox⁸ or Kenneth J. Collins.⁹ Thus Jones is well aware that Wesley’s claim that the analogy of faith in the *ordo salutis* is fraught with difficulty exegetically. It is also fraught with difficulty theologically. This is well brought out by the fact that Wesley patches on the doctrine of the Trinity as a kind of afterthought. Something is clearly amiss here. One way to explain the patchwork nature of Wesley’s thought at this point is historical. The analogy or rule of faith was once clearly identified as the content of the early creeds. Here indeed we find the doctrine of the Trinity and next to nothing on salvation. It is salvation, however, which has caught Wesley’s attention, and he is so carried away by it that initially it eclipses the doctrine of the Trinity. But Wesley is sufficiently formed by the patristic faith to rescue his dangerous substitution at the last minute. Yet he never really grasps what he is doing. This is not just reading on horseback, but doing theology on horseback.

There are Wesleyans who will find this evaluation distressing. They have been convinced by Outler and others that Wesley is a truly great theologian, so to find this kind of incompetence will be a shock to the system. We need more drastic medicine at this point. Wesley is what he is. We nonetheless can learn from him in a host of ways without exaggerating his significance. More importantly, it is a fact that those who were brought to faith through Wesley ultimately had to make their own decisions about what to adopt and what not to adopt from Wesley and elsewhere. In short, they had to make serious canonical decisions on what was binding on the denominations they had to create, and on what way and to what degree those canonical decisions were binding.

⁷Ibid., 447.

⁸See, for example, his *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

⁹See, for example, *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley’s Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore: Wesley Heritage Press, 1994).

To begin to explore this phenomenon adequately, we need another history. We need a careful account of the canonical decisions of the people called Methodists. It is within this field of discourse that we can take up what was or was not carried over canonically from Wesley into the tradition and how far it should or should not be carried over canonically into the future. Students of Wesley tend to ignore this issue. They focus generally on how the whole of Wesley or various selected parts of Wesley were played out in the aftermath. This is entirely legitimate. We can and should look at Wesley like any other figure in history. Happily, the primary and secondary sources at our disposal are legion.

This will not, however, suffice for theology. Through Wesley God raised up a people who in turn found themselves transformed into a church. In this transition they selected what would or would not be binding on the whole community and where and how this might be changed. In other words, they developed a very significant canonical heritage. For too long this canonical heritage has been misread as a quasi-epistemological heritage and reduced to the problem of authority in theology. This is the really deep problem with the status currently accorded to the Quadri-lateral in Methodist circles. Problems of canon in the church are transposed into problems of criteria in epistemology. The latter becomes like a soft Irish bog where few are able to secure their footing for long given the difficulty of the subject and given the number of philosophers who are clearing out the peat. The only way ahead is to join seriously in the work of epistemology, but to do so realizing that there is a logically distinct and equally important set of issues about the canonical heritage of the church to be explored and resolved.

Such work on the canonical history set in motion by Wesley and the Methodists will have its own light to throw on Wesley. Outler rightly taught us to examine the sources that went into the formation of Wesley. However, an agent may be known as much by his grandchildren as by his ancestors. An agent, in short, is known in part by his effects in history, and these effects are visible in abundance in the case of Wesley. Focusing on the canonical effects of Wesley's actions could well help us bring the issues under a measure of intellectual control. It might also enable his modern followers to come to better terms with the tensions and divisions which currently beset them.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE AMERICAN HOLINESS MOVEMENT: 1875-1920

by

Stephen J. Lennox

For the American holiness movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Bible represented “the grand thesaurus of inspired truth.”¹ The interpretations drawn from that thesaurus, however, differed markedly from those of many contemporaries and from earlier interpreters. How they differed and why represents the focus of this paper.

Holiness interpretation can be better understood by comparing it with John Wesley’s theological method, often called the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral.”² It was this method which enabled Wesley to maintain

¹W. B. Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 2, *Hebrews—Jude* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist, 1897), 375.

²The notion of the Wesleyan quadrilateral was first proposed by Albert Outler in the late 1960s. A good account of Outler’s intention and a fuller development of this method can be found in Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Francis and Taylor/Zondervan, 1990). Outler’s essay, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral In John Wesley,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (Spring 1985), 7-18, provides a summary of his views. Some have questioned the existence of a quadrilateral. Ted Campbell considers the identification of tradition anachronistic to Wesley (Ted A. Campbell, “The ‘Wesleyan Quadrilateral’: The Story of a Modern Methodist Myth,” *Doctrine and Theology in the United Methodist Church*, ed. Thomas A. Langford, Nashville: Kingswood-Abingdon, 1991), 154-161. Comparing holiness interpretation to Wesley’s quadrilateral is not meant to imply that the quadrilateral is the only proper way to interpret the Bible or that Wesley is the only standard by which to evaluate his followers.

both orthodox teaching and evangelical fervor. While altered early on,³ the quadrilateral continued to influence Methodism. Because the Holiness Movement stood in the tradition of Wesley and desired a similarly orthodox and fervent ministry, Wesley's theological method provides an instructive backdrop for the study of holiness interpretation.

This movement at the turn of the twentieth century was a diverse conglomerate of ecclesiologies, eschatologies, personalities, and patterns of biblical interpretation. In an attempt to capture this diversity, the works of seven influential holiness authors from widely varying perspectives will be considered: Daniel Steele (1824-1914), Beverly Carradine (1848-1931), W. B. Godbey (1833-1920), Martin Wells Knapp (1853-1901), Reuben Robinson (1860-1942), George D. Watson (1845-1924), and Joseph H. Smith (1855-1946).⁴

³Albert Outler suggests that changes were made in the quadrilateral long before the late nineteenth century. "Wesley's theological method was distinctive, and maybe unique, because one cannot identify any of his disciples who adopted it as a whole or in his theological spirit" (Outler, "Quadrilateral," 16).

⁴Daniel Steele was a highly respected Methodist Episcopal educator and pastor. Author of several commentaries and popular works on holiness, he remained a loyal Methodist all of his life. See Daniel Steele, *Love Enthroned: Essays on Evangelical Perfection*, rev. ed. (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1875), 275, 278-79; *Minutes of the New England Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1915, 130. Carradine, another loyal Methodist, represents the Southern branch of that church. Converted and called into pastoral ministry from a career in business, he became a nationally known holiness evangelist and writer (Beverly Carradine, *The Sanctified Life* [Cincinnati: M.W. Knapp, 1897], 59). W. B. Godbey, one of the more colorful figures in the Holiness Movement, was probably its most prolific author, including a complete commentary on and new translation of the New Testament. In the late 1890s he left the ME Church and gave his aid to various radical branches of the Holiness Movement (cf. D. William Faupel's Preface to *Six Tracts by W. B. Godbey*, [New York: Garland Publishing, 1985], vii-xvii; Godbey *Autobiography of Rev. W. B. Godbey, A.M.* [Cincinnati: God's Revivalist, 1909]). Knapp also began his ministry among the Methodists, but left in 1901 because of the conflict over his holiness evangelistic work. He established the monthly paper, *The Revivalist*, as well as God's Bible School and Missionary Training Home (*American Methodism, 1867-1936*, ATLA Monograph Series 5 [Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1974], 100-4; Knapp, *Out of Egypt, Into Canaan* [Cincinnati: Office of the Revivalist, 1898], especially 187-92). Reuben Robinson, better known as "Uncle Buddy," rose from abject poverty in the South to become a widely traveled evangelist. Leaving the Methodist Episcopal Church over the issue of sanctification, he joined the Church of the

Wesley's Theological Methodology

A brief overview of the four basic components of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral will provide a useful tool for reviewing and assessing biblical interpretation in the American Holiness Movement from 1875-1920.

1. **Scripture.** Paramount among all sources of authority for Wesley was the Bible. Properly interpreted, it was the source for his teaching and the final court of appeal in dispute. In the preface to "Sermons on Several Occasions" we read, "O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*, a man of one book."⁵

Scriptural quotations and illusions are scattered liberally throughout Wesley's writings, prompting Albert Outler to call the Bible Wesley's "second language."⁶ These frequent quotations demonstrate not only Wesley's respect for and familiarity with the written Word, but also his conviction that Scripture was "a most solid and precious system of divine truth"⁷ and that it should be interpreted by considering "parallel passages of Scripture, 'comparing spiritual things with spiritual.'"⁸

2. **Reason.** Wesley answered the question, "What can reason do in religion," by saying, "It can do exceeding much, both with regard to the

Nazarene in 1906 (Reuben Robinson, *My Life's Story* [Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing, 1928]; *Chickens Come Home to Roost* [Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1958]). Watson, after several successful ME pastorates, began a world-wide evangelistic and writing ministry. In 1896 he left the ME Church to join the Wesleyan Methodists (Eva M. Watson, *Glimpses of the Life and Work of George Douglas Watson* [Cincinnati: God's Bible School and Revivalist, 1929]). Smith also served several ME churches before beginning full-time evangelism. A member of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, he became its president in 1925 (Delbert Rose, *A Theology of Christian Experience: Interpreting the Historic Wesleyan Message* [Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1965]).

⁵John Wesley, Preface, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (London: Epworth Press, 1944 [1787]), vi.

⁶Outler, "Quadrilateral," 13.

⁷John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1948 [1754]), 9. Helpful treatments of this material include Timothy L. Smith, "John Wesley and the Wholeness of Scripture," *Interpretation* 39 (1985), 246-62, and *Basic United Methodist Beliefs: An Evangelical View*, ed. James V. Heidinger II (Wilmore, KY: Good News, 1986), 19-25.

⁸Wesley, Preface, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, vi.

foundation of it, and to the superstructure.” Without it, he continued, how can one “understand the essential truths contained in the Bible. . . . Is it not reason (assisted by the Holy Ghost) which enables us to understand what the Holy Scriptures declare concerning the being and attributes of God,” as well as other important truths.⁹ Dangers would accompany any over-emphasis on reason, he well knew, but he saw no substitute for logical reflection.¹⁰ Nor did he find any essential contradiction between reason and faith; the truths of Christianity are rational. “It is a fundamental principle with us that to renounce reason is to renounce religion. . . .”¹¹

Wesley demonstrated his confidence in the ability of the human mind to grasp the plain teaching of the Word by emphasizing, in his own interpretation and in his advice to others, the literal meaning of the text. He counseled a young believer, “the general rule of interpreting Scripture is this: the literal sense of every text is to be taken, if it be not contrary to some other texts; but in that case the obscure text is to be interpreted by those which speak more plainly.”¹²

3. Tradition. Consistent with his Anglican heritage, Wesley used Christian tradition from the Apostolic period to the present to shape his theology. He drew from the church’s Fathers, East and West, and encouraged others to do the same.¹³ Such knowledge was important, Wesley said, because the Fathers were “the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, and eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture is given.”¹⁴ Because Wesley drew liber-

⁹John Wesley, “The Case of Reason Considered,” *The Works of John Wesley*, reprint from 1872 ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), VI:354.

¹⁰Ted Campbell describes reason as “reflection on experience” (“Myth,” 157). Wesley felt sufficiently familiar with logic to write a *Compendium of Logic* (1750).

¹¹John Wesley, “To Dr. Rutherford,” 28 March 1768, *Letters* (Telford ed.), v:364, cf. Thorsen, 169.

¹²John Wesley, “Letter to Sam Furlly,” 10 May 1755, *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), III:129. Wesley was however, influenced by the Pietist view that the “drama of the race—of Creation, Fall and Redemption—is to be reenacted in each life” (Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 1799-1870*, vol. 1 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972], 18.)

¹³Smith, 250.

¹⁴John Wesley, “Address to the Clergy,” *The Works of John Wesley* (1872 ed.), X:484.

ally from this fountain, his writings possess an eclecticism and a spirit of tolerance for other traditions.¹⁵

4. Experience. By experience Wesley meant, first, the proper posture from which interpretation should take place. Such experience included the work of the Spirit in awakening the sinner, justifying that person by faith, providing the assurance of salvation, and leading that person by grace to holiness.¹⁶ The Spirit who had inspired those who wrote the Bible was the same Spirit who “continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer.”¹⁷

Experience, for Wesley, also meant a source of confirmation for interpretation. According to Donald Thorsen, Wesley believed “empirical knowledge—accumulated accounts of people’s experiences (religious and nonreligious) that are open to public assessment—contributes to the confirmation and understanding of biblical truths.”¹⁸ For example, one reason Wesley altered his views of entire sanctification was because of what he observed in the lives of Methodists.¹⁹

Wesley formulated his theology from the interplay between these four elements, the Bible always serving as the final authority. Richard Lovelace describes this process using a baseball diamond. “Home plate is Scripture. First base is tradition. Second base is reason and third base experience.”²⁰ In order to adequately interpret a passage—hit a home run—one must begin at home plate and touch all the bases before returning to Scripture.²¹

Interpretation in the Holiness Movement

1. Scripture. Like Wesley, the Holiness Movement regarded the Bible as its highest authority, to be read as a unified product, interpreting

¹⁵Thorsen, 168.

¹⁶Smith, 248.

¹⁷Wesley, *Notes*, 794. Something of how this works is described in the Preface, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, vi.

¹⁸Thorsen, 214.

¹⁹John L. Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury-Zondervan, 1985 [1956]), 30-31. Cf. Thorsen, 214-15.

²⁰Richard Lovelace, “Recovering Our Balance,” *Charisma*, August, 1987, 80, as quoted in Thorsen, 72.

²¹Thorsen, 72.

Scripture by Scripture.²² It also shared Wesley's view that the Holy Spirit was active in inspiring both the original author and the interpreter.²³ The implications drawn from this double inspiration, however, often went far beyond what Wesley had intended.

The Spirit not only guided the search of Scripture, it was his person and work for which American holiness advocates searched. Without intending to disparage the rest of the Trinity or disregard the "scarlet thread" of redemption, they believed it their God-appointed mission to point out another thread, the "white one of the promise of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Ghost."²⁴ The proclamation of this promise, they believed, was the special calling of the Holiness Movement.²⁵

One wonders how comfortable Wesley would have been with such an approach to Scripture. He was troubled when his chosen successor, John Fletcher, described entire sanctification as the baptism of the Spirit. It was Fletcher's emphasis, however, which proved more persuasive in the American milieu, especially as articulated by Phoebe Palmer. By the end of the nineteenth century, entire sanctification, narrowly defined as a second crisis experience subsequent to regeneration, accompanied by external manifestations and heightened morality and described as a personal Pentecost, came to be identified as the central truth of the Bible. "The Bible is perfectionism," said Godbey. "Theologians may howl and Satan may rage, but the Bible is a book on perfectionism."²⁶

Part of the reason the Holiness Movement came to this conclusion was the tremendous growth and influence it experienced in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The wide appeal of Palmer's "altar theology," the international and trans-denominational spread of the holiness

²²George D. Watson, *Love Abounding and Other Expositions on the Spiritual Life* (Cincinnati: God's Revivalist, 1891), 52-53.

²³W. B. Godbey (*Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 3, *Ephesians—Philemon* [God's Revivalist, 1898], 159-60) implied such double-inspiration when, at the end of his commentary on Colossians, he confessed, "The Blessed Holy Spirit, who gave to Paul this wonderful epistle, has illuminated the foregoing expositions."

²⁴Martin Wells Knapp, *Lightning Bolts from Pentecostal Skies* (Cincinnati: Office of the Revivalist, 1898), 13, 140.

²⁵W. B. Godbey, *Ephesians—Philemon*, 111, 191.

²⁶W. B. Godbey, *Christian Perfection* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing, 1886), 108-109.

doctrine, and the success of the National Camp Meeting Association confirmed the view that entire sanctification was the “crowning experience of the Christian life.”²⁷ This narrowed definition was then hardened in the crucible of controversy that erupted over holiness in the late nineteenth century. Most of the polemic contained in holiness writings was directed, not against the world, but against the apostate church, that is, against those who opposed the movement’s understanding of entire sanctification. “Just as the leaders of Judaism blindly resisted the Holy Ghost,” said Godbey, “so the leaders of fallen Christianity at the present day ostracize and interdict the holiness people, who are preaching just what the apostles preached.”²⁸ One should not draw up a creed in the heat of controversy, warned Daniel Steele in 1897, for then one cannot be sure that all error has been excluded and all truth included.²⁹ It was a warning which his own movement failed to follow.

To identify the Bible as perfectionism went well beyond Wesley’s belief that “the living center of every part of inspired Scripture was the call to be holy, and the promise of grace to answer that call.”³⁰ The focus of holiness advocates made it natural to read the rest of the Bible in light of this truth. Leon Hynson has called this the “holiness hermeneutic.”³¹ Examples of it are found almost everywhere.

One holiness author was complimented by his publisher for being able to find entire sanctification “in many portions of the Old Testament where few people have ever thought to look for either the doctrine or the experience.”³² The Song of Songs was interpreted as allegorically teaching second blessing holiness.³³ The book of Revelation, said Martin Wells

²⁷Beverly Carradine, *Sanctification* (Columbia, SC: Pickett, 1890), 202.

²⁸W. B. Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 5, *Acts and Romans* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist, 1899), 121.

²⁹Daniel Steele, *The Gospel of the Comforter* (Rochester, PA: Schmul, n.d. [1897]), 272.

³⁰Smith, 246.

³¹Cf. Hynson’s work on this topic, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in the American Holiness Tradition,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (Spring 1985), 19-33.

³²W. McDonald, from the Introduction to George D. Watson, *Coals of Fire: Being Expositions of Scripture on the Doctrine, Experience, and Practice of Christian Holiness* (Boston: McDonald, Gill & Co., 1886), 3.

³³George D. Watson, *The Divine Love Song: An Exposition of the Song of Solomon* (Salem, OH: Schmul, n.d.).

Knapp, can only be mastered by magnifying “the great central truth, ‘holiness triumphant,’ which gleams from every chapter.”³⁴ Israel’s history was read as an allegory of the journey from sin to entire sanctification.³⁵ While this more-than-literal reading of the Bible was not new, the extent to which it was employed by holiness interpreters is unique within the Methodist tradition and among Evangelicals of this period of American church history.

Against the example of Wesley and over the objections of some of its own leaders,³⁶ the Holiness Movement reveled in finding the deeper truths “imbedded and hidden away in the Bible for the recognition and future use of all generations.”³⁷ They did not ignore the historical context, but quickly passed over it to discover the more important spiritual truths built upon it.³⁸ It was, they said, their special relationship with the Holy Spirit which made possible such interpretations. Christians have always claimed to interpret by means of the Spirit, but the holiness movement went further. It professed to be completely purified of the sinful nature, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and thus perfectly prepared to interpret God’s Word. “Now for the first time,” remarked Beverly Carradine concerning the results of entire sanctification, “the real depth of certain Bible expressions are understood and the heart fairly revels in them.”³⁹ Like Jesus’ second touch on the eyes of the blind man, said Carradine, “we see into the Word of God as never before. Passages that were obscure and

³⁴Martin Wells Knapp, *Holiness Triumphant, or Pearls from Patmos* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist, 1900), 6.

³⁵Knapp, *Out of Egypt, Into Canaan*.

³⁶There is nothing of the allegorical in Steele’s commentary on Joshua. Instead, he confines himself to the historical and critical questions. *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 3, *Book of Joshua*, ed. D. D. Whedon, (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1873). Cf. Steele’s criticisms of the Plymouth Brethren for their more-than-literal interpretation in *A Substitute for Holiness or Antinomianism Revived; or The Theology of the So-Called Plymouth Brethren Examined and Refuted*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Christian Witness, 1899 [1878]), 76.

³⁷Beverly Carradine, *Second Blessing in Symbol*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Pickett, 1896 [1893]), 27; *Revival Sermons* (Dallas: Holiness Echoes, n.d. [1897]), 45. Steele believed such interpretation flourishes among those whose minds “are easily captivated by types which are purely fanciful, the cunning inventions of men” (*Substitute*, 76).

³⁸Carradine, *Sanctification*, 133.

³⁹Carradine, *Revival Sermons*, 90.

mysterious become luminous with a deeper and truer meaning. The Bible becomes a new book and an illuminated one at that.”⁴⁰ George Watson spoke for the movement when he wrote:

. . . a plain man entirely sanctified, without learning, and with the Bible in his hands, has an understanding of the divine promises, sees farther into the prophecies of God, gets a firmer grasp on God’s Word, than all the doctors of divinity that are not sanctified.⁴¹

Ironically, the same holiness interpreters who claimed to receive interpretations from the Spirit did not hesitate to interpret the Scriptures for others.⁴² Earlier, Augustine had highlighted the inconsistencies of such a practice: “Why does he not rather send them direct to God, that they too may learn by the inward teaching of the Spirit without the help of man?”⁴³

2. Reason. Wesley considered reason an invaluable aid in biblical interpretation, but the Holiness Movement was not so sure. Although it is “blessed to be sanctified, and even more blessed to be intelligently sanctified,” Carradine noted, “it is not by reasoning that the world knows God or the things of God.”⁴⁴ Watson conceded a place to reasoning and theology, but insisted that God’s work goes beyond what can be grasped by “mere brains and carnal reason.”⁴⁵ Far better than the “slow process of

⁴⁰Carradine, *Second Blessing*, 212.

⁴¹G. Watson, *Love Abounding*, 167.

⁴²For examples of such injunctions, cf. Carradine, *Sanctified Life*, 114-15; Robinson, *A Pitcher of Cream* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing, 1906), 156; Knapp, *Christ Crowned Within* (Cincinnati: Revivalist Publishing House, 1893) 195; *Out of Egypt*, 142; *Double Cure* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist Office, 1898), 81; Godbey, *Spiritual Gifts and Graces* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist Office, 1895), 45; Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 7, *Gospels* part 2 (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist Office, 1900), 533; *Work of the Holy Spirit* (Louisville: Pickett, 1902), 71; *The Bible* (Nashville: Pentecostal Mission Publishing, n.d.), 44; *Illumination* (Greensboro, NC: Apostolic Messenger, n.d.), 31.

⁴³*Preface to On Christian Doctrine*, 623. *Augustine*, vol. 18 of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. by Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952).

⁴⁴Beverly Carradine, *The Old Man* (Chicago: Christian Witness, 1896), 262-63.

⁴⁵George D. Watson, *Love Abounding*, 352, 77.

reasoning” is the God-given ability to discriminate between truth and error⁴⁶ when the Spirit of God speaks to the inner spirit of the Christian through intuitions and “instinctive perceptions of divine verities” which are “superior to logic.”⁴⁷ The science of determining the logical and plain sense of a passage was supplanted by the “lightning flash of intuition, that leaps over the plodding process of slow reason and knows things more surely without learning them, than reason does with all its logic.”⁴⁸ This devaluation of reason may be why the movement became preoccupied with the more-than-literal sense of Scripture. The Spirit, in sending this lightning flash of intuition, was “marvelously lighting up some obscurity in the Scriptures, or revealing whole trains of new truth.”⁴⁹ To discover the true hidden meaning of these obscurities and to announce the new truth became the objective.

Late nineteenth-century America was not a good time to proclaim the importance of reason in biblical interpretation. Not only were there strident critics outside the church, but voices within the ecclesiastical scholarly community were challenging cherished beliefs. Such challenges convinced the Holiness Movement that it had sufficient cause to abandon Wesley’s loyalty to reason. The pejorative assessment of reason also arose, in part, from the populist hermeneutic,⁵⁰ the predominant approach to the Bible among American Protestants from the Colonial period through the Civil War.⁵¹ Surpassing the Reformation’s emphasis on *Sola Scriptura*, the populist hermeneutic identified the common person as fully

⁴⁶George D. Watson, *A Pot of Oil or the Anointed Life as Applied to Prayer, the Mental Faculties, the Affections and Christian Service* (n.p., n.d., [1900]), 32.

⁴⁷George D. Watson, *Steps to the Throne* (Dallas: Holiness Echoes, n.d. [1898]), 29.

⁴⁸George D. Watson, *Our Own God, Psalm 67:6: Treating the Personalities, the Knowledge, and the Fellowship of God* (Cincinnati: Revivalist Office, 1904), 3.

⁴⁹G. Watson, *Steps to the Throne*, 30.

⁵⁰The background and development of the populist hermeneutic and its importance for holiness interpretation are examined more fully in Stephen J. Lennox, “Biblical Interpretation in the American Holiness Movement, 1875-1920” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1992).

⁵¹For the background in which the populist hermeneutic developed in America, cf. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

capable of understanding the Bible. Because each person was believed to have the capacity through the physical senses and an innate moral sense to gain knowledge of the natural world and the moral universe, regardless of level of education, it was common sense, not reason, that was the true essential. This elevation of common sense was nurtured by Scottish Realism, the reigning philosophy of nineteenth-century America. Originally developed to refute the skepticism of Hume and the idealism of Berkeley, it was widely embraced in the United States as philosophical support to this country's innate self-confidence.⁵²

By the late 1800s, the populist hermeneutic had lost much of its prominence. Some groups abandoned it, while others like the Holiness Movement continued to employ it with a few modifications. Common sense remained an essential for proper biblical interpretation, but something more was needed. Not surprisingly, it was during this period that entire sanctification came to be seen as the key to understanding the Bible. The sanctified individual with common sense had everything necessary to interpret Scripture. "The Bible is a plain book," said Godbey, "needing nothing but common sense and the Holy Ghost to understand it."⁵³

3. Tradition. W. B. Godbey's assessment of tradition was shared by many in the Holiness Movement: "Martyr blood and fire," he judged, "had kept the Church humble, poor, unpopular, and despised three hundred years. Meanwhile she had no creed but the Bible." With the conversion of Constantine came popularity, influence, wealth, the paganization of Christianity, and the first human creed. This was the first of many, "thus recognizing and inaugurating human authority, going off into ecclesiasticism, no longer content with New Testament simplicity."⁵⁴ These human digressions piled up to form a sad trail of tradition, a trail of compromise.

Actually, the Holiness Movement did not so much reject tradition as redefine what it was and how it should be used. Convinced that "God has

⁵²Richard W. Pointer, "Scottish Realism," *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, eds. Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, Harry S. Stout (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

⁵³Godbey, *Hebrews—Jude*, 232.

⁵⁴Godbey, *Ephesians—Philemon*, 209. "No creed but the Bible" was one of the hallmarks of the populist hermeneutic.

always had a true people on the earth,”⁵⁵ the movement traced a line forward from the New Testament period—the “golden days” of holiness⁵⁶—across a narrow ridge of orthodoxy to the time of the Holiness Movement.⁵⁷ Godbey saw this slender line of piety traversing the Waldenses in the third century through the Moravians to the Methodists. He also included the Augustinian à Kempis, the French Catholic mystic, Fenelon, and the Quaker founder, George Fox.⁵⁸ Less important than knowing the identity of each element in this pure lineage was knowing that such a lineage existed and that the modern Holiness Movement was a direct descendant.

Unlike Wesley who valued the church Fathers because they came so close to the fountain, holiness authors preferred more contemporary heroes such as Madame Guyon, John Bunyan, John Fletcher, Richard Watson, Hester Rogers, and, of course, the Wesleys. John Wesley had used the early church Fathers to shape his teaching, while the Holiness Movement used more recent figures to prove it was right. Tradition was now defined, not broadly as the work of God among his people in the past, but narrowly as God’s work of sanctification among his people, especially in the centuries immediately preceding their own. For the Holiness Movement, tradition was not used as a source of writings to guide the interpretation of the Bible, but for examples to illustrate their favorite doctrine found in it.

The devaluation of tradition began, for American Methodists as far back as Asbury himself, whom Outler considers to have had “next to no sense of tradition.”⁵⁹ It also owed something to the populist hermeneutic which considered tradition the cause of schism, worldliness, and dead for-

⁵⁵Godbey, *Ephesians—Philemon*, 210.

⁵⁶Knapp, *Lightning Bolts*, 72.

⁵⁷W. B. Godbey, *Sanctification* (Dallas: Chandler Pub., 1956 [1884]), 10; Daniel Steele, *Milestone Papers: Doctrinal, Ethical and Experimental on Christian Progress* (Salem, OH: Schmul, n.d. [1878]), 154.

⁵⁸W. B. Godbey, *Sanctification*, 10. Godbey appears to identify the Waldenses as the predecessors of those who followed the teaching of Peter Waldo in the twelfth-century. Steele would add the Lollards and Mystics to this slender line of piety (*Milestone Papers*, 154).

⁵⁹Albert C. Outler, “‘Biblical Primitivism’ in Early American Methodism,” *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, eds. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury-Zondervan, 1991), 150.

malism. The “Christian” movement of Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell began with the expressed purposes of restoring the New Testament church⁶⁰ and giving everyone the right to privately interpret the New Testament.⁶¹ “We are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think, but also to act for ourselves; to see with our own eyes, and to take all our measures directly and immediately from the Divine Standard.”⁶² “No creed but the Bible” became a common rallying cry in nineteenth-century Protestantism. Wesley’s dependence on the opinions of the past stood little chance of survival in this atmosphere. It is not surprising that the Holiness Movement considered creeds to “have had more to do with originating and perpetuating the divisions in the Church than anything else.” Indeed, said Godbey, “Creed making has been the fatal mistake of Christendom.”⁶³

The devaluation of tradition was, in part, a symptom of the modernization of American society taking place at the turn of the last century. Among the components of this process, according to Peter Berger, were a future rather than a past orientation and an emphasis on individual choice over the will of society.⁶⁴ While the Holiness Movement would have bristled at the idea that it was influenced by modernism, its words make it rather obvious. There is clearly a future orientation in Godbey’s view that God revealed the discovery of Codex Sinaiticus in 1859, “just in time to

⁶⁰Restorationism in American Protestantism was linked with the populist hermeneutic in its desire to return to the days when the religious leaders were fishermen, there was minimal religious establishment and (supposedly) no interfering creeds of tradition. Such views blended with the understanding that the Bible was to be interpreted normatively—a book whose characters and events provide models to be followed today. Normativity is important to the populist hermeneutic because it makes the Bible so much easier to interpret.

⁶¹For an overview of this Christian tradition in contemporary dialogue with a holiness body, the Church of God (Anderson), see Barry Callen and James North, *Coming Together In Christ: Pioneering a New Testament Way To Christian Unity* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997).

⁶²“Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington” (Washington, PA, 1809), as quoted in Hatch, *Democratization*, 162.

⁶³W. B. Godbey, *Church—Bride—Kingdom* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist, 1905), 61. In *Six Tracts by W. B. Godbey*.

⁶⁴Peter Berger, “Toward a Critique of Modernity,” *Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Modernization and Pluralism in Christian Thought and Structure*, ed. Barbara Hargrove (NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 339, 342.

boom the present holiness movement, the glorious millennial dawn” which has finally arrived after the “long, dark chasm of intervening ages” or the “devil’s millennium.”⁶⁵ When it celebrated the ability of each person, who, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, was said to be able to arrive at interpretations completely novel, it revealed its prejudice toward the present and against the past.

4. **Experience.** In some ways, experience filled the same role for the Holiness Movement as it did for Wesley. Both considered Christian experience the proper stance for accurate biblical interpretation. Differences in how Christian experience was defined and the extent to which experience shaped interpretation, however, produced dissimilar results.

Christian experience, for holiness interpreters, meant entire sanctification, narrowly defined in terms of what it was, how it was received, and what it would produce.⁶⁶ Having embraced the creed of second-blessing holiness, they were convinced that only the entirely sanctified could properly interpret the Bible. Godbey counseled interpreters to get all the rocks of depravity eliminated from the heart, leaving it soft, tender, and filled with perfect love. Then one could go down into the profound mysteries of revealed truth, be flooded with new spiritual illuminations, and progressively be “edified by fresh revealments of the Divine attributes in glory, though you never saw a college nor inherited Solomonic genius.”⁶⁷

With Wesley, the movement also regarded experience as a source of information to help refine interpretation. Carradine found “some scripture passages can only be unlocked by experience. We may think we understand; but it requires more than a knowledge of grammar, rhetoric, and the laws of exegesis to clear up the mystery.” The relative values he ascribed to exegesis and experience can be seen in his reference to the former as

⁶⁵Godbey, *Ephesians—Philemon*, 111. Codex Sinaiticus is an important manuscript of the entire New Testament and portions of the Old, dated to the middle of the fourth century and discovered in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai by Constantin Tischendorf. Godbey considered this the “pure, inspired original” and “a copy of the first volume ever compiled,” dating it “far back in the very blaze of the Apostolic age” (*Bible*, 14-16).

⁶⁶Among the authors studied, Steele stands as the exception to this narrowing. Cf. *Half-Hours with Saint Paul and Other Bible Readings* (Rochester, PA: Schmul, n.d. [1894]), 239-40.

⁶⁷W. B. Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 6, *Gospels*, part 1 (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist Office, 1900), 403.

“exit Jesus” and to the latter as “Commentary Life.”⁶⁸ One of the strengths of Wesley’s quadrilateral was its system of checks and balances which prevented another element from dominating Scripture. Holiness interpretation, by minimizing reason and tradition, became a bilateral of Scripture and experience and lost its balance. As it tilted, holiness interpretation came to be dominated by experience rather than Scripture.

When the movement read the Bible through experience, it discovered entire sanctification in places where a natural reading of the text does not suggest it. They found holiness proof-texts in the prohibition against wearing a garment mixed with wool and linen, the process of cleansing the leper, and many other places.⁶⁹ Old Testament texts were interpreted to show how the second blessing came to Abraham, Jacob, Isaiah, and many others.⁷⁰ Wherever Scripture spoke of two of anything or when something occurred twice, this was seen to teach a second definite work of grace. Passages like the second cleansing of the temple by Jesus, the two sisters of Lazarus, the two elements which flowed from Christ’s side and the double touch on the eyes of the blind man were all treated as holiness texts.⁷¹ In fact, confessed Godbey, “If I were to notice everything in the Bible setting forth this glorious double salvation, it would take me the balance of my life.”⁷² Far from being derided within the movement, practices like these were lauded as commendable; the ability to do so was sought in prayer.⁷³

Anticipating the criticism that might come for such practices, the movement developed criteria by which to test the validity of an interpretation, one of the more important being whether or not it “harmonizes with

⁶⁸Beverly Carradine, *Heart Talks*, 3rd ed. (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, 1899) 207; *The Better Way* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist, 1896), 244; *Golden Sheaves*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Christian Witness, 1904 [1901]), 30. Cf. Knapp, *Revival Kindlings* (Cincinnati: Revivalist Publishing, 1890), 323.

⁶⁹W. B. Godbey, *Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 1, *Revelation* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist, 1896), 231; Carradine, *Sanctification*, 98.

⁷⁰G. Watson, *Coals of Fire*, 7-28; Carradine, *Sanctification*, 110-11; W. B. Godbey, *Visions* (Greensboro, NC: Apostolic Messenger, n.d.), 10; Knapp, *Out of Egypt*, 62.

⁷¹Carradine, *Sanctification*, 90, 95-96; Knapp, *Double Cure*, 31-32.

⁷²W. B. Godbey, *Holiness or Hell* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing, 1899 [1893]), 139-40.

⁷³Robinson, *Chickens*, 75.

the experience” of a Christian.⁷⁴ Carradine was certain that manna typified salvation since both are bread from heaven, are sweet to the soul, and both seem to disappear in the heat and struggle of the day. “If this is not a true picture of the regenerated life,” he noted, “then have we failed to see, hear, and feel correctly.”⁷⁵ These interpreters would, of course, claim they were reading the text properly. Prior to exegeting a passage, Watson asserted, “I will give a simple exegesis of the words. I do not wish to add anything to the Word or to take anything from it, but simply explain the Word as it lies there.” In the preceding sentence, however, he confessed, “I never knew how to read that text in my life until the Lord gave me the experience which the text contains.”⁷⁶

There are several reasons why experience became so important to the Holiness Movement. Viewing experience as the test of truth owed something to a pragmatic American society which had practically canonized the seventeenth century English philosopher, Francis Bacon. To those who wanted to discover the sanctified life, Carradine suggested that they “try the Baconian or experimental method.”⁷⁷

The Holiness Movement was not made up largely of well-educated persons;⁷⁸ these were individuals for whom “a simple word or tear or metaphor or illustrative incident has done more to kindle a fire in a cold heart than a whole ton of the cold coal of logical argument would have done.”⁷⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that experience should weigh so heavily. The importance of experience among holiness interpreters can also be explained as a reaction to the intellectual revolution that was underway at that time. Discoveries like those of Charles Darwin, the rising importance of sociology and psychology, and the study of comparative religions brought challenges to the faith. The element of this intellectual revolution that dealt the severest blow to the church, however, was biblical criticism. Until this period, there had been general agreement that the Bible was the Word of God and that it could be interpreted using common sense. Growing respect for biblical criticism from Europe brought an end

⁷⁴Carradine, *Second Blessing*, 33.

⁷⁵Carradine, *Second Blessing*, 29.

⁷⁶G. Watson, *Love Abounding*, 304.

⁷⁷Carradine, *Better Way*, 179.

⁷⁸Carradine, *Sanctified Life*, 194; Knapp, *Double Cure*, 2.

⁷⁹Knapp, *Revival Kindlings*, 10.

to this American consensus. In 1870 most Americans, including most academics, agreed on *what* it meant for the Bible to be the Word of God. By 1900, Christians contended with each other as to *how* the Bible was the Word of God. And the academic world at large had asked *if it were at all*.⁸⁰

For the Holiness Movement, the whole question was settled by the experience of entire sanctification. Once people have experienced the second blessing, they are never again troubled with doubts of the inspiration of the Bible. The hungry person, finding bread that perfectly satisfies and nourishes, has no difficulty with the sophistry which would prove it was made of chaff and not of wheat.⁸¹ After this experience, “the enemy is no longer able to keep you in doubt about the divinity of Christ or the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. . . . Nothing but the Holy Ghost can make all of these things real to us, but, bless the Lord! He can do it.”⁸²

The intellectual revolution helped to make the late nineteenth century a time of suspended judgment. As was observed by Charles Kingsley, this was a generation when “few of us deeply believe anything.”⁸³ These lines from the English poet, Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861), expressed the sentiment of the period on both sides of the Atlantic:

Oh say it, all who think it,
Look straight, and never blink it!
If it is so, let it be so,
And we will all agree so;
But the plot has counterplot,
It may be, and yet be not.⁸⁴

It was by experiencing entire sanctification that one was able to deal with the complexity of the day. “We walk amid quagmires and crooked

⁸⁰Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*, Society of Biblical Literature Confessional Perspectives (San Francisco: Harper, 1986), 11.

⁸¹Steele, *Love Enthroned*, 261.

⁸²Reuben Robinson, *Honey in the Rock* (Cincinnati: God’s Revivalist, 1913), 176, 113; cf. G. Watson, *Love Abounding*, 327.

⁸³As quoted in Walter E. Houghton, “Character of the Age,” *Backgrounds to Victorian Literature*, ed. Richard A. Levine (San Francisco: Chandler, 1967), 39. It was the controversy with this Anglican cleric which led John Henry Newman to write his *Apologia pro vita sua*.

⁸⁴As quoted in Houghton, 37. This unfinished poem deals with the nature of humanity.

paths,” said Watson, “but the sanctified believer walks on marble.”⁸⁵ With the certainty of knowledge being questioned, it was reassuring to know that “one experience in the converted or sanctified life is worth ten thousand theories.”⁸⁶ By experiencing God’s love one apparently can know God “with a swiftness, a certainty and a personal communion, that surpasses all the boasted knowledge of science, and furnishes the only true interpretation of creation and providence.”⁸⁷ This assumption helps to further explain how experience came to play such an important role in the epistemology of the Holiness Movement. Lacking what was needed to dispute the critics and reassert certainty, the movement turned for refuge to their own experience. Within this shelter, they were able to maintain their faith against the prevailing winds.

Summary

Holiness biblical interpretation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not take shape in a vacuum. The heritage of Wesley and American Methodism, the relative absence of higher education among its holiness adherents, a culture where people were their own interpreters, success on the campgrounds, conflict with other Christians, tumultuous societal forces, and growing isolation from others, shaped what the Holiness Movement found within the pages of the Bible. Because these influences went generally unrecognized and unacknowledged by the movement, their effect was even more potent in shaping interpretation.

By the late nineteenth century the Holiness Movement had lost its trans-denominational constituency and was speaking to itself. Without a critical audience, there was no one to challenge its novel interpretations. By neglecting the Wesleyan Quadrilateral’s “built-in” critical audience—the scrutiny of reason and the rich heritage of the past—what remained was a hollow hermeneutic. When experience filled this vacuum, what resulted often were interpretations far different from what the Scriptural authors intended. Ironically, such interpretations may well have hindered outsiders—those who did not share the presuppositions implicit in the holiness hermeneutic—from embracing what the movement considered the crowning experience of Christianity.

⁸⁵G. Watson, *Love Abounding*, 173.

⁸⁶Carradine, *Sanctification*, 8.

⁸⁷G. Watson, *Our Own God*, 3.

UNITING WORSHIP, PREACHING, AND THEOLOGY

John Wesley's Homiletical Use of the Collect for the Communion Service

by

Wesley Tracy*

My wife had a migraine headache—so I went alone to the Round Church, Cambridge, England. Divine worship has taken place on that spot for some 800 years, according to the brass plaque at the entrance. The Round Church is “low-church” Anglican, a church of the common people. In one of the few excursions away from the *Book of Common Prayer* (hereafter *BCP*) a prayer was led by a woman in a print dress, baby on hip. She prayed for “grace to help us cope with the tourists in the streets.” As if I didn’t feel awkward enough stumbling through the liturgy, fanning the pages of the green *BCP*, acting as if I was not totally lost. But for anyone who had the prayed-for tourist grace or anyone who cared to look, it was plain that I was an evangelical duck out of water.

This dislocation was due, of course, to the dedication of my own professors at Bethany Nazarene College and Nazarene Theological Seminary. They took it as their “bounden duty” to keep me in the dark about worship and send me forth into the ecclesiastic world liturgically illiterate. They were good; it worked. So I stumbled along during the service, looking like a

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stone-faced unbeliever until—until we came to a part of the liturgy that I knew by heart. Recognition came not because I had memorized that section of the *BCP*—I hadn't—I had never held it in my hand before that day. But I had read this part so many times in the writings of John Wesley and Adam Clarke that I just knew it. They repeatedly referred to it in their writing about sanctification. I closed the little green book and joined the liturgist in the Collect for the Communion service.

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts be open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hid,

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts,
by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit,
That we may perfectly love Thee,
And worthily magnify Thy holy name.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Back in my room at Wesley House, Cambridge, I reflected on the last five of these lines. It was, I decided, an adequate outline of Wesley's doctrine. Line by line, it affords a good way to structure one's thoughts about Wesley's preaching on entire sanctification. But it was more than an outline. It was one more demonstration of the dynamic relationship between worship and theology. In last year's Wesleyan Theological Society meeting, that relationship was profitably explored in papers by Henry Knight, Carl Leth, Steven Hoskins, and Joe Gorman. Henry Knight helped us see again that "worship that glorifies God"—worship that is doxological, eucharistic, anamnestic, and epicletic—"at the same time sanctifies persons through forming and shaping distinctively Christian affections."¹

Dr. Leth pointed our hearts and minds toward the reality that the "ritual focus" of Wesleyan-Holiness worship is "dialogical in character" and centers on "decisive transformational encounter between God and human persons."² Steven Hoskins wrote and spoke about the identity-creation

¹Henry H. Knight III, "Worship and Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Fall 1997, (32, No. 2, 7, 14).

²Carl M. Leth, "Lex Orandi—Lex Credendi: Worship and Identity." Unpublished paper delivered at the Wesleyan Theological Society annual meeting, Washington, D. C., 1996, 3, 5.

powers of the liturgy, about the liturgy as anamnesis that helps worshippers remember, for it takes them “to the foot of the cross, the courts of heaven.”³ Joe Gorman instructed us about the limits of “churchly ghetto” theology, or theology made for mere academic exercise. “The only kind of theology that makes sense,” Gorman said, “is a theology that discovers its wellspring in the divine human encounter mediated through worship.”⁴ Both Gorman and Hoskins cite liturgy as the most likely place from which hope for theological and ecclesiastical renewal can come. Hoskins declares, “Within the liturgy is provided opportunity for theology (even systematic theology) to live and give life.” He also affirms that liturgy “enables a faithfulness to our past and in so doing finds a way for its preservation.”⁵ But “preservation” is a defensive word, a fortress word. I prefer Wainwright’s statement (cited by Gorman): “the liturgy is the place from which doctrinal reform can radiate into the wider thinking of the church.”⁶

Let me lift up two ideas: (1) Theology that finds its wellspring in the divine-human encounter in worship; (2) Doctrinal renewal and reform radiating from the liturgy. I believe that both of these factors are demonstrated in John Wesley’s dependence on and innovative use of the Collect for the Communion Service.

For some hireling priests, for some numb worshippers, “cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love Thee” may have been mere ceremonial syllables to mumble. But not for John Wesley. For him, it became a theology that discovered its wellspring in the divine-human encounter of worship. That wellspring burst forth, radiating doctrinal, theological, ecclesiastical, and social renewal and reform. That light, radiating down to this moment, helps each of us to say again, “my heart was strangely warmed.” The liturgy for our ecclesiastical ancestor was not empty formalism. He would have none of that. The seeker of the cleansed heart and perfected love needs more than empty formalism. “He wants a religion of a nobler kind,”

³Steven T. Hoskins, “The Wesleyan-Holiness Movement in Search of Liturgical Identity,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Fall 1997, (32, No. 2, 132).

⁴Joe Gorman, “Worship and Theology: Towards a Mutually Critical Relation.” Unpublished paper delivered at the Wesleyan Theological Society annual meeting, Washington, D. C., 1996, 4.

⁵Hoskins, 133-134.

⁶Gorman (p. 9) quotes Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology*, 176.

Wesley said. “He can no more feed on this poor, shallow, formal thing than he can fill his belly with the east wind. . . . He longs [to be] purified as He is pure.”⁷

If you went to hear Norman Vincent Peale, you would expect a sermon on some dimension of positive thinking. If you were fortunate enough to hear Martin Luther King, Jr., you went expecting to hear something on social justice (I’ll never forget his Chicago sermon, in which he proclaimed “the arc of the universe is long, but bends toward justice”). Again, when the original Martin Luther preached, his hearers could count on hearing something about justification by faith. These preachers had a dominant theme that served as backdrop for every sermon on any topic.

John Wesley did too. Sanctification, holiness, or Christian perfection (interchangeable terms for Wesley) served as the contextual backdrop, the given, the assumption, the foundation for almost all of his sermons. Thus, a sermon on patience becomes a sermon on perfection, a sermon on the new birth moves quickly, inevitably, to sanctification: “You will see the necessity of holiness . . . and consequently the new birth, since none can be holy, except he be born again.”⁸ A sermon called “Satan’s Devices” is better titled, “Hindrances to Holiness.” Even a warning about false prophets is clinched by this interpretation of Matthew 7:17, “Every true prophet, every teacher whom I have sent, bringeth forth the good fruit of holiness.”⁹ Whatever the topic, it is nearly always treated in light of its relationship to entire sanctification. The framework on which almost every sermon rests is the doctrine of holiness as outlined in the Collect for the Communion Service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid:

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts,
By the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit,
That we may perfectly love Thee,
and worthily magnify Thy holy name,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

⁷John Wesley, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse II, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (London: Wesley-Methodist Book-Room, n.d.), 297. Hereafter, *Sermons*.

⁸“The New Birth,” *Sermons*, 642-643.

⁹“Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse XIII, *Sermons*, 464.

In this paper, I have concentrated on 58 of Wesley's sermons plus his apologetic, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. The "Fifty-three Standard Sermons," which formulated for so long the major part of official Methodist doctrine, were selected along with others whose principal theme was sanctification.¹⁰

I. "Cleanse The Thoughts Of Our Hearts"

John Wesley believed that the prayer for God to cleanse the very inmost thoughts of our hearts was not only appropriate, but urgent because of original sin, the depravity of fallen humanity.

A. Original Sin and Depravity. Wesley's general pattern in preaching was to first graphically depict the utter sinfulness of humankind in its harsh and stark reality. One could mistake him for an irremedial-total-depravity Calvinist—if you stomped out angrily before Wesley got to the part of the sermon in which he announced the sunlight of prevenient, saving, and sanctifying grace to enlighten the darkened human heart. I will cite only a few examples.

Wesley cites the fall of Adam and Eve and its consequences. "Adam, in whom all mankind were then contained, freely preferred evil to good. . . . [He became] unholy, foolish, unhappy [and since] in Adam all died [Adam] entitled all his posterity to error, guilt, sorrow, pain, diseases and death."¹¹ In the typical sermon, Wesley personalized original sin. In "The Way to the Kingdom," he declared:

Know that thou are corrupted in every power, in every faculty of thy soul . . . thou art totally corrupted. . . . The eyes of thy understanding are darkened. . . . Thy will is . . . utterly perverse and distorted, averse from all good . . . prone to all evil. . . . Thy affections are alienated from God . . . So that there is no soundness in thy soul . . . only wounds, and bruises, and

¹⁰One of the "Fifty-Three Standard Sermons" is by Charles Wesley ("Awake Thou That Sleepest"). It is omitted in this study. Sermons beyond the fifty-three (which were put together as a body of doctrine in 1771) included in this study are: "On God's Vineyard," "On the Wedding Garment," "On Patience," "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," "On Perfection," and "The Fall of Man."

¹¹"The Fall of Man," *The Works of John Wesley* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978, reprinted from the 1872 edition of Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London) 6:223. Hereafter, *Works*.

putrefying sores. . . . From this evil fountain flow forth the bitter streams of vanity, thirst of praise, ambition, covetousness, the lust of the flesh . . . the eye, and the pride of life. From this arise anger, hatred, malice, revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmises . . . contention . . . luxury or sensuality, fornication uncleanness. . . . Who can number the sands of the sea, or the drops of rain, or thy iniquities? . . . Thou art guilty of everlasting death . . . thou deservest God's wrath, and everlasting damnation.¹²

Wesley told another audience: "Know and feel, that thou art a poor, vile, guilty worm, quivering over the great gulf! What art thou? A sinner born to die: a leaf driven before the wind, a vapour ready to vanish away . . . to be no more seen."¹³ Wesley's picture of human depravity can hardly be denied.

How exactly . . . do all things around us, even the face of the whole world, agree with this account! Open your eyes! Look around you! See darkness that may be felt; see ignorance and error; see vice in ten thousand forms; see . . . guilt, fear, sorrow, shame, remorse, covering the face of the earth! See misery the daughter of sin. See on every side, sickness and pain . . . driving on the poor, helpless sons of men, in every age, to the gates of death.¹⁴

This is the picture of humankind according to Wesley. This is "man in his natural state unassisted by grace."¹⁵ Unassisted by grace, we find ourselves in this plight: "But though he strives with all his might he cannot conquer," Wesley preached, "sin is mightier than he. . . . He resolves against it, but yet sins on: he sees the snare and abhors and runs into it."¹⁶ "He is not able to obey even the outward commands of God. . . . While his heart remains in its natural sinfulness . . . he cannot cleanse a [his] sinful heart. . . . He knows not how to get one step forward in the way."¹⁷ For "there is no power in man, till it is given him from above, to

¹²*Sermons*, 90-91. See also "Circumcision of the Heart," *Sermons*, 231.

¹³"Sermon on the Mount," Discourse X, *Sermons*, 441.

¹⁴"The Fall of Man," *Works*, 6:223.

¹⁵"Original Sin," *Sermons*, 626.

¹⁶"The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," *Sermons*, 115.

¹⁷"Sermon on the Mount," Discourse I, *Sermons*, 282.

do one good work, to speak one good word, or to form one good desire.”¹⁸ But grace shoulders its way onto the homiletic horizon as Wesley declares, “Know your disease! Know your cure! Ye were born in sin; therefore ‘ye must be born . . . of God!’ By nature ye are wholly corrupted; by grace ye shall be wholly renewed.”¹⁹

B. Remaining Sin Requires a Second Work of Grace. Is the prayer “cleanse the thoughts of our hearts” appropriate for the communion invitation? After all, these are God’s children coming to God’s table. Most have been born again, justified by faith. Prevenient grace has led to saving grace. They have forsaken willful sins. Are they not clean?

Wesley’s hearers, like the believers at Corinth and Thessalonica, were told that they must now go on to full salvation, that their hearts in conversion were “truly yet not entirely renewed.”²⁰ Wesley repeatedly reminds the Christian that sin still remains in the heart. The evil nature, “that Delilah which we are told is gone . . . is still lying in our bosom.”²¹ In Wesley’s sermons, he goes to great length to establish the point that sin remains in the born-again believer. One of the reasons for this was that he felt he had to oppose the teachings of Zinzendorf and the Moravians. They were Wesley’s mentor in justification by faith, but they taught that justification and sanctification happened at the same time. Wesley rejects the idea that there is no sin in the justified person: “first because it is contrary to the whole tenor of the Scripture;—secondly, because it is contrary to . . . experience . . . thirdly, because it is absolutely new, never before heard of in the world before yesterday; and, lastly, because it is . . . attended with the most fatal consequences.”²²

The believer is not at first aware of inward sin, but as one draws closer to God there is seen “daily in the divine mirror, more and more his own sinfulness. He sees more and more clearly that he is still a sinner.”²³ New Christians soon begin to

continually feel an heart bent to backsliding; a natural tendency to evil; a proneness . . . to cleave to the things of earth. They are daily sensible of sin remaining in their heart . . .

¹⁸“On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitfield,” *Sermons*, 764.

¹⁹“Original Sin,” *Sermons*, 634.

²⁰“On Sin in Believers,” *Sermons*, 167.

²¹*Ibid.*, 173.

²²*Ibid.*, 166.

²³“The Nature, Origin, Property, and Use of the Law,” *Sermons*, 494.

pride, self-will, unbelief; and to sin cleaving to all they speak and do, even their best actions and holiest duties.²⁴

They find that even their so-called good works of mercy and piety have a mixture of evil in them until “they are now more ashamed of their best duties than they once were of their worst sins.”²⁵ They cry out “with M. DeRenty, ‘I am a ground all overrun with thorns.’”²⁶

But should the discovery that the seed of the serpent still resides in the heart bring the believer to despair. No, far from it. It brings a “loving shame” and a tender humility, for the

sin which remaineth . . . is not imputed to our condemnation. Nevertheless, the conviction we feel for inbred sin is deeper . . . everyday. The more we grow in grace the more do we see the desperate wickedness of our heart . . . and the necessity of our being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness.²⁷

Not-yet-sanctified Christians should not despair, for even while they feel the sin within, “yet at the same time they know they are of God; they cannot doubt it for a moment . . . they are equally assured that sin is in them and that Christ is in them.”²⁸ As Wesley told the unsanctified hearers of his sermon on Romans 8:1 titled “The First Fruits of the Spirit,” “There [is] no condemnation to them which walk after the Spirit by reason of inward sin still remaining, so long as they do not give way thereto; nor by reason of sin cleaving to all they do.” Wesley added,

Fret not thyself because of ungodliness, though it still remains in thy heart. . . . Repine not, because thou still comest short of the glorious image of God. . . . And be not afraid to know all this evil in thy heart. . . . Be abased. Be humbled. . . . But still “let not thy heart be troubled” . . . I, even I have an Advocate with the Father . . . God is merciful to thee a sinner! Such a sinner as thou art! God is love; and Christ hath died! . . . the Father himself loveth thee! Thou art his child! . . . The whole body of sin . . . (shall) be destroyed. Thou shalt be cleansed

²⁴“On Sin in Believers,” *Sermons*, 164-165.

²⁵“The Repentance of Believers,” *Sermons*, 180.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 181.

²⁷“Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse I, *Sermons*, 285.

²⁸“On Sin in Believers,” *Sermons*, 165.

from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit. . . . Wait in peace for that hour where “the God of peace shall sanctify thee wholly.”²⁹

Similar words of comfort were given to the hearers of the sermon “Satan’s Devices.”

Instead of repining at your not being wholly delivered, you will praise God for thus far delivering you. . . . You will not fret against him, because you are not yet renewed, but bless him because you shall be. . . . Instead of uselessly tormenting yourself because the time has not yet fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, knowing it will come and not tarry. You may, therefore, the more cheerfully endure, as yet, the burden of sin that still remains . . . because it will not always remain. Yet a little while, and it shall be clean gone.³⁰

C. Purity Or Cleansing Is Promised. When Wesley preached on remaining sin, he would usually, almost in the same breath, point to its remedy. “But we know we need not remain in this state, as we are assured of a greater change to come . . . the God of your salvation who hath done great things for you already . . . will do . . . greater things.”³¹ “The sense of the sinfulness you feel, on the one hand, and the holiness you expect on the other, both . . . establish your peace and make it flow as a river.”³² We cannot cleanse our own hearts, as Wesley knew and preached:

Most sure we cannot, till it please our Lord to speak to our hearts again, to speak the second time, “Be clean;” and then only the leprosy is cleansed. Then only, the evil root, the carnal mind is destroyed; and inbred sin subsists no more. But if there is no second change, if there be no instantaneous deliverance after justification, if there be none but a gradual work of God (that there is a gradual work none denies) then we must be content, as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death. . . . But supposing we do thus repent. . . . He is able to save you from all sin that remains.³³

²⁹“First Fruits of the Spirit,” *Sermons*, 104-107.

³⁰*Sermons*, 609.

³¹*Ibid.*, 605-606.

³²*Ibid.*, 607.

³³“The Repentance of Believers,” *Sermons*, 183.

In Wesley's preaching the focus of purity was strong. He used the cleansing language of 1 John 1 repeatedly ("the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin," "cleanse us from all unrighteousness"). "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 7:1) was in constant use. James' admonition "cleanse your hands ye sinners; and purify your hearts ye double minded" was sometimes used. Ezekiel 36:25ff did heavy-duty work, as well as 1 John 3:3, "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Scanning the sermons, we see that Wesley preached that the second work of grace would: "purify their hearts from the love of the world, from the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life";³⁴ "from envy, evil-surmisings, partiality";³⁵ "the evil root, the carnal mind . . . inbred sin";³⁶ "pride, self-will, passions . . . foolish and hurtful desires, from vile and vain affections . . . all pollution";³⁷ from every unholy affection . . . filthiness of the flesh and spirit;³⁸ impure intentions;³⁹ "from anger . . . turbulent passion . . . from every desire but to please and enjoy God";⁴⁰ "from earthly sensual desires . . . inordinate affections, the whole carnal mind";⁴¹ "from every evil temper, and word and work";⁴² "from . . . every unkind affection . . . our idols . . . and all uncleanness";⁴³ "from indwelling sin . . . guilt . . . desert of punishment."⁴⁴ Thus, doth Jesus save his people from their sins."⁴⁵

D. Full Salvation Is Available in This Life. Somewhat like cause and effect are hinged together, Wesley, in establishing the doctrine of heart purity as a second work of grace, also established the doctrine and

³⁴"The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," *Sermons*, 119.

³⁵"On Sin in Believers," *Sermons*, 167.

³⁶"The Repentance of Believers," *Sermons*, 183.

³⁷"Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations," *Sermons*, 675.

³⁸"On Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," Discourse III, *Sermons*, 309.

³⁹*Ibid.*, Discourse VI, *Sermons*, 364.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Discourse XIII, *Sermons*, 481.

⁴¹"The Law Established Through Faith," *Sermons*, 518.

⁴²"Wandering Thoughts," *Sermons*, 597.

⁴³"Satan's Devices," *Sermons*, 599.

⁴⁴"Repentance of Believers," *Sermons*, 185.

⁴⁵"Christian Perfection," *Sermons*, 581-582.

the hope that it would be done in this life, not the next. Nor was it to be done in the hour and article of death as some said. Although Wesley observed that many Christians apparently are sanctified only “a short while” before death, he affirmed clearly that holiness is a present-tense salvation. Death is no redeemer; Christ is.

In the sermon “The Repentance of Believers,” preached in Londonderry, Ireland in 1767, Wesley stresses a present-tense purity in no uncertain terms. First, he establishes that God, according to the Scriptures, is “able to save to the uttermost.” “He is able to save you from all sin that still remains in your heart. He is able to save you from all the sin that cleaves to all your words and actions.”⁴⁶ But God being able to do it is no guarantee that He will—unless He has promised it. “But this he has done: he has promised it over and over, in the strongest terms.”⁴⁷ Wesley cites these “strong terms,” quoting and applying Deuteronomy 30:6, Ezekiel 36:25ff, Luke 1:68, and making much of the “in this life” grammar of 1 John 1. He preached that God not only promises present-tense purity but requires it.⁴⁸

Is God unjust to require holiness of humans? Some say these doctrines are “too severe . . . no man ever did or shall live up to them. What is this,” Wesley demanded, “but to reproach God, as if he were . . . requiring of his servants more than he enables them to perform?”⁴⁹ Such thinking was outrageous to Wesley. It was “as if he [God] had mocked the helpless works of his hands, by binding them to impossibilities; by commanding them to overcome, where neither their own strength nor his grace was sufficient.”⁵⁰ Besides, experience has already validated the scriptural promise and requirement. Wesley listened to hundreds, even thousands of testimonies to this grace.⁵¹ “Several enjoy it at this day. And not a few have enjoyed it unto their death . . . undeniable instances of genuine scriptural perfection.”⁵²

⁴⁶“Repentance of Believers,” *Sermons*, 184.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸See “Satan’s Devices,” *Sermons*, 599.

⁴⁹“Circumcision of the Heart,” *Sermons*, 233.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹See the sermon “On Patience,” *Works*, VI, 490-491. Also the “Plain Account” *Works*, XI for the sometimes scary case study of Jane Cooper.

⁵²“On Perfection,” *Works*, 420-421.

E. The Cleansing of Sanctification Is Both Gradual and Instantaneous. What are we to expect when we pray “Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts”? Wesley believed and preached a doctrine of holiness that included both gradual and instantaneous aspects, both crisis and process.

Wisely, Wesley warns us about trying to put God in a box and reduce Him to a codified formula. “It behooves us, first, always to retain a lively sense that God is above all means. Have a care, therefore, of limiting the Almighty. He doeth whatsoever and whensoever it pleaseth him.”⁵³

Wesley adds: “He can convey his grace either in or out of any means. . . . Perhaps he will. . . . Look then every moment for his appearing! Be it at the hour you are employed in his ordinances; or before, or after . . . or when you are hindered therefrom. He is not hindered; he is always ready . . . to save.”⁵⁴ Thus Wesley was slow to adopt a certain formula. Part of his hesitance on this point came because he could find no great help on the question in the Bible. In his sermon “On Patience,” he observed in response to the question: “Does he [God] work it gradually, by slow degrees; or instantaneously, in a moment?”

How many are the disputes upon this head and so there will be, after all that ever . . . can be said upon it . . . because the Scriptures are silent on the subject . . . the point is not determined . . . in express terms in any part of the oracles of God. Every man therefore may abound in his own sense, provided he will allow the same liberty to his neighbor. . . . Permit me . . . to add one thing more: Be the change instantaneous or gradual, see that you never rest till it is wrought in your own soul, if you desire to dwell with God in glory.⁵⁵

That he believed in both gradual and instantaneous dimensions of the doctrine is seen in our selected sources.

All experience as well as Scripture show us this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified. . . . It gradually increases . . . till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that increases more and more.⁵⁶

⁵³“The Means of Grace,” *Sermons*, 222.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Works*, VI, 490.

⁵⁶“On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” *Works*, VI, 509.

In the *Plain Account*, Wesley again affirms both dimensions of the work. He affirms that there is a gradual work of God in the soul and that “generally speaking, it is a long time, even many years before sin is destroyed. All this we know.”⁵⁷ He adds in the same paragraph: “But we know likewise, that God may . . . cut short his work; in whatever degree he pleases, and do the usual work of many years in a moment. He does so in many instances, and yet there is a gradual work . . . before and after that moment.”⁵⁸ Wesley believed that both aspects of sanctification were important. Of the gradual aspect he wrote:

at the time a man is justified, sanctification properly begins . . . although it is not . . . the whole process of sanctification . . . [it] is doubtless the gate of it. . . . It is only the threshold of sanctification. As, in natural birth, a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees; so in the spiritual birth, a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual stature and strength. The new birth, therefore, is the first point of sanctification which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.⁵⁹

He makes a nearly identical statement in the sermon “The New Birth.” He adds in “The Wilderness State”: The whole of sanctification is not wrought at once; . . . when they first believe they are but as new-born babes, who are gradually to grow up . . . before they come to the full stature of Christ.⁶⁰ Or this one from “The New Birth,”: “Buy up every opportunity of growing in grace. . . whatever may be tomorrow give all diligence today . . . till you attain that pure and perfect love.”⁶¹ Thus, to Wesley growing in grace and the gradual aspect of sanctification amounted to the same thing.

Unfortunately, in our time some have rigorously differentiated between gradual sanctification and growth in grace. Some folks in the Holiness Movement have exerted great energy declaring that there is no such thing as gradual sanctification. The positive things that happen in the

⁵⁷*Works*, XI, 423.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹“On God’s Vineyard,” *Works*, VII, 205. See a similar statement in “The New Birth,” *Sermons*, 645.

⁶⁰*Sermons*, 663.

⁶¹*Sermons*, 645.

believer's heart between the new birth and entire sanctification must be called growth in grace—but never gradual sanctification. History and culture have played a part in all this. A hundred years ago Wesley's words about the gradual aspect of sanctification became very attractive to many Methodists. Instantaneous sanctification had become troublesome. They began to emphasize gradual sanctification. Decade after decade the gradual aspect of sanctification was given preeminence. By the middle of the 20th century, many Methodist scholars were declaring that all John Wesley really meant by sanctification was good, steady growth in grace.

Millions of Wesley's ecclesiastical descendants had used his words about gradual sanctification as the bridge on which they marched away from the demands and distinctives of his teaching on instantaneous sanctification. Therefore, when the American Holiness Movement got going, it made very sure that no one could use that bridge again. They blew it up. They almost never spoke of gradual sanctification—but only of growth in grace. They emphasized the instantaneous aspect of sanctification. A few rose to damn Wesley, declaring that he taught gradual sanctification. In their vigor they failed to tell the uninitiated that Wesley also unequivocally taught instantaneous sanctification. Recently a missionary candidate, an associate pastor, and a Sunday School teacher—in separate conversations—all told me that Wesley's doctrine of sanctification was "gradual." If you think that's the case, read on.

During the years 1759-1762, Wesley himself carefully listened to the testimonies of about 1,000 persons who had received sanctifying grace. There were 652 in London alone, but Wesley said he carried his research far beyond London into Ireland and various parts of England. The people Wesley quizzed were "exceeding clear in their experience" and Wesley said he could find no reason to doubt their testimony. He reports in the sermon "On Patience":

Every one of these (after the most careful inquiry), I have not found one exception . . . has declared that his deliverance from sin was instantaneous; that the change was wrought in a moment. Had half of these, or one third, or one in twenty declared it was gradually wrought in them, I should have believed this, with regard to them, and thought that some were gradually sanctified and some instantaneously. But as I have not found, in so long a space of time, a single person speaking thus; as all who believe they are sanctified declare with one

voice that the change was wrought in a moment, I cannot but believe that sanctification is commonly, if not always, an instantaneous work.⁶²

After 1762, there is, in my judgment, evidence that Wesley came more and more to the instantaneous side of the question. In 1777 he asked in the *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, “Can anything be more clear than . . . that this faith, and . . . the salvation which it brings, is spoken of as given in an instant?” In the same document he restates his position, “beyond any possibility of exception . . . to this day both my brother and I maintained . . . that Christian perfection . . . is given instantaneously, in one moment. . . . That we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment.”⁶³ Wesley closes his classic sermon, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” with these dramatic words:

Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some. . . . But it is infinitely desirable . . . that it should be done instantaneously; that the Lord should destroy sin “by the breath of his mouth,” in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And so he generally does, a plan fact of which there is evidence enough to satisfy any unprejudicial person. Thou therefore look for it every moment! Look for it every day, every hour, every moment! Why not this hour, this moment? . . . If you seek it by faith, you may expect it as you are; and if as you are, then expect it now. . . . Do you believe we are sanctified by faith? Be true then to your principle, and look for this blessing just as you are . . . as a poor sinner that has still nothing to pay, nothing to plead, but “Christ died.” . . . Christ is ready; and he is all you want. He is waiting for you: he is at the door! Let your inmost soul cry out,

Come in, come in, thou heavenly Guest!
Nor hence again remove;
But sup with me, and let the feast
Be everlasting love.⁶⁴

The teaching and preaching that the blood of Christ really cleanses us from all sin is a distinctive of the Wesleyan-Holiness people. Other

⁶²*Works*, VI, 491.

⁶³*Works*, XI, 393.

⁶⁴*Sermons*, 622.

holiness people, of the Keswick persuasion along with several Pentecostal groups, believe that the baptizing Spirit empowers for service but does not cleanse from sin. “Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts,” the pre-sacramental invocation, was explained (theology) in Wesley’s “position paper” sermons. It was proclaimed in Wesley’s evangelical homiletics. And the daring, radical optimism of grace explained and proclaimed by John was made worship-ready when brother Charles set it to music.

What is our calling’s glorious hope
 But inward holiness?
 For this to Jesus I look up,
 I calmly wait for this.
 I wait till He shall touch me clean,
 Shall life and power impart,
 Give me the faith that casts out sin
 And purifies the heart.⁶⁵

* * *

The thing my God doth hate
 That I no more may do,
 Thy creature, Lord, again create,
 And all my soul renew:
 My soul shall then, like Thine,
 Abhor the thing unclean,
 And, sanctified by love divine,
 Forever cease from sin.⁶⁶

You will recognize these more familiar strains in which the optimism of grace is called “plenteous.”

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
 Grace to cover all my sin:
 Let the healing streams abound,
 Make and keep me pure within.⁶⁷

II. “By the Inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit”

Last month, at a district preachers’ meeting, a young pastor told me,

⁶⁵“What Is Our Calling’s Glorious Hope?” *Wesley Hymns* (Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing Co., 1982), 32.

⁶⁶Untitled, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (London: John Mason, 1849), 322.

⁶⁷“Jesus, Lover of My Soul,” John Lawson, *The Wesley Hymns* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 88-89.

“I like Wesley, but I also like to preach about the baptism with the Spirit.” John Wesley would have no problem with that. He used baptism language sparingly, choosing rather to use the worship language of the Collect for the Communion service. The “inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit” was the prayer of Wesley’s hearers from the day of their first communion. Clearly, for Wesley, the Holy Spirit is the operating expression of God sanctifying and cleansing the consecrated believer’s heart. Wesley declares:

All inward holiness is the immediate fruit of the faith that worketh by love. By this the blessed, Spirit purifies the heart from pride, self-will, passion, from love of the world, from foolish and hurtful desires, from vile and vain affections. Beside that sanctified afflictions have a . . . tendency to holiness . . . through the operation of the Spirit [emphasis mine].⁶⁸

Again, “thou shalt be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁹ And, “Be it all thy hope, to be washed in his blood, and purified by his Spirit.”⁷⁰ Also, “His desires are refined, his affections purified . . . being filled with the Holy Ghost.”⁷¹ Again, we are exhorted to be “thoroughly sanctified by his Spirit.”⁷²

The closest Wesley comes, in our 59 selected writings, to Pentecostal sanctification is in his sermon called “Christian Perfection,” where he says:

But the Holy Ghost was not yet given in his sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified. It was then when he ascended on high . . . that he “received” those “gifts for men . . . that the Lord might dwell among them.” And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was, that they who “waited for the promise of the Father” were made more than conquerors over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them.⁷³

⁶⁸“Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations,” *Sermons*, 675.

⁶⁹“On Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse VIII, *Sermons*, 403.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, Discourse XIII, 479.

⁷¹“A Caution Against Bigotry,” *Sermons*, 538.

⁷²“Satan’s Devices,” *Sermons*, 538.

⁷³*Sermons*, 573-574. See the fuller discussion there. Even after close perusal, it is hard to say that Wesley here comes too close to Pentecostal sanctification. One could, from the general nature of the discussion, argue Pentecostal salvation in the broad sense of the term.

Entire sanctification is not something static, not something one gets like buying a bag of potatoes. The sanctified life involves a moment by moment cleansing. This is how the spiritual life is sustained according to Wesley's preaching. He reminds the hearers of their "utter inability to do good unless he 'water thee every moment.'"74 When a Christian stumbles, the advice is to pray "Lord, I shall fall thus every moment, unless thou uphold me with they hand."75 Such moment by moment sustenance is also needed to survive "sins of surprise" and "sudden assaults."76 Without this work of the Spirit, the Christian "may commit sin even as another man . . . all manner of sin with greediness."77

But the most weighty reason that we should pray for the continual cleansing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is that "every man living needs the blood of the atonement, or he could not stand before God."78 Every person? Yes. The justified Christian needs the blood of the covenant continually applied because of sin remaining in the heart and clinging to deeds. Though they are not committing acts of sin, properly so called (that is, willful transgression of known laws), their inward sin would forever separate them from God. This defect "gives them a deeper sense, that they have always need of that blood of sprinkling."79 This sin in the justified would absolutely condemn them . . . were it not for the atoning blood."80

What of the sanctified, those already made perfect in love? They, too, need the atonement continually because of ignorance, mistakes, error, wrong judgments, and their consequent wrong actions; because "a thousand infirmities" (gifts of our fallenness) will bring innumerable violations and numberless instances of falling short of God's perfect will.⁸¹ There is no place for spiritual pride. Each one of us should pray from the heart,

74"On Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," Discourse XIII, *Sermons*, 479.

75"The First Fruits of the Spirit," *Sermons*, 107.

76Ibid., 102, 103, 107.

77"The Privilege of Those Born of God," *Sermons*, 255, 257.

78"On Perfection," *Works*, VI, 413.

79"The First Fruits of the Spirit," *Sermons*, 101.

80"The Repentance of Believers," *Sermons*, 181.

81"On Perfection," *Works*, VI, 412-413.

Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of the death.⁸²

Wesley was insistent on this:

The holiest of men still need Christ, as their Prophet, as “the light of the world”: for he does not give them light but from moment to moment: the instant he withdraws all is darkness. They still need Christ as their King: for God does not give them a stock of holiness. But unless they receive a supply every moment nothing but unholiness would remain. They still need Christ as their Priest to make atonement. . . . Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ. . . . The best of men need Christ as their Priest . . . on account of their coming short of the law of love.⁸³

Wesley adds, “the most perfect . . . need the blood of atonement, and may properly for themselves, as well as for their brethren, say ‘Forgive us our trespasses.’”⁸⁴ Thus every person needs the continual cleansing which comes to us by the “inspiration” of the Holy Ghost. We need “the power of Christ every moment . . . whereby alone we are what we are; whereby we are enabled to continue in spiritual life and without which, notwithstanding our present holiness, we should be devils the next moment.”⁸⁵ Again, Charles made John’s preaching on the “inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit” worship-ready with such songs as “Come Holy Ghost, our Hearts Inspire.”

Come Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire;
Let us Thine influence prove;
Source of the old prophetic fire,
Fountain of light and love.

Expand Thy wings, celestial Dove,
Brood o’er our nature’s night;
And our disordered spirits move,
And let there now be light.⁸⁶

⁸²Ibid., 413.

⁸³*Works*, XI, 417.

⁸⁴Ibid., 419.

⁸⁵“The Repentance of Believers,” *Sermons*, 185.

⁸⁶*Wesley Hymns*, 83.

III. “That We May Perfectly Love Thee”

Some think that Wesley’s doctrine of perfect love came from his own pharisaical, puritanical, pinched soul. Not so. It came from the liturgy of worship—anchored in Scripture. I wish I had time to explore the 15 “Perfection is . . .” statements that I have catalogued from the sources that form the foundation for this inquiry. Suffice it to say that, when pushed to define perfect love, Wesley often cited Matthew 22:37: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart . . . soul, and . . . mind . . . and . . . thy neighbor as thyself.” As the Methodists sought the perfection taught in these passages and sought to love God perfectly as the liturgy had taught them to pray, they found themselves seized by a love of God and man remarkably like the self-emptying love of Christ. “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 extent of all its faculties.”⁸⁷ It fills the soul “with love stronger than death, both to God and to mankind: Love that doeth the works of God, glorying to spend and be spent.”⁸⁸ This love is so entire and comprehensive “that you love nothing but for his sake.”⁸⁹

Those made perfect in love “are constrained to love all men as yourselves, with a love not only ever burning in your heart, but flaming out in all your actions.”⁹⁰ Such love excludes or expels sin as the believers love “one another as Christ hath loved us. . . . May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper.”⁹¹ “God is love: therefore, they who resemble him . . . are transformed into the same image. . . . Their soul is all love. They are kind, benevolent, compassionate, tenderhearted . . . not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.”⁹² Wesley said in his thirteenth discourse on the Sermon on the Mount, “I now live, even in the flesh, a life of love; of pure love both to God and man, a life of holiness and happiness.”⁹³ This love is not content with the minimum required, “content with barely working no evil to our

⁸⁷“The Almost Christian,” *Sermons*, 23.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹“Circumcision of the Heart,” *Sermons*, 235.

⁹⁰“The New Birth,” *Sermons*, 245.

⁹¹“Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse II, *Sermons*, 307.

⁹²*Ibid.*, Discourse IX, 424.

⁹³*Ibid.*, Discourse XIII, 476.

neighbour. It continually incites us to do good . . . in every possible kind . . . and degree to all.”⁹⁴ Is there no limit to this love? “We shall love every man so as to be ready to lay down our life for his sake.”⁹⁵ In the sermon “The Way to the Kingdom,” Wesley said:

Thou shalt love thy neighbour. . . . Thou shalt embrace with the most tender good will, the most earnest and cordial affection, the most inflamed desires of preventing or removing all evil, and of procuring for him every possible good. Thy neighbour, that is, not only thy friend, thy kinsman . . . not only the virtuous, the friendly, him that loves thee, that . . . returns thy kindness, but every . . . human creature, every soul which God hath made; not excepting . . . him whom thou knowest to be evil and unthankful, him that . . . persecutes thee: him thou shalt love as thyself; with the same invariable thirst after his happiness . . . the same unwearied care to screen him from whatever might grieve or hurt either his soul or body.⁹⁶

In the sermon “The First Fruits of the Spirit,” Wesley told those avid seekers of holiness: “As soon as thou lovest Him with all thy heart, thou shalt be perfect. . . . Wait in peace for that hour when ÷the God of peace shall sanctify thee wholly.”⁹⁷ In expanding on the Collect’s theme of perfect love, Wesley often quickly turned to the restoration of the image of God as a central aspect of Christian perfection.

In Wesley’s thought, humankind was “deprived” of the moral image of God. Into the vacuum caused by that “deprivation” came that element of corruption called “depravation,” that persistent sinfulness that puts humans out of joint, out of proper relation to God. Thus, “ye know the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of . . . true holiness.”⁹⁸ “Holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart.”⁹⁹ “That faith which . . . doth not . . . stamp the whole image of God on the heart and purify us . . . [is] not the faith that leads to glory.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴“The Law Established by Faith,” *Sermons*, 518.

⁹⁵“Satan’s Devices,” *Sermons*, 599.

⁹⁶*Sermons*, 87.

⁹⁷*Sermons*, 107.

⁹⁸“Original Sin,” *Sermons*, 634.

⁹⁹“The New Birth,” *Sermons*, 642.

¹⁰⁰“Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse XIII, *Sermons*, 479.

Wesley challenges his audience: “Are ye lively portraitures of Him.”¹⁰¹ The image of God is to be “written in the heart by the finger of God, so as never to be erased.”¹⁰² “Restored to the favour [first work] and image of God” [second work] was one of Wesley’s favorite expressions.¹⁰³ We are urged to “follow after the image of God . . . longing to awake up after his likeness.”¹⁰⁴ Adam, in primitive holiness, had the likeness of God “graven on his heart by the finger of God; wrote in the inmost spirit.”¹⁰⁵ This we are to receive again. “This inward religion bears the shape of God so visibly impressed upon it”¹⁰⁶ and our sanctified hearts will have “the character, the stamp, the living impression of his person.”¹⁰⁷ “Now God is love: therefore they who resemble him in the spirit of their minds are transformed into the same image.”¹⁰⁸ Again it is Charles who makes John’s preaching on perfect love worship-ready.

O glorious hope of perfect love!
It lifts me up to things above.

* * *

Rejoicing now in earnest hope,
I stand, and from the mountain-top
See all the land below:
Rivers of milk and honey rise,
And all the fruits of Paradise
In endless plenty grow.

* * *

Now, O my Joshua, bring me in!
Cast out thy foes; the inbred sin.
The carnal mind, remove;
The purchase of thy death divide!
And O! with all the sanctified
Give me a lot of love!¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹“Scriptural Christianity,” *Sermons*, 53.

¹⁰²“Self-Denial,” *Sermons*, 681.

¹⁰³See for example, *Sermons*, 210, 248.

¹⁰⁴“Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse XIII, *Sermons*, 480-481.

¹⁰⁵“The Origin, Nature, Property, and Use of the Law,” *Sermons*, 485.

¹⁰⁶“Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse IV, 327.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, Discourse IX, *Sermons*, 424.

¹⁰⁹*A Collection of Hymns . . .*, 1849, 384.

IV. “And Worthily Magnify Thy Holy Name”

In what ways are those who are cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit made perfect in love and restored to the image of God supposed to “magnify” His holy name?” There are at least four ways.

A. Full Salvation is By Grace, Through Faith; Not By Works.

One way to magnify our Redeemer is not only to admit but proclaim that the purity, the holiness, the Christian perfection is God’s work of grace and not human attainment by any good works. The Methodists were notorious for good works, but they knew that such works were not meritorious.

Anyone who knows the Scriptures knows that it “removes all imagination of merit-work.”¹¹⁰ Experience testifies the same, “For we are thoroughly sensible that we have nothing which we have not received.”¹¹¹ We have done nothing, nor could we do anything to earn “preventing, justifying or sanctifying grace,”¹¹² for “It is through his [Christ’s] merits alone that all believers are saved: that is justified . . . sanctified . . . glorified.”¹¹³ “It was free grace that . . . stamped on [the] soul the image of God”¹¹⁴ and nothing but free grace will restore it. “Ye are saved from your sin . . . ye are restored to the . . . image of God, not from any works, merits, or deservings of yours, but by the free grace, the mere mercy of God, through the merits of his . . . Son.”¹¹⁵ Therefore, even the most saintly dare not boast, but “magnify Thy holy name.”

B. Continued Growth in the Grace of Holiness Magnifies God’s Holy Name.

Sanctification’s gift of pure love is precious, “but even that increases more and more until we grow up . . . to the fulness of Christ,”¹¹⁶ Wesley taught. We never outgrow our need to grow. “There is no perfection,” Wesley declared, “which does not admit of continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree

¹¹⁰“Working Out Our Own Salvation,” *Works*, VI, 508.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 509.

¹¹²“The Means of Grace,” *Sermons*, 208.

¹¹³“On the Wedding Garment,” *Works*, VII, 313.

¹¹⁴“Salvation by Faith,” *Sermons*, 7.

¹¹⁵“The Means of Grace,” *Sermons*, 210.

¹¹⁶“On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” *Works*, VI, 509.

soever he is perfect, he hath still need to ‘grow in grace’ and daily advance in . . . the . . . love of God.”¹¹⁷

C. Lives of Christlike Service Magnify the Holy Name of God.

Loving service to the souls and bodies of persons in need was the mission of the Methodists. You have heard of the widespread hunger and destitution of Wesley’s England. Works of mercy were prominent in Wesley’s sermons. “If good works do not follow our faith,” Wesley declared, “we are yet in our sins.”¹¹⁸ A true Christian is “hungering and thirsting to do good, in every possible kind . . . rejoicing to ‘spend and be spent’ for them . . . not looking for any recompense.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, Wesley advised, “Fall not short of a Pharisee in doing good. Give alms. . . . Is any hungry? Feed him; Is he athirst? Give him drink. Naked? Cover him with a garment.”¹²⁰ And don’t settle for the minimum, “do not limit thy beneficence to a scanty proportion. Be merciful to the uttermost of thy power.”¹²¹

In case someone should still not understand exactly what to do, Wesley gave explicit instruction:

give to the poor, deal your bread to the hungry. Cover the naked . . . entertain the stranger; carry on or send relief to them that are in prison. Heal the sick; not by miracle, but through the blessing of God upon your seasonable support. Let the blessing of him that was ready to perish, through pinning want, come upon thee. Defend the oppressed, plead the cause of the fatherless, and make the widow’s heart sing for joy.¹²²

What a way to magnify the holy name of God! To illustrate the utter selfishness in doing otherwise, Wesley used this illustration:

If a man had hands, eyes, and feet he could give to those that wanted (lacked) them; if he should lock them up in a chest, instead of giving them to his brethren who were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman

¹¹⁷“Christian Perfection,” *Sermons*, 569.

¹¹⁸“The Law Established by Faith,” *Sermons*, 505.

¹¹⁹“The New Birth,” *Sermons*, 244.

¹²⁰“Sermon on the Mount,” Discourse V, *Sermons*, 362.

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*, Discourse VIII, 418. See also Discourse III, 315-316.

wretch?

If he should choose to amuse himself with hoarding them up; then entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving . . . eyes and hands, might we not reckon him mad?

Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet. If therefore we lock it up in chests, while the poor and distressed want (lack) it for their necessary uses, we are not far from the cruelty of him (who) . . . hoards up hands and eyes.¹²³

Such persons are not only robbing God, they are “also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked. . . and making themselves accountable for all the want, affliction, and distress which they do not try to remove.”¹²⁴ On the day of judgment we shall face these questions, says Wesley:

Wast thou . . . a general benefactor to mankind? feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, relieving the afflicted. . . ? Wast thou eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame? a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow? and didst thou labour to improve all outward works of mercy as means of saving souls from death?¹²⁵

D. Worship of God Magnifies God’s Holy Name. Let this trinitarian hymn by Charles Wesley magnify God in worship:

Father, at thy footstool see
 Those who now are one in Thee:
 Draw us by Thy grace alone;
 Give, O give us to thy Son!

Jesus, friend of human kind,
 Let us in Thy name be join’d;
 Each to each unite and bless,
 Keep us still in perfect peace.

Heavenly, all-alluring *Dove*,
 Shed Thy over-shadowing love;
 Love, the sealing grace, impart,
 Dwell within our single heart.

¹²³Ibid., Discourse VIII, 417.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵“The Good Steward,” *Sermons*, 727.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Be to us what Adam lost;
Let us in Thine image rise,
Give us back our paradise.¹²⁶

V. “Through Jesus Christ Our Lord”

All our high hopes, lofty ideals, and yearnings for cleanness, our longings for perfect love, and desires to worthily magnify God’s Holy name are only possible through Jesus Christ our Lord. They utterly depend, as Wesley said in the sermon “The Wilderness State,” on “the virtue of that blood which was shed for us to ‘cleanse us from all sin.’”¹²⁷ Let us join our theology and our worship by praying:

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts be open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hid,
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
By the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit,
That we may perfectly love Thee,
And worthily magnify Thy holy name.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

¹²⁶*A Collection of Hymns . . .*, 1849, 514.

¹²⁷*Sermons*, 664.

METHODIST PENTECOST: THE WESLEYAN HOLINESS REVIVAL OF 1758-1763

by

Charles H. Goodwin

In the early, heady days of the Methodist revival Charles Wesley had prophesied to his brother John, “Your day of Pentecost is not fully come but I doubt not that it will: and you will then hear of persons sanctified, as frequently as you do now hear persons justified.”¹ The prophecy was dramatically fulfilled between the years 1758-1763. At the close of the latter year Wesley reflected:

Here I stood and looked back on the late occurrences. Before Thomas Walsh left England [on April 13, 1758²] God had begun that great work which He has continued ever since without any considerable intermission. During that whole time many have been convinced of sin, many justified, and many backsliders healed. But the peculiar work of this season has been what St. Paul calls “The perfecting of the saints.” Many persons in London, in Bristol, in York, and in various parts of both of England and Ireland, have experienced so deep and universal a change as it had not before entered into their hearts to conceive. After a deep conviction of inbred sin, of their total fall from God, they have been so filled with faith and love (and generally in a moment), that sin vanished, and they

¹W. R. Ward & R. P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*, Volume 21, *Journal and Diaries*, IV (1755-1765), (Abingdon, Nashville, 1992), 392.

²T. Jackson, *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 3, (London, 1871), 262.

found that from that time no pride, anger, desire, or unbelief. They could rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks.³

On the basis of what Wesley wrote about the revival of 1758-1763 it is possible to define a Wesleyan Methodist holiness revival as a combination of evangelical revivalism and Wesleyan perfectionism. An evangelical revival emphasizes the sinner's need for immediate justification by faith. Wesleyan perfectionism emphasizes the saint's need for immediate entire sanctification by faith. Justification delivers the sinner from guilt, condemnation and damnation. Entire sanctification delivers the saint from the power of inbred sin. The justified Christian seeks to conquer sin while the entirely sanctified Christian is the conqueror of sin.⁴

These two possibilities of the Christian life are offered evangelically as instantaneous transformations rendered by the Spirit of God in response to simple faith. It is the demand for an immediate decision which makes preaching evangelical and creates a revival. "Evangelicalism is most impressive, perhaps," it has been said, "for the intensity it bestows on our decision to choose, and from the consequences that flow from this. If we choose to accept Jesus as our saviour, then our lives will be in sublime revolution, every molecule a dance, every minute scrutinised."⁵

³Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 438-439.

⁴I am indebted to Melvyn E. Dieter for this definition of a holiness revival in his book, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Scarecrow Press, second edition, 1996), 17 & 27. Dieter, however, claims the holiness revival was an American phenomenon dating from the third decade of the nineteenth century. In my opinion it dates from the third decade of the eighteenth century following upon Wesley's reading of Jonathan Edwards' "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in Northampton, Massachusetts" which was published in England in 1737 and read by Wesley on October 9, 1738. The insight that would lead to Wesley's combination of Edwards' evangelical revivalism with his own perfectionist emphases was present on January 4, 1739 when Wesley recognized that there were two levels of Christian rebirth. A lower one associated with justification by faith and the remission of sins, and a higher one involving "a thorough, inward change by the love of God shed abroad in [the] heart." W. R. Ward & R. P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*, Volume 19, *Journal and Diaries*, 11 (1738-1743), (Abingdon, Nashville, 1992), 16 & 32.

⁵James Wood, "The God Child," *Sunday Telegraph Review*, October 20, 1996.

During a revival the revolutionary change wrought in a believer's life was often accompanied by a whole range of excessive emotional behaviour—sobs, tears, groans, cries of anguish, shouts of joy, falling into a dead faint, violent convulsions, the pounding of fists on floor, table, chair, pew, and the spontaneous, loud simultaneous praying of several people. The excitement could continue for days or weeks, and spread out from the local religious community to infect the surrounding area.

Some idea of what took place in a holiness revival can be gained from the revival which broke out at Otley, a village near Leeds in Yorkshire, on February 13, 1760. It was Wesley's considered opinion that it was the revival at Otley which inaugurated the climactic years of the Methodist Pentecost: "Here began that glorious work of sanctification," he wrote from the vantage point of 1781, "which had been nearly at a stand for twenty years."⁶

The revival began in a cottage meeting for prayer, hymn singing, and conversation about the necessity for sanctification. Many of those present were justified Christians who "had no doubt of the favour of God" but who were oppressed by "the burden they felt for the remains of indwelling sin, seeing in a clearer light than ever before, the necessity of deliverance from it." This sense of oppression and desire for deliverance became so intense that all thirty people present at the meeting began to groan in anguish. One, then another, began to cry out, "Lord deliver me from my sinful nature." These cries of anguish gave way to shouts of praise from those who experienced the instantaneous deliverance for which they were praying—"Blessed be the Lord God for ever, for he hath cleansed my heart" and "Praise the Lord with me, for he hath cleansed my heart from sin." The experience of those who had been sanctified influenced those who had not been justified to ask for pardon. Their sense of guilt and condemnation allied to their fear of hell provoked cries of "I am hanging over the pit of hell by a slender thread" and "I am in hell; O save me, save me." One proclaimed his deliverance in a markedly different tone of voice—"Blessed be the Lord, for he hath pardoned my sins." The group met again the next evening when "One received remission of sins and three more believed God had 'cleansed them from all unrighteousness.'"⁷

⁶Thomas Jackson, editor, *Works of John Wesley*, Volume XIII (London, 1865), 331.

⁷Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 240-241.

The years of revival were also years of many trials for Wesley. The trials consisted of Wesley's problems in maintaining unity within Methodism and with the Church of England. Wesley always maintained that Methodists were loyal members of the Church of England because they attended the worship of their parish church. The Anglican clergy, however, accused Wesley of being subversive through taking away their congregations and imparting false teaching on subjects like assurance of forgiveness. At the Conference of 1760 some of Wesley's own preachers pressed him for ordination on the grounds that they were already dissenters in everything but name. Early in 1760 the three Methodist preachers at Norwich had taken it upon themselves, in response to the requests of the local Methodists, to administer the Lord's Supper to them; and elsewhere Methodists did not attend their local parish church on the grounds they were made to feel unwelcome when they did so. Both Charles Wesley and William Grimshaw were opposed to the ordination of the Methodist lay preachers on the grounds that it would mean separation from the Church of England. Wesley, stiffened by the support of Howell Harris, rejected the demands of the preachers.⁸

The doctrine of Christian Perfection was another source of controversy, and ultimately of schism. In his review of the years 1758-1763 Wesley had to confess that of those who had claimed to be entirely sanctified: "Tis possible some who spoke in this manner were mistaken, and tis certain some have lost what they then received. A few (very few compared to the whole number) first gave way to enthusiasm, then to pride, next to prejudice and offence, and at last separated from their brethren. But although this laid a huge stumbling-block in the way, still the work of God went on. Nor has it ceased to this day in any of its branches. God still convinces, justifies, sanctifies. We have lost only the dross, the enthusiasm, the prejudice and offence. The pure gold remains, faith working by love, and we have ground to believe, increases daily."⁹

Wesley's optimism was justified. Abel Stevens, the author of the centennial history of Methodism, called the period between 1760-1770 "The Decade of Revivals." For Wesley, he says, it was a period of many

⁸A full account of the problems Wesley faced during this period provided by R. P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and The People Called Methodists* (Abingdon, Nashville, 1995), 199-214.

⁹Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 439.

trials: “But he closed this period, at the Conference of 1770, with results and prospects such had never before cheered him. He could hardly now fail to perceive that Methodism was to be a permanent fact in the religious history of his country. Without design on his part, its disciplinary system had developed into consistency and strength; its chapels dotted the land; its ministerial plans formed a network of religious labours which extended over England, Wales, Ireland, part of Scotland, and reached even to North America and the West India islands. Seven years before, when the number of circuits was first recorded, they were but thirty-one; they now amounted to fifty. Its corps of lay itinerants included one hundred and twenty-one men, besides as many, perhaps more, local preachers who were usually diligent labourers in their sectional spheres. The membership of its societies was nearly 30,000 strong.”¹⁰

The special interest of the revival of 1758-1763 lies in the fact that it was the first Methodist holiness revival. Methodism from its beginning was a holiness movement. God’s design in raising up the Methodist preachers was “Not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.”¹¹ The first Methodist revival of 1738-1743, however, although it did encourage converts to move on to perfection, was primarily an evangelical revival with the emphasis on “remission of sins through the death of Christ, and the nature of faith in his blood.” The necessity for pressing on to perfection was spoken of only occasionally—and in terms open to misunderstanding.¹² In his sermon on Christian Perfection preached in 1741 Wesley claimed that only the entirely sanctified were true Christians: “Ye are ‘perfect men’ being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It is of these chiefly I speak in the latter part of this discourse; these only are properly Christians.”¹³ A careful observer of Methodism at Wednesbury in 1744 understood this to mean Methodists were teaching “that every true Christian did arrive at such a degree of perfection as to live entirely free from all sin; and all those who had not made this progress were no Christians at all; That every person must receive the

¹⁰A. Stevens, *The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century called Methodism*, Volume 1 (London, 1865), 349.

¹¹Jackson, *Works*, Volume VIII, 288.

¹²Jackson, *Works*, Volume VIII, 273.

¹³W. S. Gunter, *The Limits of Love Divine* (Kingswood, 1989), 104.

Holy Ghost in a sensible manner, so as to feel and distinguish all its several motions, which sometimes would be quite violent.”¹⁴

To prevent such a dire misunderstanding of Methodist teaching the Conference of 1746 found it necessary to draw a distinction between the general use of the term “Sanctification to denote the gradual death to sin and growth in grace begun at justification; and the particular use of the term “Entire Sanctification” to denote that instantaneous total death to sin and entire renewal in the love and image of God achieved through faith which enabled the christian to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks. In the 1750 version of the sermon on Christian Perfection the closing phrase was altered to read, “these only are perfect Christians.”¹⁵

The 1758 Bristol Conference addressed itself to the question of the nature of entire sanctification because James Rouquet and Thomas Walsh, two of his most intelligent preachers, had caused great consternation and alarm at Dublin by saying that, “A believer till perfect is under the curse of God and in a state of damnation”, and “If you die before you have attained a state of [perfection] you will surely perish.”¹⁶ Accordingly the question was asked, “Do you say, ‘Everyone who is not saved from all sin is in a state of damnation?’ ” The answer was, “So far from it, that we will not say any one is in a state of damnation, that fears God and really strives to please Him.” Wesley also took the opportunity to emphasize that Christian Perfection did not exclude “all infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes.” What Christian Perfection did imply was, “The loving God with all the heart, so that every evil temper is destroyed, and every thought, and word,

¹⁴F. W. Hackwood, *Religious Wednesbury: Its Creeds, Churches and Chapels*. (1900), 69. A Dr. Wilkes reported that on Sunday June 12, 1743 some Methodists, “fell down in church, made unusual noises, and, like the French Prophets in Queen Anne’s time, pretended to receive the Holy Ghost.” Stebbing Shaw, *The Antiquities of Staffordshire, Volume 2*, (1797).

¹⁵Gunter, *The Limits of Love Divine*, 104.

¹⁶John Telford, editor, *The Letters of John Wesley*, Volume IV (Epworth, 1931), 10-11. Wesley must be held responsible for the misunderstanding of preachers like Walsh and Rouquet for he did teach that it was “necessary in the nature of things that a soul should be saved from all sin before it enters into glory.” But he also taught that “none that has faith can die before he is made ripe for glory.” And that those who persevered in “the full assurance of hope” right to the moment of death would be entirely sanctified “at the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body.” [Telford, *Letters IV*, 11, 13, 187]

and work springs from and is conducted to the end by the pure love of God and our neighbour.”¹⁷

In 1760 Wesley wrote his *Thoughts on Christian Perfection* in which he drew a distinction between committing a sin voluntarily as a deliberate transgression of a known law, and involuntarily as a consequence of “the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality.” The perfected Christian was still liable to these involuntary transgressions, but Wesley did not regard them as sins properly so called. Nevertheless, strictly speaking, there was no such thing as sinless perfection, and he did not use the term.

Some of Wesley’s preachers were not impressed either by his claims or by his definitions. Peter Jaco came away from the 1761 Conference without having been provided with any passages of scripture to support the experience of instantaneous Entire Perfection and saying “there is no state in this world which will absolutely exempt the person in it from sin.”¹⁸ Others continued to preach that entire sanctification meant freedom from all sin, for in July 1761 William Grimshaw complained to Wesley that some of his preachers were teaching that “He is a child of the devil who disbelieves the doctrine of sinless perfection; and he is no true Christian, who has not attained it.”¹⁹

Thomas Maxfield and George Bell took the doctrine to extremes. They claimed the perfected Christian lived a life of angelic sinlessness on earth. “Their view led to a dangerous combination of assertive infallibility and blatant antinomianism; people began to imagine that they would not die or that they were immune from temptation. Some, like Bell, also began to practice faith-healing and speaking in tongues.”²⁰

Despite all the controversy, misunderstanding, and abuse of the doctrine Wesley never lost confidence in the hope of attaining and enjoying entire sanctification in this life for many years prior to death. Wesley’s last recorded letter of 1763 was to Dorothy Furley of Bristol. He told her, “Salvation from sin is a deeper and higher work than either you or Sarah Ryan can conceive. You had a taste of it when you were justified; you since experienced the thing itself, only in a low degree; and God gave you

¹⁷L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, Volume II (London, 1876), 307.

¹⁸Gunter, *The Limits of Love Divine*, 211.

¹⁹Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, Volume II, 306.

²⁰Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 209-210.

His Spirit that you might know the things which He had freely given you. Hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end.. However, you are right in looking for a farther instantaneous change as well as a gradual one.”²¹

Here is the combination of the evangelical revival with the Wesleyan perfectionism which constitutes the distinctive Wesleyan holiness revival. This study looks at three aspects of the holiness revival of 1758-1763: the course of the revival, the reasons for its success, and the experience of entire sanctification. The conclusion considers the ways in which, if any, the revival prefigured the holiness revival of the nineteenth century.

A Kindled Flame: The Course of the Revival

John Wesley defined a revival as a great impression made upon a considerable number of people. Two factors were at work in creating this impression: human curiosity fostered by word of mouth throughout a community, and the preventing grace of God in drawing people to hear the gospel message of justification by faith. John Wesley described the course of revival thus: “Everywhere the work of God rises higher and higher, till it comes to a point. Here it seems for a short time to be at a stay; and then it gradually sinks again.”²² A revival, therefore, consists of three stages: an arousal of religious interest and excitement culminating in an intense period of religious excitement marked by numerous sinners being converted, saints sanctified, and backsliders restored, leading to a decline of excitement ending in acrimony and dissension.

The holiness revival of 1758-1763 followed this pattern of the arousal, climax and decline of religious excitement. The years of arousal were 1758 and 1759. The climactic years were 1760-1762. The decline set in during the latter part of 1762 and continued into 1763.

The Journal of John Wesley, the lives of the early Methodist preachers, and the local histories of the more important centres of Methodism all bear witness to the revival that took place between 1758-1763.

A. The years of mounting excitement, 1758 and 1759. The last Sunday of January 1758 saw, in London, “an uncommon blessing at West Street and a still greater at Spitalfields,” when Wesley was preaching. “Some could not refrain from crying aloud to God. And he did not cast

²¹Telford, *Letters*, Volume IV, 225.

²²Jackson, *Works*, Volume XIII, 352-353.

out their prayers.” Religious excitement had not abated nearly three weeks later when Wesley preached on Friday, February 13 “at West Street in the morning, at Spitalfields in the afternoon, and Bull and Mouth in the evening, everywhere to a crowded audience.”²³ On April 13, 1758 Thomas Walsh left for Ireland. Wesley followed suit on the April 28. The end of August found him at Cork where, on the last Sunday of the month, he “began meeting the children in the afternoon, though with little hope of doing them good But I had not spoke long on our natural state before many of them were in tears, and five or six so affected that they could not refrain from crying aloud to God. When I began to pray their cries increased, so that my voice was soon lost. I have seen no such work among children for eighteen or nineteen years.”²⁴

Thomas Lee’s first appointment as a travelling preacher was to the Lincolnshire Circuit in 1758. He travelled the arduous circuit for sixteen months spending two months in the eastern part and then two months in the western part: “There was a considerable increase in the societies, and many souls were brought to the saving knowledge of God.”²⁵ There were other signs of revival in the unusually large congregations drawn to hear Wesley preach in Liverpool, Bath, Shepton, Rye, Rolvedon, Northiam, Colchester and Norwich. A large congregation at Swansea enjoyed, “A very uncommon blessing.” At Cardiff “two or three were cut to the heart” during a cottage meeting.

Wesley spent November in the south-east of England. At Colchester he found that 12 persons had joined the Society within the space of three months. Moving to Wrestlingworth ,he preached in the parish church of the evangelical priest, Mr.Hicks, on the Thursday evening and the Friday morning of November 9 and 10. In the middle of the Friday morning sermon “A woman before me dropped down as dead as one had done the night before, in a short time she came to herself, and remained deeply sensible of her want of Christ.”²⁶ He then travelled the four miles to Everton in the company of John Berridge, the vicar of Everton. A few months before Berridge had undergone an evangelical conversion: “For many years he was seeking to be justified by his works but a few months ago,

²³Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 135.

²⁴Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 159.

²⁵Jackson, *The Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 4, 162.

²⁶Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 171.

he was thoroughly convinced that 'by grace' we 'are saved through faith.' Immediately he began to proclaim aloud the redemption that is in Jesus; and confirmed his own word exactly as he did at Bristol in the beginning, by working repentance and faith in the hearers and with the same violent outward symptoms. I preached at six in the evening and five in the morning and some were struck just as at Wrestlingworth."²⁷

Alexander Mather was appointed the superintendent minister of the York Circuit in 1759. The circuit "included the whole of the West Riding, the Ainsty, and portions of the North and East Ridings."²⁸ York had been made the head of this new circuit in 1758, and on July 15, 1759 Wesley preached in the new chapel capable of accommodating 400 to 500 people. At the society meeting at the close of the sermon he "began reading to the society an account of the late work of God at Everton; but could not get through. At first there were only silent tears on every side; but it was not long before several were unable to refrain from weeping aloud; and quickly a stout young man dropped down and roared as in the agonies of death. I did not attempt to read any further but began wrestling with God in prayer."²⁹ In Methodist history the combination of new circuit and new chapel frequently create the conditions for a revival. The outbreak of revival fervour which accompanied Wesley's meetings in the new chapel was felt throughout the circuit. Mather recorded that "1759 was the year the work at Whitney began, and we had a great outpouring of the spirit in many places."³⁰ There was another revival at Morley in the West Riding of Yorkshire. "A flame is suddenly broke out here," wrote Wesley, "where it is least of all expected. And it spreads wider and wider. When God will work who is able to stay his hand?"³¹

Signs of revival continued to be evident in Wesley's ability to attract large congregations wherever he went in the course of 1759. His meetings at Grimsby, Morpeth, and Haxey attracted the largest crowds ever seen in those places. The large congregations at Colchester, Mareham, North Ilkington, Selby, Acton Bridge, Bradford, Sunderland, Birstall and North

²⁷Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 171.

²⁸John Lyth, *Glimpses of Early Methodism in York* (London, 1885), 90.

²⁹Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 209 & Lyth, *Glimpses of Early Methodism in York*, 93.

³⁰Jackson, *The Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 2, 178.

³¹Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 211.

Scarle forced him to preach out of doors. He was fortunate that the summer of 1759 was exceptionally hot. At North and South Shields he witnessed the change that Methodism could make within a community. "the greatest part," he says of those who turned out to hear him preach, "seemed to hear as for their lives. So are these lions also become lambs."³² There were further deeply attentive congregations at Yarm, Hutton, Rudby, Guisborough and Heptonstall.

B. The high point of the revival, 1760-1762. 1760 got off to a good start. Wesley discovered in January that at Brentford "after a stop of ten or twelve years the work is broke out afresh." In London the signs of revival exhibited in the preceding two, years came to fruition during the ministry of Joseph Cownley when "an extraordinary work commenced in London: the Kingdom of the Redeemer was enlarged, many were added to the society and renewed in love."³³ The revival at Otley in February has already been described.

The faithful ministry of Christopher Hopper in Scotland, who preached every morning at five o'clock on Castle Hill in Aberdeen despite the bricks and dead animals that often flew about him, saw the work of the Lord prosper: "Sinners were converted, mourners were comforted, and saints built up in their most holy faith."³⁴

The progress of Methodism in 1760 was uneven. Wesley preached in the open air at Dudley without interruption. The former den of lions had been tamed by the steady behaviour of the Society which had made "an impression on most of the town." A similar transformation had taken place at Redruth where "A multitude of people, rich and poor, calmly attended. So is the roughest become one of the quietest towns in England." At Stockport "more and more hear the word of God and keep it."

At Limerick, however, Wesley found "a considerable decrease," and at Bandon the Society had declined from 290 to 233 members. Launceston contained "the small remains of a dead, scattered society." The society at Camelford was in a similar condition. The spirit of revival was present at St. Ives and at St. Just. Practically the whole, town attended Wesley's open air meetings at St. Ives, and St. Just had the largest congregation for fourteen years. In both places the people listened attentively and peni-

³²Ward & Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 203.

³³Jackson, *The Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 2, 26.

³⁴Jackson, *The Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 1, 210.

tently. Some wept with guilt at St.Ives, and at St.Just others were struck dumb. Wesley “re-joined to the society”, at St.Just, “ten or twelve backsliders.” At Plymouth Dock he found only 34 members left out of an original 70. At four services over the weekend of September 27 and 28 Wesley “strongly exhorted them to return to God” to such good effect that, “Many were convinced afresh, many backsliders cut to the heart.” Wesley left the society “once more between sixty and seventy members.”

1761 was a good year for Thomas Rankin. On the little, newly formed Sussex circuit. Faithful pastoral care and positive preaching brought about a revival in which, “Every day some one or another was brought to the knowledge of God; others filled with his pure love, and several awakened to a sense of their lost and undone state.”³⁵ It was also another good year for Methodism as a whole. “It seems God was pleased to pour out His spirit this year,” wrote Wesley, on every part of both of England and Ireland—perhaps in a manner we have never seen before, certainly not for twenty years.”³⁶

There were some black spots. There was “a poor shattered society” at Evesham, and Alnmouth was “a poor barren place, where there is as yet no fruit.” To offset these disappointments was the success story of Yarmouth where Howell Harris, an officer in the militia, had established a society in “a large and populous town . . . as eminent both for wickedness and ignorance as even any seaport in England.” Overflowing congregations at Birmingham encouraged Wesley to hope “perhaps the time is come for the gospel to take root even in this barren soil.” The ministry of Alexander Mather at Hulton Rudby in 1759 had resulted in a society “about eighty in number” housed in a new building by 1761.

From his preachers in the North of England Wesley learned that the widespread revival under way in Yorkshire was exceeded by the one taking place in Lincolnshire, where there had been no work like it since the time he had preached at Epworth on his father’s tomb. While Wesley was exhorting the society at Manchester to go on to perfection “a flame was kindled” which he hoped “neither men nor devils shall ever be able to quench.” Elsewhere love and harmony prevailed in societies formerly riven by disputes. Liverpool was “now entirely united together in judgment as well as in affection.” All disputes were now forgotten at Bolton, “and the Christians do

³⁵Jackson, *The Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 2, 174.

³⁶Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, volume 21, 342.

indeed love one another." God had "breathed a spirit of love and peace," at Norwich, "into all that remain united together."

The cause of Methodism was flourishing in the main urban centres of Methodism. Newcastle was on the verge of revival with many feeling "their hearts burn with a fervent desire of being renewed in the whole image of God." The same spirit of expectation was to be found at Gateshead Fell and Fewston. "The congregations were exceeding large," at Bristol, "and the people hungering and thirsting after righteousness." Every day "afforded fresh instances of persons convinced of sin or converted to God." The decline at Kingswood had been arrested: "The society, which had much decreased, being now increased again to near three hundred members, many of whom are now athirst for full redemption, which for some years they had almost forgot." The revival begun at London under Joseph Cownley in 1760 was still in progress, as was the revival at Brentford which had been "for many years . . . the darkest, driest spot of all in or near London. But now God has watered the barren wilderness, and it is become a fruitful field."

In the midst of all the success of 1761 the spectre of secession hung over the society at London—"the enemy was not wanting in his endeavours to sow tares among the good soil." Wesley was aware of the danger but "durst not use violence, lest in plucking up the tares I should root up the wheat also."

The first eleven days of 1762 were filled with revival fever. There were "near two thousand" at Spitalfields for communion on January 1. The preaching house at Haverhill was crowded, there was "a considerably larger congregation" at Steeple Bumstead, and the "exceeding large preaching place" at Barkway was jam-packed with people. "God both wounded and healed" at Harston (where Wesley preached for the first time by moonlight), at Melbourn, and at Stoke (Cambridgeshire). A typical spontaneous praying revival broke out during Wesley's sermon at Bottesham-Lode. He had no sooner named his text, "when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both," when "a murmur ran through the whole people, and many of them were in tears." The concern increased as Wesley went on preaching until it seemed everyone in the large congregation was affected. A woman near Wesley "cried with a bitter cry. But in a short time she shouted for joy. So did several others, so that it was not easy to tell whether more were wounded or comforted."³⁷

³⁷Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 349.

Revival fervour was much in evidence during Wesley's visit to Ireland. He "added a few members" to the society at Carrickfergus, "and left them in peace and love." He found "a poor shattered society reduced from fifty to eighteen members" at Newton[ards]. Wesley spent three days with the society, leaving behind him "between thirty and forty members full of desire, and hope, and earnest resolutions not to be 'almost but altogether Christians.'" He had no success at Newry where only thirty two members were left "of near one hundred". Bandon's decline had continued since his last visit in 1760 so that the society was once again "much lessened and dead enough". Three days at Waterford, however, saw "several backsliders . . . healed; many awoke out of sleep. And some mightily rejoiced in God their Saviour."

Wesley took advantage of his visit to Edenderry to clear up a misconception about his teaching on sanctification. Many people within the society had stopped reading his sermons because they thought the sermons "were nothing but the law" teaching that the holiness which qualified the soul for final salvation consisted of one's own good works. Wesley preached from Romans 10, 6-8 to those "toiling to work themselves unto holiness" to such good effect that at the ensuing society meeting at the close of the service two of the "old believers" were constrained to declare, "they believed God had cleansed them from all sin."

When Wesley had visited Limerick in 1760 he had found a considerable decrease in the society which he attributed to the lack of a preaching house, and he had said he would not visit them again until they were prepared to build one. Because they expressed a desire to comply with his wish the paid them an extended visit beginning on June 30. "A considerable sum of money" was willingly subscribed. Revival broke out at a Love-feast held on July 3: "Five persons desired to return thanks to God for a clear sense of his pardoning love, several others for an increase of faith and for deliverance from doubts and fears. And two gave a plain, simple account of the manner whereby God had cleansed their hearts, so that they now felt no anger, pride, or self-will, but continual love and prayer and praise."³⁸ The revival continued unabated for three weeks. On July 18 there were scenes of intense excitement after the Sunday service: "All were in floods of tears; they trembled, they cried, they prayed, they roared aloud, all of them lying on the ground." On July 25 Wesley was

³⁸Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, volume 21, 372.

informed there were ten women and thirteen men who confessed they were entirely sanctified.

Wesley had spent March 2-29 at Dublin. The congregations were uncommonly large, and by the time Wesley left, "several mourners had found peace with God, and some believe he has saved them from all sin. Many more are all on fire for this salvation, and a spirit of love runs through the whole people." Wesley returned July 24 to find "the flame not only continuing but increasing." The agent in fanning the flame of revival was John Manners, "a plain man of middling sense, and not eloquent but rather rude in speech." In the four months Wesley had been away about forty people had been sanctified, and "the same, if not larger number, had found remission of sins."

Revival was widespread throughout the North and the Midlands. Thomas Rankin moved to the Sheffield Circuit in 1762: "The work of the Lord prospered, but particularly in Sheffield and Rotherham. Many were added to the society, and several brought to know the justifying and sanctifying influences of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, with several other places, partook of the revival." On his journey through Cheshire and Lancashire in the summer of 1762 Wesley was confronted with acts and accounts of revival throughout the region. He found twelve people at Chester who "believed they were saved from sin; and their lives did not contradict their profession." At Manchester he received news of revivals which had broken out at Congleton in Staffordshire during a love-feast where "Five persons were assured of their acceptance with God . . . four believed he had not only forgiven their sins, but likewise cleansed them from all unrighteousness"; and at Burslem where a cold and dead society had been rekindled by the fire of God's love so that "Sometimes we have had two, at other times six or seven, justified in one week; others find the very remains of sin destroyed, and wait to be filled 'with all the fulness of God.'" At Liverpool Wesley found "such a work of God as had never been known there before," and spoke to 51 men women, and children "who believed they were sanctified."⁴¹ He also received news of a revival that had broken out at Bolton with "seven (if not more) justified, and six sanctified at one meeting, At

⁴¹Jackson, *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 3, 103.

Macclesfield he was told of a revival in which forty people had claimed entire sanctification.⁴²

In the summer of 1762 Thomas Taylor ventured into Pembrokeshire where he “formed a circuit, including about 250 persons by Christmas.”⁴³ The flame of revival burned brightly in parts of Cornwall during Wesley’s visit in the autumn. “A flame was kindled,” at Helston, “almost as soon as [Wesley] began to speak, which increased more and more all the time [he] was preaching, as well as during the meeting of the society.”⁴⁴ Many of the congregation at St. Hilary Downs “were athirst for God, and he did not deceive their hope.” “God was in the midst,” at Newlyn, “and many hearts broke in pieces.” “The society . . . more than doubled” at Port Isaac.

Wesley finished the year in London visiting the classes. He was confronted by many “hot spirits” of whom “some were vehement for, some against, the meetings for prayer which were in several parts of the town.” At Beech Lane he experienced for himself the reasons for the hostility towards the prayer meetings. The one at Beech Lane was “like a bear garden; full of noise, brawling, cursing, swearing, blasphemy and confusion.” He moved the meeting to the Foundry but the continued misbehaviour of the people convinced Wesley that George Bell “must not continue to pray at the Foundry.” Wesley, however, did give Bell two more opportunities to amend his ways at West Street on December 26, and at the Foundry on December 29, before deciding, reluctantly, that Bell would no longer be welcome at West Street and at the Foundry.

The revival began its decline from the October 1762 as Wesley’s energies were focussed increasingly on preserving the London society from the harmful effects of the activities of Thomas Maxfield and George Bell. At the end of 1762 Wesley wrote: “I now stood and looked back on the past year—a year of uncommon trials and uncommon blessings. Abundance have been convinced of sin; very many have found peace with God. And in London only, I believe, full two hundred have been brought into glorious liberty. And yet I have had more care and trouble in six months than in the several years preceding. What the end will be I know not. But it is enough that God knoweth.”

⁴²Jackson, *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 3, 104.

⁴³Jackson, *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 2, 83.

⁴⁴Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 388.

C. The decline of the revival, 1763. The controversy between Wesley and Maxfield and Bell came to a head between January 7 and February 5, 1763. Bell had prophesied the world would come to an end on February 28. Wesley met with Bell on January 7 in what proved to be an abortive attempt to “convince him of his mistakes.” On January 25 a Mrs. Coventry who was an intimate friend of Maxfield stormed into a meeting at which Wesley was present to throw down her class “her ticket, with those of her husband, daughter and servants” with the words, “Sir, we will have no more to do with you; Mr. Maxfield is our teacher.” On February 4 George Bell returned his class ticket, saying, “Blind John is not capable of teaching us; we will keep to Mr. Maxfield.” The following day Thomas Maxfield ceased to meet in class.

On February 9 Wesley wrote to the editor of the London Chronicle to report that Bell was no longer a member of his society, and that he did not believe “either that the end of the world or any signal calamity will be on the 28th instant.” On the day previous to the predicted catastrophe Bell and some companions waited on a mound near St. Luke’s hospital to view the destruction of London. He was arrested and led away to prison. On the evening of February 28 Wesley preached at Spitalfields on “Prepare to meet thy God”. He showed “the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world was due to end that night.” Nevertheless “many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed by an earthquake.”⁴⁵ Far away in the north-east, Darlington was in an uproar. When the fateful hour had passed the fears of the people gave way to resentment, and they threatened to pull down the preaching house, and to burn the Methodist preacher—who happened to be George Storey. Undeterred by the threats to his person, Storey held his meeting as advertised and quietened down the people by reading to them Wesley’s advertisement disclaiming his association with Bell’s prophecy as printed in the regional Newcastle paper.⁴⁶

The breach between Wesley and Maxfield was finalised on April 28 when Maxfield declined the opportunity to preach at the Foundry. The

⁴⁵A concise account of the controversy between Wesley and Maxfield is given by Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Controversy* (Wesley Heritage Press, 1987), 160-165.

⁴⁶Jackson, *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 5, 238.

controversy over perfection discredited the doctrine within Methodism. Wesley was dismayed to find at Yarm, in June, that “the good doctrine of Christian perfection had not been heard of there for some time. The wildness of our poor brethren in London has put it out of countenance above two hundred miles away.” In 1764 Wesley wrote to Charles: “The frightful stories wrote from London had made all our preachers in the North afraid even to mutter about perfection; and, of course, the people on all sides were grown good Calvinists in this point.”⁴⁷ As late as 1793, John Pawson could write from London, “We have a very blessed work here; but the old people are so afraid of George Bell’s work returning that they can hardly be persuaded it is the work of God.”⁴⁸

There was still much to encourage Wesley during 1763. In Scotland the congregations were large and composed of all classes of the community. Wesley was moved to declare, “Surely never was there a more open door.” The Methodist societies at Aberdeen and Edinburgh increased to the extent “that the want of chapels was seriously felt.” The foundations of the chapel at Aberdeen were laid in 1764, and those of the chapel at Edinburgh in 1765.⁴⁹ Congregations in Wales were large, attentive and well behaved. Thomas Taylor continued the work of revival begun at Cork by his predecessors Manningham and Pennington: “It did not decrease during my stay, but increased more abundantly.”⁵⁰

Congregations were large and well behaved in the West Country at Bristol, Shepton Mallet, and elsewhere. Thomas Rankin inherited the revival inspired by Wesley’s visit to Cornwall in 1762: “Over a thousand joined the societies including some hundreds entirely sanctified.”⁵¹ Methodism continued to flourish in parts of the north. Wesley found the work at Manchester “was greatly increasing.” John Pawson travelled the Howarth Circuit where “the work prospered wonderfully; and I believe there was much more good done in that circuit in that one year, than had been done in seven years before that time. In Keighley, also, and in the neighbourhood there was a glorious revival of the work of God, such as

⁴⁷Telford, *Letters*, Volume IV, 245 (quoted Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Controversy*, 165).

⁴⁸Gunter, *The Limits of Love Divine*, 225-226.

⁴⁹David Wilson, *Methodism in Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1850), 6.

⁵⁰Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 5, 26.

⁵¹Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 5, 177.

no one then living could remember to have seen.”⁵² Although Pawson does not mention the fact, William Grimshaw died on April 7, 1763. The revival may, in part, have been a response to this devastating loss. George Storey was at Wear-Dale one Sunday afternoon when “the Divine power descended upon the assembly; six persons, one after another, dropped down and, as they came to themselves cried out or mercy. The work from that time revived and spread through different parts of the Dale.” The 36 members of the Society were doubled as a result of the revival.

In conclusion it can be said that between 1758-1763, Wesleyan Methodism gained a foothold in Wales, established itself in Scotland, and consolidated its presence in the North, West, and Midlands of England.

A Gospel for the Saved: Reasons for the Success of the Revival

The preaching of entire sanctification been aptly described as “a gospel not merely for sinners, but for the saved.”⁵³ It was a challenge to the second generation of methodists “to discover higher levels of personal holiness and new sources of spiritual power in a second personal religious experience as definite and critical as their initial christian experience.”⁵⁴

The possibility of a higher life of grace came as a novelty to the second generation of methodists. Wesley’s exhortation to the Manchester society to on to perfection in 1762 seemed to many of them, “a new doctrine. However they all received it in love, and a flame was kindled,” wrote Wesley, “which I trust neither men nor devils shall ever be able to quench.”⁵⁵

The novelty of holiness preaching created much sharp discord within the methodist societies. Thus, in the spring of 1763, George Storey, somewhere on his round of the Dale Circuit, was overtaken by his colleague Samuel Meggot who was in great distress. Meggot had been overtaken by events of his own devising. To infuse new life into the Barnard Castle society Meggot had advised them “to observe every Friday with fasting and prayer. The very first Friday they met together, God broke in upon them in a wonderful manner . . .” said Wesley in his

⁵²Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 5, 28.

⁵³J. B. Figgis quoted by Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 153.

⁵⁴Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 6.

⁵⁵Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 313.

account of the revival. Six or seven of the members created confusion, uncertainty, and animosity by claiming to have been entirely sanctified. Meggot galloped off to find George Story to sort out the mess for him since it was Storey's preaching which had created the opportunity for claims to entire sanctification to be made. On his arrival at Barnard Castle Storey was greeted with hostility as "a setter forth of strange doctrines," and was just about to stop preaching, "when in an instant the power of God descended in a wonderful manner. The assembly were all in tears, some praising God for pardoning mercy, and others for purifying grace. And even those who could not yet understand this new doctrine were constrained to say, 'If we do not believe it, we shall never speak against it any more.' The snare of the enemy was effectually broken; and from that time the work spread not only through the town, but also in the neighbouring societies."⁵⁶

Holiness preaching, as Henry Rack points out, "offered a new incentive" to methodists for whom, "the original strangeness and hock value of conversion had worn off."⁵⁷ Alexander Mather's "conviction of the need of a further change was abundantly increased by the searching preaching" of Thomas Walsh.⁵⁸ Mather, in his turn, influenced Francis Asbury and Richard Whatcoat at Wednesbury in 1761. Asbury was fifteen years of age when he heard Mather preach: "young as I was, the Word of God made a deep impression on my heart which brought me to Jesus Christ, who graciously justified my guilty soul through faith in his precious blood; and soon showed me the excellency and necessity of holiness."⁵⁹ Whatcoat's sense of need for the blessing of entire sanctification, and his confidence in obtaining it was the result of "frequently hearing Mr. Mather speak upon the subject."⁶⁰

It was the persistent, searching preaching of John Oldham on the need for entire sanctification at Macclesfield which finally bore fruit during eight days in March 1762. At the Monday night preaching service

⁵⁶Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 5, 239.

⁵⁷H. D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast. John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Epworth, 1989), 342.

⁵⁸Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 2, 189.

⁵⁹J. Lewis, *Francis Asbury: Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Epworth, 1927), 45.

⁶⁰Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 5, 315.

Oldham's preaching, coupled with news of revival at Bolton, Burslem and Congleton, created an expectation for revival which broke out as people were leaving the room at the close of the service. "A man, in whom the spirit of God had been striving mightily, fell down on his knees and cried aloud for mercy." Others present were affected in the same manner. The meeting continued until six o'clock in the morning, and was resumed every night until the following Monday.⁶¹

In addition to preaching on the need for entire sanctification, Wesley also emphasized the importance of those who had been sanctified to bear public testimony to their experience. "It requires a great degree of watchfulness to retain the perfect love of God," declared Wesley, "and one great means of retaining it is frankly to declare what God has given you, and earnestly to exhort all the believers you meet with to follow after full salvation."⁶²

The love-feast provided the ideal opportunity for testimonies to be given as Wesley explained to the crowd assembled at Birstall on July 19, 1761: "The design of a love-feast," he told them, "is a free and familiar conversation, in which everyman, yea, and woman, has liberty to speak whatever may be to the glory of God." From 1761 onwards the love-feast became a popular venue for the outbreak of revival. On April 27, 1762 Wesley preached at Clonmain in the largest preaching house in the north of Ireland. After the sermon Wesley held a love-feast: "It was a wonderful time. God poured out His spirit abundantly. Many were filled with consolation, particularly two who had come from Lisburn, one a lifeless backslider, the other a girl of sixteen, who had been some time slightly convinced of sin. God gave her a clear evidence of his love—and indeed in so uncommon a manner that it seemed her soul was all love. One of our brethren was constrained openly to declare, he believed God had wrought this change in him."

Wesley also circulated written accounts of the revivals taking place throughout the British Isles together with testimonies to entire sanctification in order to publicize the experience. These accounts also led to revival taking place. The soldier, Duncan Wright, was stationed at Galway

⁶¹B. Smith, *The History of Methodism in Macclesfield* (London, 1875), 64-66.

⁶²Quoted by D. A. Whedon, "John Wesley's Views of Entire Sanctification," *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1862, 1093.

during 1761-63. He records that: "Our little society at Galway was wonderfully blessed. As there was at this time a glorious revival in many parts of the three kingdoms, I communicated to them the intelligence I received of the work; and the fire soon kindled among them also."⁶³ Thomas Rankin went to hear John Wesley preach at Sunderland in June 1761. "His preaching was attended with a peculiar blessing to my soul, in giving me a more clear conception of purity of heart, and the way to obtain it by faith alone; but when he read some letters in the society, giving an account of the work of God in London, and some other places, I was so deeply affected with a sense of inbred sin, that I was almost overwhelmed by it."⁶⁴

The Methodist Pentecost was essentially a praying revival. Prayer was the democratic voice of Methodism. In a revival anyone could pray irrespective of age, sex, occupation, education or social status. Prayer was the spontaneous expression of popular fear, aspiration, fulfillment, anguish and joy. When a revival broke out preaching frequently had to give way to prayer. After preaching to a large crowd at Stoke in Cambridgeshire in the open air, Wesley moved into a cottage for a meeting with the local society but "the excitement was so intense that "after speaking a few words" Wesley "went to prayer. A cry began and soon spread through the whole company, so that my voice was lost."

Prayer also commandeered the traditional, exclusive, society meeting held after the preaching service and turned it into a spontaneous, open, prayer meeting. Thomas Maxfield preached at Spitalfields on Sunday, March 15, 1761: "After the sermon, the power of God was very present. Many were groaning and weeping, when Sarah Webb, falling down to the ground, cried aloud, declaring that God had set her soul at liberty. At the same time one at the bottom of the chapel declared, The Lord had made him whole. The flame now began to spread, and everyone seemed to feel, God was in that place."

Alexander Mather noted what was taking place and in 1760 deliberately changed the society meeting at the close of the preaching service at Wednesbury into a prayer meeting led by his wife as a technique for working up a revival. It was a success. Some of the converts at Wednesbury set up their own prayer meeting at Darlaston. There, a young appren-

⁶³Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 2, 117.

⁶⁴Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 5, 168.

tice, Thomas Day, experienced a dramatic conversion which he proceeded to declare openly. This sparked off a revival so that “even the wicked cried for mercy” when they heard him. Eighty-five new members were added to the existing forty-eight of the society. Ground was purchased and a preaching house built in 1761. The revival spread throughout the circuit: “In one night it was common to see five or six (and sometimes more) praising God for His pardoning mercy. And not a few in Birmingham, Dudley, and Wolverhampton, as well as in Wednesbury and Darlaston, clearly testified that the blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed them from all sin. Meantime the societies increased greatly.” The older members were appalled by the noise and disorder of the prayer meetings. Their objections were upheld by retired travelling preacher living in the area, and by other preachers passing through on their way to conference. Mather was forced to discontinue the prayer meeting with the result that: “Immediately the work began to decay, both as to its swiftness and extensiveness . . . for want of seconding by prayer meetings the blow given in the preaching.”⁶⁵

Mather was thirty years ahead of his time. It was William Bramwell who would ultimately make it acceptable to work up a revival, and it was between 1820 and 1850, according to William Dean, that the after service society meeting was supplanted by the prayer meeting.⁶⁶

Another innovation was the setting up of independent cottage meetings devoted to praying for holiness revival. John Manners informed Wesley from Dublin in May, 1762: “There are now three places in the city wherein as many as have opportunity assemble day and night to pour out their soul before God for the continuance and enlargement of His work.” In November, 1762 Wesley found the impetus of the London revival was being sustained by “meetings for prayer which were in several parts of the town.”

Elsewhere in 1762 weekly cottage prayer meetings were being held at Dukinfield and surrounding villages by Matthew Mayer and John Mor-

⁶⁵Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, Volume 2, 179-181. Billy Brammah tried the same technique at Yarm in 1763 with the same result. Wesley had to warn Brammah that his wife’s prayer meetings were causing offence by their unseemly disorder and enthusiasm: “Either Alice Brammah must take advice or the Society warned to keep away from her.” Telford, *Letters*, Volume V, 116.

⁶⁶W. W. Dean, “The Methodist Class Meeting: The Significance of its Decline,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Volume XLIII, 45.

ris,⁶⁷ At Sheffield by William and Alice Brammah,⁶⁸ and at Halifax by James Parker, John Holroyde and Isaac Wade.⁶⁹

The years of the revival were also the years of the global conflict between England and France for commercial supremacy in North America, the Caribbean, West Africa and India. It is possible that the noise, disorder, and irregular hours of Methodist revival meetings provided an emotional outlet for the excitement and tension engendered in national life by the fears and anxieties of being at war. The significant revival at Otley on February 13, 1760 followed soon after the naval victory at Quiberon Bay on November 20, 1759 which put a decisive end to mounting fears among all levels of society of a French invasion.

Five reasons for the success of the revival between 1758-1763 have been suggested: the novelty of the call to holiness to the second generation of Methodists accustomed to the call for justification, the preaching of Wesley and his helpers on the need for holiness, the publicity given to the experience by written and verbal testimonies, the use of prayer meetings, and the general excitement of the years of warfare with France.

Souls Struggling Into Life: The Experience of Sanctification

The aim of this section is to examine the nature of the experience of entire sanctification, and to see how valid it was in the face of the criticism that it was a case of self-deception, merely the work of one's own imagination.⁷⁰ Wesley addressed himself to the problem of how it could be known that "one is saved from all sin." He came up with what he considered to be three reasonable proofs required of anyone who claimed to be perfected: "(1) If we had clear evidence of his exemplary behaviour for some time before this supposed change. This would give us reason to believe he would not 'lie for God,' but speak neither more nor less than he

⁶⁷W. D.Lawson, *Wesleyan Methodist Local Preachers* (London, 1873), 315.

⁶⁸J. Dunston, "Billy and Alice Brammah, Partners in Ministry," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Volume XXXVI, 173.

⁶⁹L. F. Church, *More About the Early Methodists* (Epworth, 1949), 145.

⁷⁰Wesley reflected on the testimony of a woman at Barnard Castle who claimed to have been sanctified and asked himself: "What, however, can be inferred if she 'should be cold or dead in ten weeks or ten months time'—shall I say, 'She deceived herself; this was merely the work of her own imagination?'" (Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 414).

felt. (2) If he gave a distinct account of the time and manner wherein the change was wrought, with sound speech that could not be reproved. And (3) if it appeared that all his subsequent words and actions were holy and unblameable.”⁷¹

It was just as important for the person who claimed to have been perfected to be absolutely sure of the reality of his experience. It was not sufficient “to feel all love and no sin” for several had experienced this for a time before their souls were fully renewed: “None therefore ought to believe that the work was done, till there is added the testimony of the Spirit witnessing his entire sanctification as clearly as his justification.”⁷²

A classic description of what was involved in being entirely sanctified is found in the testimony of a certain M— S— of Wednesbury recorded by Wesley in March 1760.

There was a parallel relationship in Wesley’s thought between justification and sanctification. “The one of these great truths does exceedingly illustrate the other,” Wesley wrote. “Exactly as we are justified by faith so are we sanctified by faith.”⁷³ The first proof required of the sanctified person was a genuine experience of justification expressed in a changed life successful in conquering sin. The testimony of M— S— begins, therefore with an account of her awakening to her need for pardon, and her experience of justification.

She was born April 8, 1736. Her father died when she was four years of age, and her mother died when she was aged eleven years. She was not a religious person but did turn to God in prayer for comfort in times of severe trouble. Her brother must have been a methodist because he persuaded her to attend a Methodist cottage meeting when she was seventeen years old. She liked what she heard and began to attend regularly. She was eighteen when she was awakened to her spiritual condition as a lost sinner. “For three weeks I was in deep distress,” she told Wesley, “which made me cry to God day and night. I had comfort once or twice, but checked it, being afraid of deceiving myself.” She was justified in December, 1754, “as Mr. Johnson was preaching one morning at five o’clock in Darlston, my soul was so filled with the love of God that I had much ado to help crying out. I could only say, ‘Why me, Lord, why me?’ When I

⁷¹J. Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Epworth 1979), 48.

⁷²Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 52.

⁷³Quoted by D. A. Whedon, *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 1862, 1019.

came home I was exceeding weak, having also a great pain in my head. But all was sweet; I did not wish it to be otherwise. I was happy in God all the day long. And so I was for several days.”

We now come to the first proof. Inward sanctification began, according to Wesley, “In the moment we are justified. The seed of every virtue is then sown in the soul. From that time the believer gradually dies to sin and grows in grace.”⁷⁴ M— S—, therefore, goes on to say, “*From this time I never committed any known sin, nor ever lost the love of God, though I found abundance of temptations and many severe struggles. Yet I was more than conqueror over all and found them easier and easier.*”

This account conforms to the statement that “A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin. This is the glorious privilege every Christian, yea, though he be but a babe in Christ.”⁷⁵ And yet, the justified Christian has only been born again in a lower sense because “sin remains in him; yea the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout in in spirit, soul and body.”⁷⁶ The justified Christian still has to contend against pride, desire, self-will and anger. And so M— S— goes on to describe her awakening to her need for entire sanctification to complete what justification had begun. “*About Christmas 1758 I was deeply convinced there was a greater salvation than I had attained. The more I saw of this and the more I prayed for it, the happier I was. And my desires and hopes were continually increasing for above a year.*”

Two points can be made about this part of the testimony. The popular, prevalent view was that just as justification should be preceded by “a considerable tract of time” marked by much emotional toil and suffering so should sanctification. Wesley dismissed this concept. “A year or a month is the same with God as a thousand. If He wills, to do is present with Him. Much less is there any necessity for much suffering. It is therefore or duty to pray and look for full salvation every day, every hour, every moment, without waiting till we have done or suffered more.”⁷⁷ Where one woman at Dublin was justified for seven years and seeking sanctification for five, a Mr. Timmins was convinced of sin for only two

⁷⁴Jackson, *Works* Volume VIII, 374.

⁷⁵Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 19.

⁷⁶Jackson, *Works*, Volume VIII, 374.

⁷⁷Quoted I. E. Page & J. Brash, *Scriptural Holiness as Taught by John Wesley* (London, 1891), 66-67.

months before being justified, and sanctified a mere ten days later—“After a violent struggle he sunk down as dead. He was cold as clay. After about ten minutes he came to himself and cried, ‘A new heart, a new heart.’ He said he felt himself in an instant entirely emptied of sin and filled with God.”⁷⁸

The second point is the manner in which entire sanctification should be sought. Wesley said it one should wait for “the fulfilling of the promise in universal obedience; in keeping all the commandments; in denying ourselves, and taking up the cross daily. These are the general means which God hath ordained for our receiving his sanctifying grace. The particulars are prayer, searching the scriptures, communicating, and fasting.”⁷⁹ In the testimony of M— S— it is prayer which is emphasized as the constant expression of the soul’s intimate communion with God. Presumably the other methods are taken for granted.

Wesley then recorded the second proof for entire sanctification—“a distinct account of the time and manner wherein the change was wrought,” “On January 30, 1760 Mr. Fugill talked with one who thought she had received the blessing. As she spoke, my heart burned within me, and my desire was enlarged beyond expression. I said to him, ‘O sir, when shall I be able to say as she says?’ He answered, ‘Perhaps tonight.’ I said, ‘Nay. I am not earnest enough.’ He replied, ‘That thought may keep you from it.’ I felt God was able and willing to give it then, and was unspeakably happy. In the evening as he was preaching, my heart was full, and more and more so, till I could contain no more. I wanted only to be alone, that I might pour out my soul before God; and when I came home I could do nothing but praise and give him thanks.”

In this second proof are echoes of three emphases about perfection made in the preface to the second volume of hymns published in 1741. Firstly that entire sanctification is “receivable by mere faith, and hindered only by unbelief”. In the case of M— S— her unbelief was her sense of a lack of earnestness. Secondly that mere faith, “and consequently the salvation it brings, is . . . given in an instant.” Thirdly “that instant may be now.”⁸⁰ M— S— feels that, “God was able and willing to give it then.” There is also the “unspeakable happiness” of M— S— paralleled by the

⁷⁸Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 376.

⁷⁹Jackson, *Works*, Volume VIII, 374.

⁸⁰Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 27.

experience of a woman at Barnard Castle who said the experience of sanctification was as different from that of justification “as the noonday light from that of daybreak,” and the woman at Dublin who described the difference between the love of God she enjoyed as a justified Christian, and the love of God she now enjoyed as a sanctified Christian, “as if her soul was taken into heaven.”⁸¹

Wesley ends the testimony of M— S— with the third proof. “From that moment I have felt nothing but love in my heart; no sin of any kind. I trust I shall never sin any more, nor any more offend God. I never find any cloud between God and me; I walk in the light continually. I do ‘rejoice evermore, and pray without ceasing.’ I have no desire but to do and suffer the will of God. I aim at nothing but to please him. I am careful for nothing, but in all things make my requests known to Him in thanksgiving and I have a continual witness in my self that whatever I do, I do to His glory.”

There is such a close resemblance between this part of the testimony, and the following extract from “The Character of a Methodist” that heavy editing on the part of Wesley is indicated: “From Him, therefore, he cheerfully receives all, saying, ‘Good is the will of the Lord’; and whether He giveth or taketh away, equally blessing the Name of the Lord. Whether in ease or pain, whether in sickness or health, whether in life or death, he giveth thanks from the ground of the heart to Him who orders it for good; into whose hands he hath wholly committed his body and soul, ‘as into the hands of a faithful creator.’ He is therefore ‘careful for nothing’, as having cast all his care on Him that, careth for him’; and ‘in all things resting on Him, after ‘making his requests known to Him with thanksgiving.’”⁸²

Wesley did not succeed in persuading the majority of either his preachers or the Methodist people of the validity or value of the experience of entire sanctification. At the height of the revival in 1762 he complained, “The more I converse with the believers in Cornwall, the more I am convinced that they have sustained great loss for want of the hearing the doctrine of Christian perfection clearly and strongly enforced.”⁸³ In 1768 he was so conscious of fighting a losing battle that he asked his

⁸¹Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, Volume 21, 414 & 378.

⁸²Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 11-12.

⁸³Quoted in M. R.Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford, 1978), 434.

brother Charles, “Shall we go on asserting perfection against all the world, or shall we quietly let it drop?”⁸⁴ He came back strongly, however, at the Conference of 1769 to press home the value of insisting on the experience of instantaneous sanctification before the moment of death. All the preachers were agreed, he argued, that “from the moment we are justified, there may be a gradual sanctification, a growing in grace, a daily advance in the knowledge and love of God.” All the preachers were convinced that they “must insist on the gradual change; and that earnestly and continually.” Wesley then went on to say that the value of the hope of instantaneous, entire sanctification lay in the incentive it gave to pursue gradual change more earnestly and continuously—“constant experience shows the more earnestly they expect this, the more swiftly and steadily does the gradual work of God go on in their soul; the more watchful they are against all sin, the more careful to grow in grace, the more zealous of good works, and the more punctual in their attendance on all the ordinances of God. . . . Destroy this hope, and that salvation stands still or, rather, decreases daily.”⁸⁵

Wesley failed to carry his preachers and his people with him. In 1772 he admitted, “I find almost all our preachers in every circuit have done with Christian perfection. They say they believe it; but they never preach it, or not once in a quarter.”⁸⁶

The main reason for Wesley’s failure may lie in the impression given by the doctrine of Christian perfection that it was a denial of what was popularly understood to be the central tenet of the doctrine of justification by faith—namely, “entry to heaven is not earned as a reward for good works, but is conferred by the unaided grace of God, signified by faith in the Lord Jesus.” In other words, the Christian believer is saved in spite of himself.⁸⁷ Wesley’s insistence that faith must express itself in works worthy of repentance and rebirth or perish, and that holiness was the only acceptable qualification for heaven, seemed to place an unwelcome,

⁸⁴Watts, *The Dissenters*, 434.

⁸⁵Jackson, *Works*, Volume VIII, 316.

⁸⁶Watts, *The Dissenters*, 434.

⁸⁷F. Fernandez-Armesto & D. Wilson, *Reformation. Christianity and the World 1500-2000* (Bantam Press, 1996), 82-83.

papist emphasis upon good works despite Wesley's protestations and carefully worded defences to the contrary.⁸⁸

Michael Watts' verdict is, "In the eyes of rank and file Methodists there was no necessary connection between their conversion experiences and Wesley's teaching on Christian perfection, and they preferred the simple Evangelical message of justification by faith to their leader's constant exhortations to strive towards the goal of High Church ascetics."⁸⁹ Mainstream Methodism chose the way of justification, rebirth and gradual sanctification—to obey imperfectly the perfect will of God.

Conclusion

Wesley lost the battle in Britain but won the war in North America. The three most influential preachers he sent to America, Thomas Rankin, Francis Asbury and Richard Whatcoat were all traditional Wesleyan Holiness preachers and staunch exponents of holiness revival. These men engaged in vigorous, pointed, emotive preaching reinforced with noisy, disorderly prayer meetings. Full scope was given for lay witness and participation leading to uninhibited outbursts of intense religious excitement and dramatic increases in Methodist membership. The "American Pentecost" took place between 1784-1792 when 60,000 new members and 183 new preachers were added to the Church. "The meetings" conducted by the preachers, "were often scenes of the most intense spiritual energy. Men fell down as dead under their word; others were roused to combat. . . . The cries of the mourners mingled with the shouts of those who had

⁸⁸Thomas Jackson had to devote a paragraph of his centenary history of Methodism to refuting the assertion of a Mr. Conder that the Wesleyan Connexion taught a doctrine substantially the same as the Church of Rome to the effect "that men are justified by personal holiness." T. Jackson, *The Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism* (London, 1839), 165.

⁸⁹Watts, *The Dissenters*, 434. The reference to Wesley's high Church ascetics is a reminder that Wesley's views on holiness were a legacy of his pre-conversion days as a High Churchman. It was in 1725 that he saw the necessity for "purity of intention," the dedication of the whole of life to God. In 1726 he saw the necessity for "the religion of the heart"—"the giving even of all my life to God . . . would profit me nothing, unless I gave all my heart to Him." In 1729 he accepted the Bible "as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion." In his sermon on the "Circumcision of the Heart" preached in 1733 he brought these three insights together as the "mind of Christ" which was summed up as the law to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. See Wesley, *Plain Account*, 5-7.

found peace and the assurance of salvation. Often the preachers themselves were overcome and dissolved in tears. The meetings lasted for hours. Men and women were eager for salvation, and, being saved, longed for the life of entire sanctification. Many were filled with the perfect love of God and man, and lived and died in a heavenly mind. Multitudes came to hear and see; some with good intent, some with ill. But none left as they came. Both were conscious of the power of the Spirit. And both spread the news, and tended to increase the audience of the preachers.”⁹⁰

The enthusiasm and lack of restraint of holiness revival brought the movement into disrepute within methodism as the church became more respectable, especially in urban centres. When Nathan Bangs was appointed as the superintendent of the New York churches he was offended by “the spirit of pride, presumption, and bigotry, impatience of scriptural restraint and moderation, clapping of the hands, screaming, and even jumping, which marred and disgraced the work of God.”⁹¹

Traditional holiness revival went into decline in America as in England but only for a short time in the late 1820s and early 1830s. In 1835 Sarah Lankford and her sister, Phoebe Palmer, began to hold “Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness” in their homes. Thus began the great holiness revival of the nineteenth century which brought into being the seventh largest family of Christian churches in Protestantism. American Methodist revivalists like James Caughey and the Palmers reintroduced classic Wesleyan Holiness preaching into British Methodism where it was championed by people like John Brash, Thomas Champness, and Samuel Chadwick, and institutionalized in the Stockport Convention and Cliff College.⁹² History vindicated John Wesley’s confidence in his doctrine of Christian Perfection.

A personal note to close on. The first book I was given to read after my conversion was Oswald Chamber’s “My Utmost for His Highest.” I didn’t understand the book but it did inspire me to pray for holiness one night in the quiet of my “den.” As I was praying I felt the presence of God’s holiness. The hairs stood up on the back of my neck in terror and I

⁹⁰Lewis, *Francis Asbury: Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 46.

⁹¹R. Carwardine, *Trans-atlantic Revivalism: Popular Revivalism in Britain and America 1790-1865* (Greenwood, 1978), 12.

⁹²See D. W. Bebbington, “The Holiness Movements in British and Canadian Methodism in the late Nineteenth Century” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Volume 50, 203-228.

fled out of the room onto the landing of our house. Four years later I found myself on the platform of Wolverhampton Railway station waiting for the train to take me to the Royal Artillery base camp at Oswestry to begin my term of National Service. I opened my Bible at random for a reassuring word of scripture at Joshua 1.9, "Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." I believed the promise and for the next five months between August 1951 and January 1952 lived a Christian life on the highest plane of love I have ever experienced. It came silently and unannounced, and it left as suddenly and silently as it came. I'm glad I didn't know what had happened to me, and I'm glad there was no one around to question me and to persuade me that I may have been leading a consciously sinless Christian life. The essence of the experience was a desire to serve God by being of service to my fellow recruits and by keeping myself unspotted by the world. There was not the slightest inclination to check my spiritual pulse or to examine my motives and feelings. I was content to lead my life as love led me.

This is the essence of holiness for me, and the finest Methodist exemplar of it for me is William Bramwell. I end this study by quoting what James Everett wrote about his benevolence in "The Wesley Banner and Revival Record" of September, 1850.

Mr. Bramwell's indifference to mere worldly comfort or enjoyment made it an easy thing for him to practise what is often termed such by mere courtesy, benevolence. Although his means were ever limited, something was regularly abstracted from his scanty income for the relief of the necessitous. Money, provisions, and wearing-apparel, were dispensed with a liberality which, in his circumstances, savoured of indiscretion. He has often bestowed the last penny he had in hand upon some distressed individual. It was seldom he was master of two coats at a time; the first deserving applicant was sure to become the owner of one. Whilst in the Salford circuit, a friend one morning told him of a local preacher who was in great poverty. On returning home in the evening, this friend found a note from Mr. Bramwell requesting that he would forward a coat which accompanied the letter, to the poor brother, without mentioning the matter to anyone. The garment proved to be the very same which the donor had been wearing at the time. There were, of course, many cases brought under his

notice in which he could furnish no appropriate relief. In one instance he was fortunate in affording considerable consolation to a pious widow in a way which he perhaps little expected. At his request, she handed him a short statement of her debts and resources, exhibiting, alas, a most melancholy deficiency! The minister glanced at the contents of the paper, and saw at once that it was a case for which he could find no remedy, except by application to heaven. Hastily scribbling some Hebrew characters upon the back of the paper, he folded it up and returned it to her without a word. She took it, and probably thinking that the document was a precious memento of some spiritual interference to be exerted on her behalf, carried it about with her for several years, as an Eastern would an amulet. The minister had doubtless consecrated the ceremony by silent prayer, and calculated to some extent upon the efficacy of his future supplications. The consequence was, that the anxiety of the poor widow was relieved by this interview, and the calamity she had anticipated was in fact averted. The scrap of paper now lies before us, but the Hebrew characters are scarcely intelligible. Long after the incident had occurred she continued to regard it with peculiar veneration. His charity sometimes displayed itself in a rather curious form; he would give, to save others who might be crippled in their circumstances the necessity of being benevolent. "One year," says Dr. Taft, "when the circuit debt at Salford was £200, Mr. Bramwell was solicitous that ten persons might be found, if possible, to contribute £20 each, and he would most gladly have been one of the ten, that an additional and a very oppressive collection might not be made upon our people in general. Had his offer been accepted in that case, he must have given his all." This unrestrained benevolence soon dissipated his private property, and largely encroached upon his professional stipend. Everything that he had to give he gave without scruple. He would have hailed with pleasure any scheme for making "all things common" again amongst the disciples of Christ. He would deny himself what are deemed indispensable comforts. Thus in Salford he refused to have a fire in his "study," because the Society was then poor and over-burdened. He frequently enjoined the strictest frugality upon Mrs. Bramwell, although her management was so economical that none but a man determined to reduce his household expendi-

ture to the very narrowest limits would have thought a caution of the kind necessary “Ellen,” he would say, “remember that these things are paid for by the pence of the poor, as well as by the pounds of the rich.”⁹³

⁹³*The Wesley Banner and Revival Record*, 1850, 342-343.

BRETHREN IN CHRIST: AN UNEASY SYNTHESIS OF HERITAGE STREAMS

by

Luke Keefer¹

Two questions are central here. In relation to the Brethren In Christ denomination (hereafter BIC): (1) “What are the streams of church tradition that comprise this tradition?” and “What is the nature and extent of the integration of these streams in the current denominational identity?” I will address both of these questions and in that order, since the theological analysis of the second question is decisively affected by the historical evidence associated with the first.

What Are the Streams of This Heritage?

With the pioneering work of Asa Climenhaga in 1942² and the focused research since 1960 of Owen Alderfer,³ Carlton Wittlinger,⁴ Mar-

¹This is an edited version of the article by Luke Keefer titled “The Three Streams in Our Heritage: Separate or Parts of a Whole?” in *Brethren In Christ History & Life* XIX:1 (April 1996), 26-63.

²A. W. Climenhaga, *History of the Brethren in Christ Church* (Nappanee, IN: E. V. Publishing House, 1942).

³Owen H. Alderfer, “The Mind of the Brethren in Christ: A Synthesis of Revivalism and the Church Conceived as Total Community” (Ph. D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1964).

⁴Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1978). This is the standard denominational history.

tin Schrag,⁵ and E. Morris Sider,⁶ it has been a common consensus that traditionally three streams have made up this heritage. They are Anabaptism, Pietism, and Wesleyanism. Within the last decade, however, there appears to have emerged a fourth stream, Evangelicalism.⁷ It will be helpful to examine each of these streams in sequence, noting their characteristic qualities and investigating how the BIC is shaping and being shaped by these streams into a broader, more eclectic identity. With this shaping comes the concern that currently the fourth stream may be excessively dominant at the expense of the denomination's classic heritage synthesis.

Anabaptism

Current studies have emphasized the diverse beginnings of the Anabaptist movement and the way they contributed to different theological emphases. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to ask only about the status of Anabaptism in Pennsylvania in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Lancaster County Mennonites and Amish were largely from Switzerland and Germany. They represented a heritage that was two centuries old, a tradition that had eliminated early expressions of social radicalism, mystical theology, and eschatological excitement. They had become disciplined by suffering and fortified by long oral tradition, bringing to the "New World" the German Bible, the Anabaptist hymnbook, the *Martyrs Mirror*, and several Anabaptist confessions and creedal statements. There was an established church order of officials, discipline, and worship.

Characteristic of these Anabaptists was a commitment to a Believers' Church model in which adult baptism was the door of entry to both personal faith and corporate fellowship. The ideal was to become disciples of Jesus as taught by the Gospels and illustrated in the pristine fellowship of the early church. Life was to be simple and separated from the worldly style of the ungodly and the compromised style of the "Constan-

⁵Martin Schrag, "The Brethren In Christ Attitude Toward the 'World': A Historical Study of the Movement from Separation to an Increasing Acceptance of American Society" (Ph. D. dissertation, Temple University, 1967).

⁶E. Morris Sider, *The Brethren in Christ in Canada: Two Hundred Years of Tradition and Change* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1988).

⁷David Zercher, "Opting for the Mainstream: The Brethren Join the National Association of Evangelicals," *Brethren In Christ History and Life*, 10 (April 1987), 48-70.

tinian churches” around them. Theirs was a church truly separate from the state. No one would serve as a civil magistrate, swear legal oaths, or participate in armed conflict. Their circle of fellowship was nourished by mutual aid and protected by strict observance of church discipline. Worship was simple and solemn and observed in the homes or barns of the church members. It was conducted in the German language, for all these people were first or second generation immigrants.

Culturally, the Anabaptists were somewhat isolated from the rest of colonial America by theology, language, and location. This intensified their sense of personal identity and magnified the importance of the church. Consequently, the Great Awakening, which had stirred Christian faith and witness in America for several decades already, had not penetrated the Anabaptist communities of Lancaster County. This revival, both in Europe and America, was largely fueled by Pietism. But its English voices had but a faint chance to penetrate the Lancaster County Anabaptists. This was to be altered slightly, though decisively, by the approach of Pietists who were German speaking.⁸ Especially was this the case of those Pietists who had great affinities with the Anabaptists, such as the German Baptists and the ex-Mennonite preacher Martin Boehm.

Pietism

The central feature of Pietism was the emphasis on a heart-felt and life-changing conversion experience of the saving grace of God. Combined with this, both as evangelistic technique and as Christian nurture of the saved, was an emphasis on small groups for devotional study of the Bible, prayer, testimony, and intimate Christian fellowship.⁹ Classical Pietism also emphasized evangelism, missions, Bible Societies, and social structures to care for widows, orphans, the poor, the sick, and the educational needs of children and youth.

Pietism first took root among the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in northern Europe. It spread to the Puritan communities in both England and

⁸A very helpful source for understanding the Pietist influence in Pennsylvania at this time is F. Ernest Stoeffler, Editor, *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976). Especially significant are chapters by Donald F. Durbaugh on the Brethren, Martin H. Schrag on the Mennonites, and John R. Weinlick on the Moravians.

⁹For a good introduction, see Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Nap-panee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, rev. ed. 1996).

America and penetrated the Anglican Church through the evangelistic work of John and Charles Wesley, George Whitfield, and a host of their fellow laborers. It proved to be a movement that influenced nearly every Protestant communion in due course. It sought not to erect a new, distinctive church entity, but to revive individual Christian life and practice. Its common denominator was a vital experience with and relationship to God. It relegated such divisive issues as sacramental practice, church structure, and theological systems to secondary and marginal status. Thus, it was able, with little threat to distinct traditions, to penetrate the inner spiritual life of numerous churches and even to achieve evangelical ecumenicity. People of diverse church backgrounds could come together in neutral fellowship groups and cooperate in joint evangelistic and missionary ventures.

Early Brethren In Christ Blending of Anabaptism and Pietism

Brethren In Christ family names in the early years of the denomination (1780s) indicate that many came from Mennonite roots. They were located within the Anabaptist heritage. It is not surprising, therefore, that their concept of the church—its nature, officials, worship, discipline, and separateness from the state and ungodly culture—is for the most part Anabaptist. The personal piety and lifestyle were also reflective of Anabaptist heritage. But they had personally experienced Pietist conversions, and the denomination they founded was distinctively Pietist in its theology of salvation and its style of fellowship.

Though it is somewhat simplistic to say that initially the BIC heritage synthesis was an Anabaptist understanding of the church and a Pietist understanding of salvation, this does correctly state the essential mix. What we want to know is whether such a synthesis is congenial and whether it can be stable? At one level one can reply, “The two streams must be congenial, because the early BIC successfully synthesized them.” There are, however, other factors which argue that such a synthesis is possible. Both Anabaptism and Pietism shared the conviction that Protestantism alone did not make one Christian. They both critiqued Protestants who were not genuinely converted. There were affinities between the personal and family piety of the two movements.¹⁰ Both looked to the early

¹⁰Robert Friedmann details the extensive use of Pietist devotional materials by Mennonites in both Europe and America in *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries: Its Genius and Its Literature* (Sugar creek, OH: Schlaback Printers, 1980), 225-231

church, as depicted in the New Testament, for their model of Christianity, though they emphasized different aspects of that primitive vision.

More attention should be given to two groups which modeled a synthesis of Anabaptism and Pietism for the early BIC. I am referring to the German Baptist Brethren (later to be called the Church of the Brethren) and the Moravians. When Alexander Mack and his close associates formed the Brethren Church in Germany (1708), they deliberately blended radical Pietism and Anabaptism in their movement.¹¹ The Brethren group moved in mass to America in 1733 (to the Germantown section in Philadelphia) and were well represented in Lancaster County by the beginning of the BIC. The founding fathers of the BIC are known to have had serious conversations with Brethren elders before establishing themselves as a church. In fact, the first baptism of the BIC was in direct imitation of Alexander Mack and his group. There was a virtual copying of the Brethren approach to the practice of the ordinances (even the name is significant) of baptism and communion. The deacon's function was modeled in part on that of the Brethren, as well as some other details of Christian life and worship.¹²

The other group which may have influenced the BIC was the Moravians. Under the protection and influence of Count Zinzendorf, they became one of the more evangelistic groups of the German Pietist movement. They descended from the reform movement begun in Bohemia by John Hus, withstanding two centuries of intense persecution before taking refuge in Germany. They also looked to the early church for their group model, and, at the time they moved into Lancaster County (establishing a settlement at Lititz), were pacifist in theology and practice. They often practiced communal living (not unlike the Hutterites) and wore a distinct garb. Many were German speaking. They also were a group of Pietists who resembled Mennonites in many respects.¹³

¹¹For a brief historical sketch, see Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1968), 120-130. A more detailed doctrinal analysis can be found in Dale R. Stoffer, *Background and Developments of Brethren Doctrines, 1650-1987* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1989), 5-57.

¹²See Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Nineteenth-Century Dunker Views of the River Brethren," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 67 (April 1993), 133-151.

¹³American Mennonite reaction to Pietistic revival is a fascinating, complex story. While appreciative of Pietist literature, especially of a devotional nature, Mennonites seem to have resisted the revival techniques of the mid-eighteenth

The Moravians demonstrated the possibility of blending the Pietist view of personal salvation with an Anabaptist-like style of living. The big question is, “Did the BIC have any contact with them?” To date we have no concrete historical documentation that they did. However, the Moravian Church by 1748 had congregations in Lancaster, York, and Donegal;¹⁴ and the settlement at Lititz (1757) could hardly have been unknown to the early Brethren In Christ. It is virtually certain that Moravians would have attended the evangelistic barn meetings that were held at the time in the area since it was a primary rule of Moravian strategy to cooperate with all meetings that fostered true conversions no matter who sponsored them. They made concerted attempts to unify German-speaking peoples in Pennsylvania in common evangelistic enterprises.¹⁵

Two expressions in the early BIC *Confession of Faith* are characteristic of Moravian language in the eighteenth century.¹⁶ Further research of BIC beginnings is needed to see if there are possible Moravian influences on the early BIC heritage. Since these two groups were living proof that such an Anabaptist/Pietist synthesis could be made as the very foundation

century when they came to Lancaster County. Count Zinzendorf’s efforts in Pennsylvania to reach evangelical accord among the diverse Protestant groups may have been a significant factor in this attitude. The Mennonites had been affronted by his approach in that abortive process of 1742. They, like other denominations involved in the process, became less open to outside influences and concentrated on developing their own denominational identity. Two very helpful sources on this question are John Joseph Stoudt, “Count Zinzendorf and the Pennsylvania Congregation of God in the Spirit,” *Church History*, 9 (December 1940), 366-380, and Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, *American Mennonites and Protestant Movements: A Community Paradigm* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1987), 23-74.

¹⁴John R. Weinlick, “Moravians in the American Colonies,” in Stoeffler, *Continental Pietism*, 150.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 142-145.

¹⁶Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, 551-554. The expressions are “poor sinner” (frequently used in the early part of the confession to describe a person under conviction of sin) and “such children” (used in the middle of the confession in regard to intimate small-group fellowship of Christians). They were not exclusive to the Moravians, however, and can be found in general in Pietist literature of the time. In regard to the first, “poor sinner,” it is instructive to note that Martin Boehm so refers to himself as one seeking salvation. See his testimony, “I felt and saw myself a poor sinner,” in A. W. Drury, *History of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ* (Dayton: United Brethren Publishing House, 1931), 97.

of a denomination, the only real question remaining is whether such a synthesis could be stable? Could Anabaptism and Pietism form a permanent marriage or would the two traditions eventually divorce and go separate ways?

The marriage metaphor is apt for an assessment of this synthesis. Just as two distinct individuals join in a one-flesh union, so a synthesis of two traditions will be a new entity, while retaining unmistakable signs of separate identities. One can, for example, go through the early BIC confession and clearly identify the Pietist and the Anabaptist sections. Heartfelt and life-changing conversion is there. So also is adult baptism and renunciation of the sword for the disciple of Jesus. But both traditions are altered by the synthesis. There is more concern for ordinances, church order and discipline, separation, and pacifism than in classic Pietism. The mode of baptism (trine immersion) for regenerated adults and the rather tolerant view of other Christians regarding baptismal practices suggests that the BIC had modified some of the Anabaptist tradition.

There is here a crucial insight into the nature of synthetic movements. In blending two traditions one also changes them. Anabaptism and Pietism are not like two separate cogwheels in a machine, whose teeth perfectly mesh with each other. Rather, they are more like a mixed fruit drink where both flavors can be identified individually, but also achieve a new blended flavor that is not like that of either ingredient. From the very beginning the BIC were Anabaptists with a difference. They were not identical with the Amish or the Mennonites, though they were Anabaptist. They were also Pietists with a difference. They were not identical to any of the recognized Pietist groups in Pennsylvania at the time, though they were quite similar to the German Baptist Brethren.

Judged in this light, the BIC synthesis has lasted for two hundred years. This speaks well of the stability of the synthesis. But stability does not require a static state of affairs. Just as stable marriages go through phases where the heritage of one or the other of the spouses seems to play a more dominant role, so also an ecclesiastical synthesis might alternate its emphases. Take, for example, the mid-nineteenth century divisions of the River Brethren movement. One way to see the Yorker reaction is to understand it as a re-emphasis of the Anabaptist side of the heritage. These brothers and sisters feared that new styles of evangelism, copied from the American revivalist tradition, were compromising the practice of

separation in the church.¹⁷ On the other hand, Matthias Brinser and the United Zion's Children¹⁸ were emphasizing Pietism at the expense of Anabaptism. They feared that the tradition of home worship by the group meant that no longer was there a neutral place where sinners might come to hear the word. They placed a priority on saving souls and challenged the centuries-old Anabaptist tradition of worship in homes.

I am not suggesting by this that the BIC got it right by holding to the middle ground. Both the Old Order River Brethren and the United Zion's Children retained the original synthesis as well as the BIC. They merely shifted their point of emphasis. Events in the BIC reflect changing emphases in the synthesis as well. The dress codes of the 1930s and 1940s was a renewed emphasis upon the Anabaptist doctrine of separation. The two world wars of this century gave new vigor to the Anabaptist doctrine of non-resistance. On the other hand, the mission movement a century ago, as the church planting efforts since the 1950s, are Pietist emphases. Only over a long period of time can an assessment be made about whether one dimension of the synthesis is being eclipsed.

Wesleyanism

In the late nineteenth century a major new component entered the traditional synthesis of the BIC. It rooted in the eighteenth-century English revival inspired in large part by John Wesley. He was a complex personality and his theology reflects that in its comprehensiveness and its eclecticism. He cannot be reduced to one issue, not even to the doctrine of Christian perfection. However, it was his views on entire sanctification which entered the BIC in the years between 1886 and 1910. To be more precise, it was his views as understood and propagated by the American Holiness Camp Meeting tradition. This tradition followed the lead of John Fletcher, Joseph Benson, and Adam Clarke in equating the baptism of the

¹⁷Laban T. Brechbill, *History of the Old Order River Brethren*, edited by Myron S. Dietz (n.p.: Brechbill & Strickler, 1972). The issues involved, based primarily on oral tradition, are covered vaguely in his historical sketch, pp. 35-37. More definite issues are mentioned repeatedly during the brief ministerial sketches that comprise the bulk of the book. See, for example, critiques of revivalism and worldliness on pp. 50, 53, 84-85, 101, 110-111, 119, 122-124, 126, 133, 156-159, 167, 188, 202, 209-212. Cf. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, 134.

¹⁸Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, 134-140.

Holy Spirit with entire sanctification. Wesley himself did not agree with the terminology, but he was not willing to make an issue over words when they agreed in substance that God could purify the Christian's heart and fill it with perfect love. To say the least, this was an understanding of a completeness to sanctification that neither Anabaptism nor Pietism was want to hold. It clashed with the BIC assumption that sanctification was a process in the regenerate that would not be not completed until glorification. For our purposes, we are interested in how the original BIC synthesis fared with the introduction of the new Wesleyan stream.

Methodism entered Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, too late to influence BIC beginnings, though it had substantial influence on other Pietist groups which sprang from the same revival matrix. Methodism itself was a Pietist revival movement, so there is no surprise that it was compatible with Pennsylvania groups which were predominately Pietist in character. Anabaptist groups, however, were largely closed to the Methodist influence. At the time that the BIC would have encountered the Methodists in Lancaster County, it is likely that the church's commitment to Anabaptist principles would have closed it to Methodist influence. A century later the situation was considerably different. Methodism by then was the most successful version of Pietism in North America and the BIC in the Mid-West was not as culturally isolated in their Anabaptist way of life as the earlier Pennsylvania folks were. Besides, the BIC had begun to adopt the evangelistic practices of American revivalism which were leavened considerably by Methodist precedents.

The introduction of Methodist holiness into the denomination presented little challenge to the Pietist part of the synthesis. Even though it meant a new theology of sanctification, it was a challenge which could be negotiated. Pietism emphasized heart-felt, life-changing salvation. Holiness was both of these, intensifying regeneration through a dramatic second experience. Pietism also had a strong pragmatic bend to it; methods that resulted in conversions and Christian renewal were seen as good. The fact that the holiness renewal among the BIC coincided with new ventures into evangelism and foreign missions gave credence to the new doctrine from the Pietist perspective.

It was the Anabaptist half of the synthesis that was most challenged by Wesleyan sanctification and was most resistant to it. There were numerous issues that caused concern. Did the emotionalism of personal experience and the spontaneity of corporate worship violate worship that

was decent and orderly? Did the new optimism of grace overlook the subtleness of sin and the necessity of suffering in the Christian life? Would the emphasis on the freedom of the individual conscience subvert the importance of group guidance and judgment? Would the doctrines of baptism, separation, and non-resistance suffer through associations with holiness groups?

Reports of the “Kansas wildfire” and some of the early holiness testimonies in the *Evangelical Visitor* gave substance to these concerns. Intense religious experiences can lead certain personalities to excessive individualism, resulting in views and actions which bring tension and discredit to the body of Christ. The church in Kansas passed through that experience and emerged disciplined and strengthened by the ordeal. The printed testimonies in the *Visitor* which raised concern were those which attacked the practices of separation as legalism. These people claimed that the Holy Spirit had now freed them from this bondage. Accordingly, they had stopped wearing the plain style of clothing practiced in the BIC. Letter responses in the *Visitor* sounded the alarm. Is this what the new theology produces? Are the old ways in jeopardy? Are the “perfect” ones beyond the counsel and control of the group?

I maintain that the introduction of the third stream of Wesleyanism neither destroyed the initial synthesis of Anabaptism and Pietism nor won at the expense of either of the first two streams. It found acceptance in the denomination by coming to terms with our Anabaptist heritage and it modified the Pietist stand with which it already had widespread commonality. It is a credit to the BIC that the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification did not result in a church split even though the tension was strong at points. The Anabaptist sense of group held the BIC together. Leaders talked until there was majority agreement, and those who dissented were not excommunicated. In fact, those who opposed Wesleyanism were used in the church as pastors, evangelists, teachers, and institutional administrators. The doctrinal positions on sanctification in 1887 and 1910 are clearly compromise statements. There was enough latitude that both old and new could live with the decision. There is in this tolerance much of the spirit of classic Pietism, for Pietism strove to keep Christians unified on essentials, while differing on secondary matters, for the sake of evangelism.

Finally, the type of Wesleyanism that emerged in the BIC was different from other holiness groups in North America. Wesleyanism had been domesticated to the BIC mind. In a striking about face, the testimonies in

the *Visitor* soon took on a different tone. People wrote of their experiences of sanctification and noted that they could not “pray through” to the witness of the Holy Spirit until they died to their pride and were willing to take the “plain way.” So strongly was Wesleyanism wed to Anabaptism that to this day the congregations that most support Wesleyan holiness are also the most explicit about separation and other Anabaptist distinctives.

As the BIC entered the twentieth century, then, it did so as a synthesis of three heritage streams. At least through the doctrinal formulas and disciplinary decisions of the 1930s and 1940s, this synthesis remained strong. The *Constitution and By-Laws* of the period reflects some of the strongest, most explicit statements on regeneration, sanctification, separation, and non-resistance to be found anywhere in the history of this denomination. However, this was all to change beginning in the 1950s and accelerating thereafter. The clearest barometer of that change was the work of the *Church Review and Study Committee*, its annual reports to General Conference, and the actions of Conference regarding those reports and recommendations. Noticeably affected were requirements for church membership, patterns of worship, the pastoral office, and church administrative and financial structures. The doctrinal statement of the early 1960s indicated that these changes were not without doctrinal causes and effects. What had happened and how was the three-part heritage synthesis affected?

The causes of the changes were diverse and we might still be too near the events to see all the implications. The denomination was approaching its second centenary. Original visions are difficult to maintain over time. The Brethren In Christ had acculturated considerably since 1900. Two key indicators were participation in the public school system (both as students and as teachers) and the language shift to English rather than German. Demographics had also changed. The trend from rural to urban had begun, more clearly reflected by vocation than by residential location. Geographic dispersion had sufficient time to allow for area differences to emerge. Evangelism in North America and overseas missions had raised questions about some aspects of the heritage. Changes were bound to come. The only question was the direction they would take.

In general, the Brethren In Christ accommodated to North American culture. What theological heritage served as a model for that acculturation and provided the theological rationale for the changes that occurred? I suggest that the answer in the main is Evangelicalism, with the denomina-

tion's entry into the National Association of Evangelicals in 1949 being the symbolic harbinger of things to come.¹⁹

Evangelicalism

"Evangelical" has proved to be a difficult word to define historically. Protestants at the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation generally saw themselves as evangelical because they emphasized faith in Christ as the saving cause rather than the sacramental acts of the church which Catholicism emphasized. In English Christianity, evangelical came to mean those groups which undertook evangelistic activities of one sort or another, seeking conversions to Christ on an individual basis. Thus, in North America it now is an umbrella term that covers numerous denominations. The very term National Association of Evangelicals is recognition of this fact.

But there are significant nuances to Evangelicalism in North America that must be reckoned with. While many Anabaptists could be Evangelicals, they are marginally present in the NAE, preferring instead to find associations in the Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite World Conferences, and forums of the Historic Peace Churches or Believers' Church gatherings. Several Wesleyan bodies are openly linked with the NAE, but they are outnumbered by other traditions, and their distinctive concerns find better expression in the Christian Holiness Partnership and like assemblies. Pietism is the only aspect of the BIC heritage that can mesh significantly with the majority groups of NAE with no doctrinal or ecclesial difficulty. This suggests, on the one hand, that part of the BIC heritage predisposes the denomination to association with Evangelicalism. On the other hand, it says that two streams of the BIC heritage, while attracted to Evangelicalism, have significant reservations about it. Why?

North American Evangelicalism is in large measure mild Calvinism. In part this is historical, dating back to the groups most affected by the First Great Awakening in America. While the nineteenth century witnessed the dominance of Wesleyan-Arminianism in evangelism, this was

¹⁹The National Association of Evangelicals itself was not a problem for the Brethren in Christ Church. Its leadership and doctrinal statements required no compromise of the denomination's heritage. Rather, the denomination's association merely indicated that the church was open to a new influence, namely evangelicalism. Subsequent effects came from other causes whose analysis lies beyond the scope of this paper.

blunted by the end of the century due to the impact of German Liberalism on mainline Methodism. Wesleyan Evangelicalism was kept alive through Methodist campmeeting associations and splinter groups which emerged as the various holiness denominations, but the movement had lost its numerical strength and has not been able to affect twentieth-century American Christianity as it did the previous century.

Moreover, the groups most active in opposing Liberalism were those who owned a Calvinist heritage. They were the dominant voices in Fundamentalism. The Anabaptists in America were protected from this battle by their cultural isolation. Wesleyanism was fragmented, preoccupied with personal denominational identities, and thus not prepared to address the chief issue of the time. Consequently they endorsed much that the Fundamentalists stood for, clearly sensing kinship with these conservatives rather than the doctrinal stance of the Liberals. Then in the 1930s and 1940s Evangelicalism emerged out of the Fundamentalist cocoon. It left behind the cultural mindset of Fundamentalism, but not its Calvinist overtones. What remains is a tolerant Calvinism, ready to work with evangelical Anabaptists, Wesleyans, Charismatics, and many others. Yet it is a vigorous Calvinist voice in several respects.

First, many Evangelical denominations of large memberships are doctrinally Calvinistic. The weight of their numbers overshadows the memberships of many Anabaptist and Wesleyan denominations. In the American perception that big makes right, this fact has influence, even if unconsciously. Second, Calvinism is represented well in Christian education. This is true of many Bible colleges, liberal arts colleges, universities, and seminaries. Graduates of these institutions attend BIC churches and often serve as pastors and missionaries. Third, Calvinist Evangelicalism is well represented in the media. Several well-known suppliers of Sunday School curricula own this heritage. The same holds true of the biggest publishing houses of Evangelical books. In the fields of radio, television, film, and video they would be rivaled only by Pentecostal Evangelicals. Fourth, Calvinist Evangelicals are heavily involved in parachurch ministries, especially to youth and young adults.

At this point I am making no value judgments. I am simply stating evidence for the fact that Evangelicalism in the mid-twentieth century was significantly shaped by a Calvinist mindset. The important question here is whether this shaping force has affected the BIC vision of itself as a denomination. Has it affected the traditional synthesis of the three streams

of the BIC heritage? At the doctrinal level, mild Calvinism would differ most from the pre-1950 synthesis at two points: sanctification and the security of the believer. It would argue for progressive sanctification in this life, applying the concept of entire sanctification to glorification. If one looks at the BIC statements of 1961 and 1994, they are tending increasingly in this direction. If the denomination were suddenly deprived of the members above age 60, there would scarcely be a Wesleyan note in the BIC understanding of sanctification. Many pastors in recent years would find the Evangelical stance more palatable than Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification.

None of the BIC doctrinal statements have ever affirmed the Calvinist position on the security of the believer. But, as a member of the committee responsible to draft our most recent position, I know that explicit language affirming the Arminian heritage of our denomination on this question did not make it into the text presented to General Conference. A number of current BIC church members would affirm some adherence to "eternal security," and some pastors would too, at least privately.

Obviously, some doctrinal model has been affecting the BIC over the last four decades. The fact that the two doctrines mentioned above coincide precisely with the mild brand of Calvinism prominently represented in American Evangelicalism suggests the force which has moved us. Unacknowledged, the BIC has adopted a fourth stream into its heritage. This new stream has substantially blunted our Wesleyan voice on sanctification. On the question of the believer's security, both the Anabaptist and the Wesleyan aspects of the BIC heritage are being eroded because both affirm the possibility of losing one's relationship with the Lord.

Mild Calvinism also has a different model of the church's relationship to the world than does the Anabaptist heritage which shaped most of the BIC's first two centuries. It was this difference that led the Anabaptist leaders at Zurich to separate from Ulrich Zwingli. He believed that the church should seek the approval of the civil magistrates for the changes in religion introduced to public life and worship. The Anabaptists said that the two spheres were separate and thus the church should follow the council of God whether the secular powers agreed or not. Calvin, however, believed strongly in a theocratic approach to society, and his followers, though exhibiting diverse models, have uniformly been persuaded

that the church has an aggressive role in civil affairs.²⁰ Calvinists criticized those Christians who were judged to be too isolated from the world or too idealistic in their stance on social ethics. North American Evangelicalism has leveled both charges at Anabaptist groups, judging that such separation from the larger culture inhibits evangelization. It has argued that Christians should be directly involved in the affairs of government, including voting, holding office at all levels, and participating in the military branches of government in all “just war” situations.

Again, one needs only to note changes in the BIC denomination since 1950 to see a clear pattern. Many of the patterns of living and worship (rationalized as legalism) were dropped so that no cultural isolation would hinder evangelism. At the same, the denomination has become politically involved in voting and holding offices. The peace witness has steadily declined, and many newer members and preachers have more sympathy with the “just war” theory than they do with biblical non-resistance.

Without question the new stream of Evangelicalism has muted much of the BIC’s Anabaptist heritage. The denomination did not suddenly get lost in a theological muddle in the 1950s; it opened itself to a clear theological tradition that represented a new stream of influence. The BIC believed that it could learn from it discretely, adopting only what was judged of value. But the new stream to be adopted selectively had more force than was anticipated. The BIC has not domesticated Evangelicalism as it did Wesleyanism; instead it has been domesticated by it. Evangelicalism has clearly won much ground while two thirds of the BIC’s previous heritage has lost considerably (all but the Pietism).

Theological Reflection

I favor the BIC’s current participation in the NAE, but I do wonder why the BIC has managed poorly to synthesize a new stream of influence while the denomination’s forbearers did it well. The earlier BIC leaders wed Anabaptism and Pietism as equal partners in a relationship. At the turn of the last century, they encountered dynamic Wesleyanism and

²⁰Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 110-112, 132-136, 244-246. Harvie M. Conn even critiques Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism for not developing a thoroughly Reformed view of the state and society (*Contemporary World Theology: A Layman’s Guide*, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973, 112-147).

allowed it to renew the spiritual vision and energy of the church, but not to crowd out its original synthesis.

It is not that the BIC has completely lost this art of critical synthesis. In the same period that the denomination was being “Evangelicalized” without effective critique, the denomination also encountered the Charismatic movement. In this case the BIC’s critique has been substantial, virtually resisting its early expression and more recently borrowing only selectively and deliberately. One key factor here might be the internal sense of need. The BIC already had experiential and theological resources on the Holy Spirit from its Wesleyan heritage. But Evangelicalism was encountered by the BIC at a point where it felt ineffective—success in evangelizing contemporary North Americans and retaining youth in their churches of origin. The BIC critiqued what it did not feel it needed (i.e., the Charismatic movement), but was uncritically open to a stream that offered help where it was judged to be needed it (i.e., contemporary evangelism).

Another aspect might be synthetic overload. Merging two or even three streams might work, but how many more can be added before the mix becomes an indistinct blur? Might not the punch then take on the flavor of the most recent additive or the most pungent ingredient? A fourth influence, to change the metaphor, might just have been the proverbial straw which breaks the camel’s back. The BIC’s eclectic capacity may have been exceeded and the coherent synthesis lost. The new stream poured through the broken machinery without significant blending from the previous influences. Is that why most Brethren In Christ think first of the word “Evangelical” when asked by strangers to identify their denomination?

There is at least one other aspect that should enter into this discussion. If I may oversimplify the categories for the sake of clarity, the original BIC synthesis reduces to this: Anabaptism supplied the form and Pietism the spirit. The version of Wesleyanism that was encountered revived and intensified the spirit part of this equation. Spirit is very malleable; it can be adjusted to many forms. Thus the Pietist side of the BIC could readily adapt to Evangelicalism. Form, however, is different: it shapes but is not readily shaped. So as long as the BIC accentuated its Anabaptist heritage, it retained a distinct denominational form of identity. But when it moved from its Anabaptist forms, it lost its capacity to shape

the influences that were coming. The spirit side of the BIC heritage took on the new form of Evangelicalism, which replaced Anabaptism as the form of Brethren In Christ identity.

So the Brethren In Christ has come to this point in its history with a badly eroded sense of identity. Three streams have become four, and the synthetic glue has lost its power to bind. Pietism has merged with Evangelicalism, thus becoming the dominant mind. Those who are uneasy with this state of affairs identify either with the Wesleyan or the Anabaptist sides of the heritage, but they are minority voices. Nonetheless, the BIC needs visible forms to shape spiritual vitalities. I predict that this denomination will either reaccess its Anabaptist form to regain its identity or it will totally embrace the Evangelical form to shape a new identity. If nothing is done, the latter will surely happen by default. To do the former would require leadership and a denominational commitment similar to the magnitude of the *Church Review and Study Committee* process of the 1950s. Any campaign to recapture aspects of past heritage will be futile if it does not resonate with currently felt needs in the body as a whole. Nor will an arbitrary wrenching of the clock backwards succeed. Unless an image has the perceived potential to lead forward with new resources, it will fail. God must create the proper *kairos* for renewal to occur. That is more a matter of prayer than it is theological formulation.

In fact, such a *kairos* may be at hand, at least in terms of what is happening throughout conservative Christianity. Prayer for revival is a growing international movement. Part of the restlessness which drives this concern is the feeling on the part of many groups that theological and ecclesiastical identity has been lost in the general pragmatism which has dominated the last fifty years of the Western Church.

A good model to analyze the current situation is a military one. In the midst of all-out battle, the sides can become so intermixed that general confusion results. One cannot distinguish friend or foe, let alone who is winning or losing. Commanders do not know whether to advance or sound the alarm for retreat. At times like that it is important for all to rally to their divisional symbols. The flag bearers must stand up and wave their colors, so people know where to gather. Such theological flag waving has begun in recent years. At the same time that some of us see our roots being severed by a prevalent Calvinism within Evangelicalism, other voices are lamenting the corruption of Evangelicalism by dynamic

Arminianism and experiential Pietism.²¹ Wesleyans wonder what has blunted their heritage, and Anabaptists fear the loss of their distinctives to the pervasive cultural Christianity of North America. This pause in the battle, to continue the metaphor, may provide the needed respite which allows the BIC to reassess denominational identity.

It is not a situation that is without risk, however. While strong company loyalty is crucial to the success of an entire army, it could degenerate into sectarian rivalry. I hope that what emerges is stronger personal identities on the part of all concerned. But this must be in the interest of the larger unified effort to defeat the kingdom of darkness, proclaim Christ to all peoples, and disciple a world of true followers of Jesus Christ. The Protestant Reformation introduced a divisive mentality into Western Christianity. We are now needing to come together as Christians. But our skills for cooperation are not as well-developed as are our habits of individualism. Thus, positive denominational identities are not a given; they will need deliberate effort.

A difficulty in reassessing the heritage of the Brethren In Christ, especially its Anabaptist form, is determining what kind of Anabaptism is to be accessed. Whatever the party claims might be, no group today represents original Anabaptism. At best, we can identify only such distinctive Anabaptist concerns as discipleship, believers' baptism, separation, discipline, and non-resistance. We need to work with those Anabaptist fellowships which exemplify these original values, along with contemporary commitments to a high view of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and the ministries of evangelism and mission. Re-formation will not occur without intimate association and shared commitment to a common vision.

Conclusion

If what is said here about the formation of the heritage of the Brethren In Christ is true, then certain things appear obvious in regard to the identity of this particular tradition. There must be some addressing of the current imbalance within the historic synthesis. The undue role of

²¹Note the lament of David T. Wells over the loss of Reformed thought in American Evangelicalism in his *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993). In praising the Puritans, J. I. Packer clearly advocates Reformed theology as the only consistent Evangelical position (*Among God's Giants: Aspects of Puritan Christianity*, Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1991).

Evangelicalism must be addressed through submitting it to a conscious, thoroughgoing critique. It must be made to answer to the other parts of the Brethren In Christ heritage. Secondly, those aspects of this heritage, especially Anabaptism and Wesleyanism, which have declined, need new and emphatic articulations. The identity crisis of the Brethren In Christ is not unique. There are sister denominations that are facing similar dilemmas. A larger conversation may help all involved to move forward with new strength of purpose to be the faithful people of God.

WORSHIP: FORMATION AND DISCERNMENT

A Wesleyan Dialogue Between Worship and Christian Education

by

Dean Blevins

Traditionally most Wesleyan/Holiness and Evangelical parishioners perceive the roles of Christian education and worship to be quite different. Usually the presumed difference lies in the tacit understanding of Sunday School (or small group discipleship) in contrast to corporate worship. But is this understanding a truly appropriate approach from a Wesleyan perspective? If not, what is the relationship of these two functions of the church?

In actuality, there is or ought to be a vital relationship between worship and Christian education, particularly as worship contributes to an educational approach conceived within a framework of formation and discernment. “Formation” and “Discernment” are terms which describe two necessary yet interdependent educational methods which operate together as a larger approach to Christian education, and which find an affinity with Wesleyan thought. This approach to Christian education not only challenges one’s understanding of worship styles, but also affirms the necessity for an intentional understanding of Wesleyan Christian education that both draws from worship and informs worship.

To develop these assertions, we will first review how worship informs educational efforts through the thought of religious educators John Westerhoff and Craig Dykstra. I will posit that their approaches constitute the educational movement known as “Formation.” We will also

investigate how education can impact the church's understanding of worship through an examination of Tom Groome and James Loder's educational method, which collectively will be understood as the practice of "Discernment." We will then explore how this dialogue between worship and education, Formation and Discernment, is indicative of Wesley's theological method and his educational approach derived from his description of the "Means of Grace." Finally, we will posit certain implications that this form of Wesleyan Christian education has for implementing worship styles in Wesleyan/Holiness churches of our day.

Worship's Influence On Education

Enculturation and Encounter Models. Two prominent religious educators, John Westerhoff (formerly Professor of Theology and Christian Nurture at Duke Divinity School) and Craig Dykstra (Vice President for Religion at Lilly Endowment and former Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary), have been well known for their promoting worship as a powerful method of Christian education. These theorists, however, do take somewhat different approaches to how worship functions in Christian education. Westerhoff, following the thought of other educators such as C. Ellis Nelson, asserts that Christians learn primarily through an enculturation or socialization process.¹ This approach has been identified in various places as the faith community approach in which Christians are educated as they are socialized into the community of faith.² Westerhoff himself believes that the community enculturation approach is imperative since the traditional "schooling" approach to Christian education has proven itself to be ineffective for long-term discipleship.³

Westerhoff's overall model of religious education, which he terms "catechesis," embraces three large movements: instruction (acquiring knowledge and skills considered necessary and useful to Christian life), education (reflection on experience in light of Christian faith and life), and enculturation or formation (experiencing or being enculturated into

¹C. Ellis Nelson, *Where Faith Begins* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967).

²See Jack L. Seymour and Donald Miller (ed.), *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 11-34 and 53-72; and Donald Miller, *Story and Context: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 11-40.

³John Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976, reprinted by Harper & Row), 1-25.

Christian faith and life).⁴ Westerhoff also anticipates that a firm understanding of the Christian gospel will provide an impetus for Christians to work for social change⁵ and to resist “turning the Gospel into an opiate of personal piety and ignoring its call to social liberation.”⁶ Thus Westerhoff anticipates that authentic enculturation will yield a genuine commitment to social change for the Kingdom of God.

John Westerhoff, however, has chosen to champion one aspect of his triadic model more than others, that of formation.⁷ His model calls for an intentional assimilation into the Christian worldview through what he believes to be the eight aspects of congregational life: communal rites (repetitive, symbolic and social acts which express and manifest the com-

⁴John Westerhoff, “Formation, Education and Instruction,” *Religious Education* (Fall, 1987)82:4, 578-591.

⁵John Westerhoff, “Fashioning Christians in Our Day,” in *Schooling Christians*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and John Westerhoff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 271:

If a person desires to become a Christian, he or she needs to practice praying the Lord’s Prayer, ministering to the poor and needy, and performing other acts basic to being Christian. He or she also needs to learn a story so that words and actions merge together, shaping the heart, mind, and soul of the apprentice.

⁶Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, 71.

⁷Westerhoff, “The Making of Christians Through Formation,” 26-27. Westerhoff closes his speech to the NAAPCE:

Some, such as Tom Groome in *Christian Religious Education*, believe that Christian education is the more important issue facing us today. James Michael Lee in his numerous works on instruction believes that it is instruction. Earlier I have established that all three are necessary and surely a case can be made for each of the three. Without proper instruction, Christian education is impossible. Without good education, faithful formation is impossible. Without formation, instruction makes little difference and education is inadequate for making Christians. Formation while necessary, but not sufficient, remains foundational. It is also the most complex, least understood, and most problematic of the three processes. However, it deserves and demands our attention for without it we will have no possibility of making Christians.

Westerhoff repeats this emphasis on formation as enculturation in “Fashioning Christians In Our Day,” 266-271. He summarizes: “Formation then is fundamentally the practice and experience of Christian faith and life” (271).

munity's sacred narrative along with its implied faith and life), church environment (including architectural space and artifacts), time (particularly the Christian calendar), communal life (polity, programs and economic life as well as support behaviors), discipline (structured practices within the community), social interaction (interpersonal relations and motivations), role models (exemplars and mentors) and language (which name and describe behavior).⁸ Through the intentional employment of these aspects in distinctly Christian ways, Westerhoff believes we can induct children into a primary Christian community and culture which is the basic form of discipleship for Christians.⁹ At the heart of Westerhoff's approach is worship and he has written a number of texts which seek to combine liturgy with his enculturation or formational approach.¹⁰ Ultimately for Westerhoff our practices in worship shape our identity as Christians as we orient our world around the worldview (symbols, rhythm, stories, and language) embedded in worship.

Craig Dykstra takes a different approach in which worship is grounded in a transformative encounter with God. Dykstra sees worship not so much a living into a particular worldview (enculturation) as a place where we are encountered by God's redemptive activity (transformation) in spite of our own self-destructive tendencies.¹¹ This transformation occurs primarily through what Dykstra refers to as the three disciplines of the Christian life: repentance, prayer, and service. Through these disciplines we remove self-centered concerns so that God may encounter us from within. "We get ourselves into a condition in which our imaginations may be transformed so that we can come to see, think, feel, and act as reformed selves."¹²

While Dykstra may seek a transformative "event" through these disciplines, he does believe that this event occurs through the traditional

⁸Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians in Our Day," 272-278.

⁹Westerhoff, "Fashioning Christians in Our Day," 269-271.

¹⁰See John Westerhoff and William Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle* (Oak Grove, MN: The Seabury Press, printed by Winston Press, 1980); John H. Westerhoff, *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith* (Oak Grove, MN: Winston Press, 1980); John Westerhoff, *A Pilgrim People: Learning Through the Church Year* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

¹¹Craig Dykstra, "The Formative Power of the Congregation," in *Religious Education*, 82:4 (Fall, 1987), 530-546.

¹²Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 103.

structures found in worship. Dykstra emphasizes that worship is a paradigm of these forms.

In worship our disciplines take on liturgical form, but they are the same disciplines nonetheless. When we come to worship, we come to put ourselves in a position to receive revelation. Worship is repentance, prayer, and service carried out in the context of a hearing of God's Word.¹³

These liturgical forms, as they are repeated, become formative as they shape our preconscious minds into perceiving all of life in the same manner. For Dykstra these formative patterns become the very heart of the possibility of transformation even outside of worship.¹⁴

Worship is the core of congregational life, and provides the paradigm for its peculiar form of life. In worship, the congregation is the congregation. Through worship, patterns of mutual self-destruction become redemptively transformed.¹⁵

Formation as a Synthesis. While Dykstra's emphasis on encounter is different from Westerhoff's enculturation model, these forms of Formation are not mutually exclusive. Westerhoff seems to be advocating an ongoing living into God's redemptive message (the gospel) by the church's practices in worship. What believers do in worship is a part of the overall enculturation process. Our character as Christians, how we understand time and our social calendar, how we view other people, the language we use to describe the world, all of these elements are shaped by our worship practices. Dykstra, for all of his emphasis on transformation, also endorses this formational living into the gospel, if only to free us for the opportunity of transformation. When practiced in worship, these liturgical events hold together the logic of transformation. For both educators, Formation is extremely important as it shapes the character of the lives of Christian believers and leads them to transformation.

Education's Contribution To Worship

Shared Praxis and Imagination. Possibly the best way to understand how Christian education can enhance worship is through the work

¹³Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 104.

¹⁴Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 105.

¹⁵Dykstra, "Formative Power of the Congregation," 540.

of Thomas Groome and James Loder. Groome, of Boston College, has posited a rather powerful and prominent model of Christian education known as “Shared Praxis.”¹⁶ Groome claims that this model draws from a number of sources including Jurgen Habermas and Paulo Freire’s liberative pedagogy.¹⁷ The educational method is designed in five movements. First, we name a present activity in our lives, such as the style of worship that our congregation is using. Secondly, we then critically reflect on that practice to understand ourselves in light of the activity. After this critical reflection on our contemporary experience, Groome establishes his third movement which is to bring our experience (in our example, worship) to a deep understanding of the Christian Story, which for Groome includes both Scripture and church tradition (dogma and doxology, *lex orandi, lex credendi*).¹⁸ In the fourth movement we engage in a mutual dialogue between contemporary experience and the Christian Story. In our example, since the earliest forms of worship (the eucharist) basically re-enacted the passion of Christ, we might ask how contemporary practices reflect the original intent of worship to re-enact the gospel “story” as well as foster praise to God.¹⁹ Finally, in the fifth step, we posit a future based on any new insight that comes from the dialogue. We envision a form of

¹⁶Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 135-260. See also *Sharing Faith* (Harper San Francisco, 1991).

¹⁷Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 139-183. It is important to note that Groome draws from a wide variety of sources.

¹⁸Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 191-192. McGrath offers a simple definition of *lex orandi, lex credendi* as “the way you pray determines what you believe,” although the broader definition includes the theology communicated in worship (191).

¹⁹Paul Bradshaw, s.v., “Eucharist,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J. G. Davies (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 227-229.

In this corporate act done in remembrance of Christ and in thanksgiving for what God had done through him, his followers experienced the presence of their risen Lord as a living reality, uniting into one body the individuals gathered there, and they looked forward in hope to the final consummation of God’s kingdom and the fulfillment of the messianic banquet, of which their meal was a foretaste (228).

worship that is authentic to the Christian Story in our day.²⁰ It is Groome's belief that authentic worship carries within its liturgical forms a process that resonates with the shared praxis approach, particularly in dialogue with the Christian Story.²¹

It is in Groome's final step that James Loder of Princeton Theological Seminary is most helpful. The bulk of Groome's work seems more focused on the critical investigation of contemporary experience and a critical dialogue between that experience and the Christian Story. Groome does not seem to provide as great a detail for imagining an alternative future as does Loder.²² Loder's work, similar to Dykstra, posits that this imaginative new "vision" of the future is where authentic transformation occurs.²³ Loder believes that true learning always occurs in a phenomenal leap of the imagination and the following search to authenticate this new knowledge in community. This ongoing search becomes reminiscent of Groome's method.²⁴ Loder's emphasis on the sudden imaginative move adds an expanded view of authentic constructive creativity to Groome's educational method. This view allows for a greater emphasis on constructive as well as critical investigation.²⁵

Discernment as a Synthesis. Combining Groome's method with the possibilities provided by Loder yields an educational approach that can be both critical and constructive (or creative). An appropriate term to describe this educational process (and "event") is "Discernment." Dis-

²⁰Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 207-234; *Sharing Faith*, 283-294.

²¹Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 361-362.

²²Not that Groome does not promote the use of imagination. See *Christian Religious Education*, 186-188, where Groome posits that creative imagination is essential. One must, however, note that the bulk of his method tends toward the more critical portion of the dialogue.

²³James Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989), 14.

²⁴Loder, 33, 37-65. Loder posits the following steps in what he calls transformational logic or the knowing event: (1) conflict, interlude for scanning; (3) constructive act of imagination; (4) release and openness; and (5) interpretation (37-40).

²⁵See also Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years* (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1986), 105-132. Parks follows Loder, but also emphasizes that the power of religious imagination, the "ability to intuit the whole," is a major characteristic of adult faith (108).

cernment is more than a critical investigation of contemporary practice and Christian thought. Discernment allows for a sense of creativity or constructive thought that might come suddenly from God in the midst of the analytical process. Discernment, following Loder, also implies that the creative process will seek confirmation in community, including the Christian tradition. The search for confirmation means that critical reflection will continue after Groome's fifth movement or new "vision" of the Kingdom of God. Insights are constantly examined to see how they correspond to existing beliefs (including the Christian Story) and with community. For example, worship would be critiqued in light of the intent of early Christian worship to re-enact the gospel itself. One, however, would also have to be open to a fifth movement where perhaps a new way of expressing the gospel might be made in today's worship, but even this new expression would be open to re-examination.

Wesleyan Intersections With Formation and Discernment

Theological Method as Formation and Discernment. The double movement of Formation and Discernment does seem to have Wesleyan tendencies. In dialogue with Randy Maddox's research, this double movement seems to embrace the theological method of Wesley's day.

At the most basic level, theology was the (usually implicit) basic worldview that frames the temperament and practice of believer's lives. This worldview is not simply bestowed with conversion, it must be developed. This need gave rise to the next major dimension of theology: the disciplined concern to form and norm the Christian worldview of believers. Given the communal nature of Christian discipleship, this concern took most direct expression in such "first-order" theological activities as pastoral shepherding and the production of catechisms, liturgies, and spiritual discipline manuals.²⁶

These "first-order" exercises seem indicative of the process of Formation, as indicated in Westerhoff's and Dykstra's writings. Maddox stresses that this form of theological reflection was primary in Wesley's own practical theology:

²⁶Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 16-17.

In keeping with its defining task, the primary (or first-order) literary forms of “real” theological activity for Wesley were not Systematic Theologies or Apologetics; they were carefully-crafted liturgies, catechisms, hymns, sermons, and the like.²⁷

The intent of such theological activity apparently was to form Christians.

There was another, complementary theological movement that accompanied these first-order activities:

These activities in turn frequently sparked “second-order” theological reflection on such issues as the grounding for, or interrelationships and consistency of, various theological commitments. But even at this second-order level theology remained a practical discipline, ultimately basing the most metaphysical reflections about God on the life of faith and drawing from these reflections ethical and soteriological implications.²⁸

This second-order approach is similar to the practice of Discernment. Discernment may be understood particularly as a critical and constructive exercise or dialogue between the practices of Wesley’s day and Wesley’s theological orienting principle or metaphor of “Responsible Grace.”²⁹ A metaphor or orienting concern in lieu of a fixed set of theological propositions resonates with Groome’s emphasis on the broader, open, category of the Christian Story which includes what Groome indicates as a Vision of the Kingdom of God.³⁰ What might be more important is that the use of metaphor also places more emphasis on the use of imagination as a constructive application when the orienting concern “Responsible Grace” is applied to old and new practices. Sharon Parks, following Loder, notes

²⁷Maddox, 17.

²⁸Maddox, 16-17.

²⁹Maddox, 18-19.

³⁰Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 144-145, 192-195. Groome states:

From a biblical perspective then, Christian religious education should be grounded in a relational/experiential/reflective way of knowing that is informed by the Story of faith from Christians before us, and by the Vision toward which that Story points (145).

that it is through metaphor that imaginative acts can occur.³¹ Maddox's description of Wesley's method could be interpreted as implying that Wesley seemed to busy himself in both "first order" theological activities which could be understood as Formation activities and "second order" theological reflection that might also be reinterpreted as Discernment.

The Means of Grace as Formation and Discernment. John Wesley's educational method has often been maligned because of his use of educational theory prominent in his day.³² Perhaps a better way to understand his approach to Christian education would also be through another "orienting concern" understood as his interpretation of the Means of Grace.³³ Wesley's interpretive approach seems to also indicate a double movement of Formation and Discernment.

By "means of grace" I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he [God] might convey to men, preventing, justifying or sanctifying grace.³⁴

This quote comes from Wesley's sermon "The Means of Grace" and emerges in part during Wesley's dispute with certain Moravians at the Fetter Lane Society and his assertion of the value of participating with God's redemptive work.³⁵ Wesley would also interchange the word "means" with

³¹Parks, 108.

³²Wesley Tracy, "Christian Education in a Wesleyan Mode," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 17:1 (Spring, 1982), 30-31.

³³Wesley Tracy, "Christian Education in a Wesleyan Mode," 32-51. While Tracy develops several themes from Wesley's educational emphasis and develops a dialogue with educational theory today, my contention is that they are incomplete without the central orienting principle of the Means of Grace.

³⁴John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1832, 1986), vol. 5, 187.

³⁵Wesley, vol. 1, 282. A dispute rose with certain Moravian "quietists" who were part of the Fetter Lane Society and were stressing that, since salvation came by faith alone, they were not "bound or obliged" to practice the ordinances of grace, including the Eucharist. Wesley, as noted in his journal from June 22 to July 20, 1740, opposed this viewpoint and ultimately he, along with eighteen or nineteen others, left the society. At the end of this controversy, when Wesley would leave Fetter Lane with a band of followers, he set forth the following declaration about communion as part of the Means of Grace.

Sat. 28 (1740). I showed at large (1) that the Lord's Supper was ordained by God to be a means of conveying to men either prevent-

the word “ordinances” on occasion as an indicator that this participation was expected by God.³⁶ The “means,” however, were not an end in themselves:

But we allow that the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion; that, consequently, all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing and vanity; that if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God, they are not acceptable in his sight.³⁷

While the Means of Grace themselves had no intrinsic worth, they were channels by which the Holy Spirit worked to communicate grace for the full work of salvation. Jesus Christ is the ground of this grace, particularly through the act of the atonement: “the merit is that of the Son.”³⁸ The means, like grace, were available to all, even to those who did not yet experience what Wesley would call “salvation” (or the witness of the Spirit). As grace was a dynamic, so were the Means of Grace. The result was that there were many different forms which Wesley categorized as either Instituted or Prudential Means of Grace.

Wesley believed that there were five means of grace, the Instituted means that had been evident in the life of Jesus: The Lord’s Supper; Prayer; Fasting; Scripture; and Christian Conference or Conversation.³⁹

ing or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities; (2) that the persons for whom it was ordained are all those who know and feel that they want the grace of God, either to “restrain” them from sin, or to show their sins forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God; (3) that inasmuch as we come to his table, not to give him anything but to receive whatsoever he sees best for us, there is previous preparation indispensably necessary but desire to receive whatsoever he pleases to give; and (4) that fitness is not required at the time of communicating but sense of our “state”, of our utter sinfulness and helplessness; every one who knows he is fit for hell be just fit to come to Christ, in this as well as all other ways of his appointment (280).

³⁶Wesley, 185.

³⁷Wesley, 188.

³⁸Henry Hawthorn Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: A Contemporary Understanding of John Wesley’s Means of Grace* (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1987, Ann Arbor: UMI, 1987), 59.

³⁹Steve Harper, *The Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 19. See also Wesley, vol. 8, 323-324. An elaboration of the Instituted Means of Grace is found in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Dean Blevins, “Means of Grace: Toward a Wesleyan Praxis of Spiritual Formation” (32:1, Spring 1997), 69-83.

These means form a constellation of practices that were interdependent yet individually important as well. These same practices, particularly in their corporate expressions, seemed to mirror the intended and ongoing sacramental life of the church.

The Prudential Means of Grace were designed to meet the person at his or her point of need. “Prudential means may vary according to the person’s needs and the circumstances, thus showing Wesley’s simple concern for man’s particular historical situation.”⁴⁰ The Prudential Means of Grace spanned those activities found in the instituted and the general means of grace. They also included Christian social praxis.⁴¹ They were contextual.

The instituted means belong to the universal church in all eras of history and in all cultures. In contrast, the prudential means of grace vary from age to age, culture to culture, and person to person; they reflect God’s ability to use any means in addition to those instituted in accordance with different times and circumstances.⁴²

Henry Knight lists several prudential means:

1. Particular rules or acts of Holy Living.
2. Class and Band Meetings.
3. Prayer meetings, covenant services, watch night services, love feasts.
4. Visiting the sick.
5. Doing all the good one can, doing no harm.
6. Reading devotional classics and all edifying literature.⁴³

Wesley would also include several metaphors for living the Christian life. Knight places these under the “General Means of Grace.”⁴⁴ These metaphors were “watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, exercise of the presence of God.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰Ole E. Borgen, “John Wesley: Sacramental Theology, No Ends Without the Means,” in *John Wesley: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. John Stacey (London: Epworth Press, 1988), 105.

⁴¹Harper, 64.

⁴²Knight, 4.

⁴³Knight, 7.

⁴⁴Knight, 178-184.

⁴⁵Wesley, vol. 8, 323.

Wesley also understood that it was prudential to utilize the Instituted Means of Grace. The replication of Christian Conference in some instances as both Instituted and Prudential Means of Grace meant that all ordinances were to have some form of “contextual” meaning and some correspondence to historical practice.

Intersections with Formation and Discernment. The Instituted Means of Grace were primarily those practices (public and private) that were formative in the Christian life. Wesley seemed to believe that believers could faithfully practice these Instituted Means with some anticipation of the activity of the Holy Spirit (though Wesley cautioned that the practices were not ends in themselves). These practices find a correspondence in the practice of Formation, particularly since many of them include corporate expressions found in worship.

The Prudential Means of Grace, on the other hand, were activities and attitudes that often had to be discerned in the everyday life of believers. To practice the Prudential Means was to participate in an ongoing process of trying to determine how such practices could truly be used of God, to see how grace was manifested in the practices. This exploration, I contend, would include a tacit if not explicit process very close to our description of Discernment since such investigation included critical analysis and a constructive connection with the activity of the Holy Spirit. Here the orienting principle of the “Means of Grace” would have a Christian educational function similar to Maddox’s “Responsible Grace.” To participate in both Instituted and Prudential Means of Grace would be to participate in both Formation and Discernment.

Formation and Discernment: Implications for Today

The Interplay of Formation and Discernment. The Christian education approaches of Formation and Discernment have points of commonality. As observed by Groome, the very structure of liturgy may provide a formative pattern that will encourage discernment. The critical and constructive process of Discernment is also an influence in how we have been formed by the Christian Story. Our formative base of experience (those structures that have shaped our understanding of Christianity) may provide both the subject of Discernment, yet Formation may also influence the perspective from which our judgements are made. In addition, transformative “events” may take place in either approach: in Formation if our under-

standing of Dykstra is correct and in Discernment if our interpretation of Loder is accurate. The potential of these transformative events are important. In the process of Formation this potential opens up the possibility of fresh encounters with God through established practices. This same potential also serves as a reminder that Discernment is more than a critical exercise; it should also include a constructive or creative process as well.

Formation and Discernment, however, are also distinct in that they serve different yet necessary functions within this Christian education approach. Formation is primarily concerned with the creation of a Christian “way of being” in the world. Formation asks how the structures of our lives might be so disciplined or shaped so that we adopt a particular approach to life that is in harmony with the Christian Story. Discernment is a means by which we can inquire about how authentically Christian are the very structures and disciplines that we employ, along with other practices that impact our lives outside the Christian domain.

Ultimately these two methods, Formation and Discernment, are interdependent. Without Discernment, Formation may include the tacit reification of certain practices that are inappropriate to the Christian Story. Formation becomes a type of ritual fundamentalism that no longer questions the reason for its own practices. Without Formation, however, Discernment may be impaired in that it provides no embodiment of the Christian Story, no concrete referent within history to provide some perspective. Discernment, without Formation, often results in an ideological dialogue, logically coherent perhaps, but removed from life.

Implications for Worship in the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition.

Once one adopts a Wesleyan Christian education approach centered around the methods of Formation and Discernment, one approaches worship with a certain perspective. Worship can then be seen as a primary educational influence on Christians within the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. Christians, as they worship, are formed into the character of Christianity through set patterns that not only establish a particular Christian worldview and conduct, but also the potential for transformation.⁴⁶ For

⁴⁶Note here that “worldview” may not be a static structure of beliefs and practices no longer subject to review (or discernment). Worldview, understood here, is a concretizing of Christian practice for a Christian community, suitable to a particular context. Though worldview is not more narrowly viewed as a universalizing principle, it is not relegated to individual subjectivity either. Worldview in this sense is a way of “making a life” for a Christian community in a particular context (see John Westerhoff).

those within the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, there may well be certain worship patterns which “form” Christians into the character of holiness and prepare them for certain transformative events, including entire sanctification. This notion should come as no surprise since the various elements of worship would be included in Wesley’s “first-order” theological reflections. The formative power of worship would then challenge liturgists to give careful consideration to how worship would be structured or changed to accommodate current contemporary preferences. The removal of certain symbols or symbolic practices might mitigate against the minister’s very desire to shape holiness of character or to encourage entire sanctification within the congregation.

Christian educator Mark York once wrote an article challenging Wesleyan/Holiness pastors to be aware of the Sunday School curriculum at work in their churches. York’s thesis was that Sunday School teachers, using independent or “generic” literature, may well be teaching concepts that are theologically antithetical to the holiness emphasis within a pastor’s sermon. York argued that much of what lies behind “generic” evangelical literature is actually Calvinist in orientation, causing the lesson ultimately to negate the overall intent of the sermon.⁴⁷ Following this notion, it might well be that the very structure of worship, if not reflected on, might be equally antithetical. Contemporary styles of worship might be forming Christians into a language and conduct that mirrors something other than a Wesleyan/Holiness ethos. In addition, these worship styles may be neglecting those tacit structures that, according to Dykstra, provide a model for transformation. The danger would then lie in the fact that, while the content of the worship service might allude to holiness, the very structure of the service would not provide an opportunity for the worshiper to subjectively be open to the transformative impact of the holiness message. For instance, worship styles that focus on therapeutic, “needs-based,” or consumer oriented liturgies would rarely promote Dykstra’s themes of repentance, prayer, or service. Developing a worship service oriented primarily to addressing a contemporary American suburban culture would call for careful consideration of the structures that

⁴⁷Mark York, “Is Your Congregation a Church at Risk?” *Building a World-Class Sunday School into the 21st Century* (Kansas City: Church of the Nazarene Sunday School Ministries, 1993), 85-87; also published in *The Preacher’s Magazine* 68:1 (Sept.-Nov. 1992), 10-12.

would dominate the worship style.⁴⁸ There would exist the danger that such a service might not actually prepare people for transformation, or enculturate them into the heart of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition.

How might pastors recognize both positive and destructive styles of worship? The process of Discernment might provide a solution. Pastors, following Groome, might first critically reflect on their pattern of worship and then ask how that style truly dialogues with the Christian “Story” concerning Scriptural holiness (both in the Bible and in liturgical interpretations of the biblical message). Serious consideration would be given to the relationship between current worship styles and the worship practiced by the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, particularly in John Wesley’s day. Additional study might be given to understanding the nature of the symbols (as artifacts, hymns, rites, or even worship space) that embody and promote the holiness message. This intensive educational dialogue might actually take place throughout the church as a form of communal Discernment.

Such Discernment would be critical in that it would challenge the assumptions of contemporary worship styles located in either a consumer or therapeutic orientation. This method might also find new, constructive ways of re-interpreting the Christian holiness tradition today, but always in light of the original intent of Christian worship, to tell and re-tell the gospel so as to be shaped by an authentic understanding of Christlikeness. As with Groome, pastors might even ask how contemporary worship styles actually promote this critical and constructive act during worship.

It is hopefully obvious by now that Formation and Discernment are not isolated, independent categories of educational method. Their interrelatedness are evident historically in Wesley’s theological framework and in the practices of the means of grace. Collectively, Formation and Discernment in a Wesleyan framework form an effective approach of interrelated and interdependent educational approaches by which to embody, evaluate, and envision authentic Christian worship. In this approach, worship becomes, for the sake of holiness, both a corporate expression to God

⁴⁸Roger Betsworth, *Social Ethics: An Examination of American Moral Traditions* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 11-24, 178-187. Betsworth offers a brief overview of American “culture” and notes that both consumerism and therapeutic well-being are primary American narratives. Betsworth, in his conclusion, also notes that the Biblical narrative, with its recognition of sin, provides another rationale for ongoing discernment.

and a communal approach to personal formation. Any changes to worship demand careful consideration.

It is small wonder that Wesley's theological method and educational approach focused on developing patterns that shaped Christians. It is also understandable why Wesley practiced and encouraged an approach that discerned critically and constructively those Formational practices. Perhaps by using a Wesleyan Christian education orienting principle, the Means of Grace, worship leaders and educators in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition will understand better how congregations are both formed and transformed by worship; and they will discern what authentic worship may both be and become in the future.

HOMO PRECARIUS: PRAYER IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD

by

Craig Keen

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern (Calvin 1960, 1.1.1).

Theology is anthropology (Feuerbach 1957, xxxvii).

It is interesting that we *homo sapiens*—we who claim to have risen beyond the earth from which we were sculpted, who claim to be so discerning, so wise—know so little about ourselves. And yet we want to know; and despite the shortness of our reach, despite the emptiness again and again of our hands, we grope on for the slightest trace of that which makes us distinctively human. It is a preoccupation that we have and have had especially since the time of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). But we have always (as far as our backward self-scrutiny can tell) wanted to know who we are; and we have always, even if secretly, wanted to know that we are not to be taken lightly. Is it any surprise, then, that when we come upon Genesis 1:27 at the very beginning of our holy book, we straighten up and take notice? “And God. . .” God who has just called *the universe* into being merely by the force of his word, God who is sovereign over light and darkness, waters and sky, earth and world, and

the living things which move where these contend, this God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness. . . ."¹

Indeed, we have not only taken notice, we have read this passage with great energy, struck as we have been by its unusual import. When our various interpretive labors have been done, we have found and brought to one another different meanings, sometimes a welter of conflicting perceptions. Claus Westermann counts nine different prominent interpretations of Genesis 1:27 (Westermann 1984, 148-158).² Which is it? Does this verse affirm that human being as such is God's representative, viceroy, vizier, attorney in this world?³ Or is it rather that "image"

¹"Since biblical interpretation came in contact with Greek thought and the modern understanding of humanity, scarcely any passage in the whole of the Old Testament has retained such interest as the verse which says that God created the person according to his image. The literature is vast. The main interest has been on what is being said theologically about humankind: what is a human being? What is striking is that one verse about the person, almost unique in the Old Testament, has become the center of attention in modern exegesis, whereas it has no such significance in the rest of the Old Testament and, apart from Ps. 8, does not occur again" (Westermann 1984, 148).

²Some of these are compatible with others of these nine. At times the same writer will put two or more of them together. However, there is a diversity here that itself speaks of the difficulty of reading this short verse.

³Westermann deals seriously with this view, noting that there is considerable evidence that the phrase "image of God" occurs in the broader world of which the ancient Hebrews were a part. There are extant Egyptian and Mesopotamian records which speak of a king as the image of a god. It is clear in these texts that the king is being described as the representative of the god. So, the argument goes, Genesis 1:26 says also that human being as such is God's representative in this world. However, Westermann comes finally to reject this reading of the passage. A representative represents another before some third party. Westermann says that this is certainly not the meaning here. Further, the passage stands within a broader literary whole ("P") with a specific conception of the holy God, and it is "inconceivable that P could have meant 'wherever a human being appears, there God appears.' . . . P could conceive of an appearance, manifestation, or representation of God only as a holy event, completely outside the range of ordinary events. He could not possibly think of a human being as standing in the place of God on earth" (153). Finally, there are also to be found a few Egyptian and Mesopotamian references to the creation of the human being in the image of the god. Although these do little to show positively what Genesis 1:26 means, they are different enough from what is said more specifically about the king to be a rather strong warning against hasty generalization (154).

here is a more pointed power-term, indicating human exercise of “dominion,” as the following verse says, over the rest of God’s creatures?⁴ Or is the divine image a kind of minimal “natural” similarity to God that is to be distinguished from a loftier *supernatural* divine likeness that was added to it in our first parents?⁵ Or is the image the “spiritual qualities or capacities” that make us humans at least relatively unique, capacities such as freedom, personality, understanding, self-consciousness, intelligence, or immortality?⁶ Is it simply our bodily form?⁷ Or is it more broadly “the person as a whole”?⁸ Does the verse have a more specifically Christological significance, indicating that humans were created long ago, with the

⁴Westermann considers this to be one of the less convincing interpretations of the passage. His rather summary dismissal is this: “A whole series of studies has shown quite correctly that this opinion is wrong, and that according to the text dominion over other creatures is not an explanation, but a consequence of creation in the image of God” (155).

⁵Westermann dismisses this interpretation: “It is generally acknowledged that Gen. 1:26f. is not speaking of a distinction between the natural and the supernatural and that such talk about the person does not accord with the Old Testament. There is unanimity in the abandonment of the distinction” (149).

⁶At times these “spiritual qualities” have been taken as the “natural image” in us to which supernatural likeness may be added. Westermann rejects this interpretation of the verse as well as the contrasting interpretation to follow (“the image of God” as “the external form” of the human) because in his view the Old Testament refuses to split human beings into a spirit and a body. See below.

⁷Of course, this would be very difficult for later participants in the Judeo-Christian tradition to affirm. However, at this early stage of development, the argument runs, abstraction has not yet overcome the concrete thinking that looks to “external form.”

⁸In other words, a human being is simply a human being, certainly with various dimensions and modes of action and passion, but a whole human being nonetheless. To look for a spirit distinct from a body or a body distinct from a spirit is to look for what is not there. Westermann quotes W. H. Schmidt with approval: “The most recent exegesis has managed to pry the phrase ‘in the image and likeness of God’ free from an idea foreign to the Old Testament, namely the separation of the corporeal and the spiritual.” Westermann adds: “The discussion whether the image and likeness of God referred to the corporeal or the spiritual aspect of the person has brought us to the conclusion that the question has been placed incorrectly. Gen. 1:26f. is concerned neither with the corporeal nor with the spiritual qualities of people; it is concerned only with the person as a whole.” He concludes: “There can now be basic agreement that when Gen. 1:26 talks of the image and likeness of God, it envisages the whole person, and not just the corporeal or the spiritual side” (150).

coming Christ as their destiny?⁹ Is the image of God a yet unobtained goal toward which we are created to move?¹⁰ Or is it our being “God’s counterpart,” the one whom God addresses as “you,” the one who can reply as “I”?¹¹

But what if we have miscalculated in our analyses of ourselves and this verse? What if we have prepared ourselves so much for a certain kind of answer to our questions that we have missed a very different one, an answer that one might read in our holy book? Westermann thinks that this is precisely what has happened:

This survey . . . reveals a common trait: all exegetes from the fathers of the church to the present begin with the presupposition that the text is saying something about people, namely that people bear God’s image because they have been created in accordance with it. The whole question therefore centers around the image of God in the person. . . . Scarcely one of the many studies of the text asks about the process that is going on. . . . There can be no question that the text is describing an action, and not the nature of human beings.

Most interpretations presume without more ado that the verb “create” can be understood in itself and apart from the context in which it is set. But the text is speaking about an

⁹This is another of the interpretations that Westermann takes to be relatively minor. His rejection of it is accounted for in this way: “Such an explanation however is forced to say that fallen humanity is not the image of God.” In other words, Westermann is saying that according to this view those who have failed to conform to Christ are cut off from God’s image (which, he would maintain, is untenable). However, there are other ways of thinking about this Christological notion of the *imago dei*.

¹⁰Westermann spends almost no time with this reading of the text. He does note that, since the time of the fathers of the church, it has gone out of fashion (should add “in the West”). He is willing to quote a more recent (again, Western) advocate (A. M. Dubarle): “The image of God is not a static quality conferred once and for all, it is a call to imitate in action the one whose image is carried. It is a call to live a life of religion: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (155). Perhaps this view can yet be rehabilitated and made an ingredient in a more adequate understanding of the *imago dei*.

¹¹This position becomes that of Karl Barth and of Westermann himself, when contextualized somewhat differently. Although his critical remarks are framed in such a way that they seem to be directed at all nine interpretations of the *imago*, obviously he is not attacking himself.

action of God, and not about the nature of humanity. . . . In any case, what the Old Testament says about the creation of humanity in the image of God has meaning only in its context, namely that of the process of the creation of human beings. . . .

[The point of the passage is that] the creation of humanity has as its goal a *happening between* God and human beings. . . ; it is not a question of a *quality in* human beings. . . . God has created all people “to correspond to him,” that is, so that something can *happen between* creator and creature (155, 157, 158).¹²

Westermann’s reading of Genesis 1:27 provides an intriguing alternative to the typical approach to the text. Here we have the notion that the image of God is not to be located *in* the human being, but rather in the region *between* the human being and transcendent God, in the region opened up by God’s movement to the one who is irrevocably his creature. Thus the image is very much the image of the God who approaches and addresses the human and only thereby sets the human apart as unique. This means that no matter how hard one looks at the human being, it is only as one’s gaze slips from the human to the God who addresses the human that one comes to find the uniqueness that constitutes the *imago dei*. The image of God is not simply there in us or about us, a brute matter of fact lodged, located, statically in place. The image rather *comes*; it comes as a gift that never becomes a possession, that never ceases being a gift. Genesis 1:27, therefore, speaks first of the God whose movement yields that which is most distinctive in the human being, and only then, derivatively, speaks of that human to whom God moves. Westermann is saying that the address of God is an event that calls, that challenges us to respond. Thus, it is not so much that the human “images God.” It is much more that the human is “imaged by God.”

This in turn means that the human is the one who answers the call of God, who lives from the insuperable gift that God gives, who turns to the God who first turns to humans, who thus *is* only in the space opened by God’s image. It means that this human prays. The implication of Westermann’s argument is that the human being, according to Genesis 1:27, is to be thought of as the prayer invited by God, is to be understood as *homo precarius*. That is, insofar as being human is being in the image of God, prayer is not something added to the human being as if without it the

¹²The emphases in this quotation have been added.

human would remain essentially unchanged. Rather, it is prayer, specifically the prayer called forth by God's address, that makes us human.

The one theologian cited again and again by Westermann as having understood the passage,¹³ as having avoided the "false start" that has taken almost all interpreters down a path away from the text, is Karl Barth, whose now classic treatment of Genesis 1:27 is found in the *Church Dogmatics*, 3/1. Although Westermann would not embrace all that is said in that section (he rejects the Christological-Trinitarian reading of the text), his weighty words of approval invite a closer examination of what Barth has to say. Barth's understanding of human life lends itself precisely to the notion that the human being is prayer, i.e., is an openness to the openness of God. However, the position advocated by Barth and Westermann is not entirely new. Its continuity with older Protestant thought is illustrated, e.g., by John Wesley's notion that salvation is simultaneously an event of prayer ("prayer without ceasing") and the restoration of the human being in the image of God. Both of these positions will be examined in what follows.

Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There Is Freedom

The theology of Karl Barth is a theology of revelation. It is certainly also a theology of the wholly other God; but Barth speaks of this God only as he speaks of the apocalyptic event in which God makes himself known, in which God opens himself, bares himself to what he is not (1947, 314-315; 1975, 298).¹⁴ Indeed everything Barth says, whether of the finite or the infinite, the temporal or the eternal, the human or the divine, emerges finally from that event in which two utterly alien realities, one creature, the other creator, become one. All theological utterances are to be received here.

It is because of the exhaustively constitutive nature of God's self-revelation in Barth's theology that late in his career he could (to the surprise of many) write of "the humanity of God" (1960b, 37-65). The wholly other God comes close, so close that one cannot speak of God in

¹³That is, the theologian who understood that it concerns human being holistically, that it concerns human being as God's counterpart, that it concerns not a quality *in* human being, but an event for which we were created, etc.

¹⁴*Dieser Gott selbst ist gerade nicht nur er selbst, sondern auch sein Sich-Offenbaren* (1947, 315).

isolation from his coming; and his coming entails us. To understand who God is is to understand who God is in the event of his self-revelation. But it is equally true that to understand who *we* are as humans is to understand who we are in that same event. Where God and human being are one is where God is most really God and human being is most really human being. Thus Barth refuses to speak in abstraction from revelation either when he speaks of God or when he speaks of human being: they are equally inseparable from that revelation. Anthropology is theology: in order to speak of human being, one must first and last speak of God. And so, when Barth explains the doctrine of the image of God, he does so by thinking human being at the place where the outgoing reality of *God* occurs.

Further, the revelation of God, according to Barth, is the history of Jesus Christ, the concrete history of this concrete human being. This is the history of God's radical grace, this is the space opened as God goes out to what God is not, to what is radically other than everything God is, this is where God gives himself unreservedly (1975, 315; 1957, 257-321). God is utterly laid bare here, and so is human being. What occurs here has no referent beyond itself which gives it meaning and worth. This God is God. This human being is human being. All purported divine events as well as all purported human events are to be judged here. There is no higher court of appeal. This human history, as particular as it is, is that to which all human histories are to be referred; i.e., because God is radically here as this history, it is constitutive of human being as such, it defines human being.

Moreover, the presence of God as this history is not a casual and static presence. It is not simply there like a marble in a jar. Rather, the unity of this history occurs as two radically different natures concur in the heat of their difference, as an act, a movement, of mutual self-giving, of mutual kenotic love. The history, which is this human being and is this God, is the "yes" spoken by each to the other. Therefore, what happens in the profound relation between this human and the God who is here revealed is that human being is made known as the creature utterly given over to God (*der Mensch für Gott*). What occurs as Jesus Christ is the reality of every human being (*er ist . . . der wirkliche Mensch*). Everything human *is* human only here, in him, in his life and death. In other words, human being is created to occur precisely as Jesus occurs: as the concrete and particular event of absolute openness to the God who is

absolutely open to him, as the history of God with us and of us with God, as the history in which there is no distinguishing what human being is about from what God is about (1948, 64-241; 1960a, 55-202).¹⁵ Jesus Christ is the concrete history of human being utterly given over to God; the entirety of his history is human being corresponding to God.¹⁶

If the history of Jesus Christ is the defining event of human being, then human life is to be understood in relation to him from the very beginning. Indeed, since God is at work here, the history of Jesus Christ must be traced beyond the very beginning to the heart of God. The outgoing of God that occurs with us as a human history, the outgoing of God that lays God bare to us, the outgoing of God that is indistinguishable from the what and who of revelation, is an outgoing at work already and transcendently *within* the divine reality. God not only appears to be love; God *is* love, and that from all eternity. The history of Jesus reveals that God *in himself* is never *simply* in himself, but is even there an outgoing movement of self-giving. For example:

Among all other men and all other creatures He [Jesus] is the penetrating spearhead of the will of God their Creator: penetrating because in Him the will of God is already fulfilled and revealed, and the purpose of God for all men and creatures has thus reached its goal; and the spearhead to the extent that there has still to be a wider fulfilment of the will of God and its final consummation, and obviously this can only follow on what has already been achieved in this man. . . . And if the man Jesus is the penetrating spearhead of this will of God . . . His existence is determined from the beginning, before the foundation of the world. This can be said only of Him. For He

¹⁵“God acts as Jesus acts. The divine work is accomplished in the work of this man. And the work of this man consists in the abandonment of all other work to do the work of God” (1960a, 62). “In Jesus Christ there is no isolation of man from God or of God from man. Rather, in Him we encounter the history, the dialogue, in which God and man meet together, the reality of the covenant *mutually* contracted, preserved, and fulfilled by them” (1960b, 46).

¹⁶“To sum up, the distinctiveness of this creature consists in the fact that it is for God. That it is for God means that it is for the divine deliverance and therefore for God’s own glory, for the freedom of God and therefore for the love of God” (1960a, 70-71). This means that his identity as this specific human being *is* his mission from and to God. However, he is not dissolved into the divine work. There are two natures here in this one history, this one person.

alone is the man, the creature, in whom the will of God has already been fulfilled and by whom the enemy of being has been slain and the freedom of being attained. He alone is the archtypal man whom all threatened and enslaved men and creatures must follow. He alone is the promise for these many, the Head of a whole body. . . . If now in the vast sphere of human fellowship and history we have to do with the man Jesus, it is because His existence was eternally resolved in the sovereign will of God to save us and all creation: resolved before all things, before being was even planned, let alone actualised, before man fell into sin, before light was separated from darkness or being from non-being, and therefore before there was even a potential threat to being, let alone an actual; resolved as the very first thing which God determined with regard to the reality distinct from Himself; resolved as the all-embracing content of His predestination of all creaturely being (Barth, 1960a, 143-144).

The resolution of God, therefore, occurs in the inner life of God. God goes out because he is essentially outgoing even in himself. That is, the revelation of God to his other signifies the same dynamics at work in the inner divine life. God is alive and moves even within himself; i.e., there is an other at work within God.¹⁷ God is God only because his unity occurs in this movement of othering. This, Barth maintains, is the implication of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. From here Barth moves to Genesis 1:27. He, of course, knows that the history of the Christological interpretation of Genesis has not been an altogether pretty sight. Yet he does not on that account draw back from letting the implications of the notion that Jesus is the Christ, the hope of Israel and the world, the eternal Son of the Father, unfold even here.¹⁸

The creation of human being is an event in which God moves to the outside. In that event, Barth argues, human being is set in motion in the

¹⁷In other words, the revelation that occurs as the history of Jesus Christ means that there is a trinitarian movement in the transcendent reality of God. There is a You addressed by the divine I. There is a Son to the sovereign Father.

¹⁸“Here, too, we can only say that, if the hope of the Old Testament was not meaningless, if its covenant-history really had a supremely definite and concrete goal, if Jesus Christ really was Israel's Messiah, the Son of God and therefore the fulfilment of Israel's own existence, the meaning and goal of its whole course, and therefore the answer to the enigma of Gen. 1: 26f., Paul did not represent any innovation in relation to the Old Testament but pointed to its fulfilment” (1958, 202).

direction of that movement of God.¹⁹ We are created toward the creator who comes to us. Again, there is in God an outgoing, and it is to this outgoing that human being is created to move. The outgoing of God is not something separate from God himself. God indeed remains the mystery, the wholly other, the transcendent one, high and exalted, precisely when he is closest. Thus the outgoing of God is a kind of repetition of the hidden one, a kind of “over-against” (*Gegenüber*)²⁰ of God to God, a kind of *image of God*. Again, God moves to what he is not without ceasing to be what he is. God’s moving to what he is not is still true God. Yet it is the one God *again*, as the image of God. God, whom we confront as we are formed from the ground, is the transcendent one come close, the true, utterly undiluted, undiminished image of the true God. Human being is created to move to this outgoing, to this image, to stand out in it, to go after it.²¹ In other words, human being, not in itself the image of God, “is created in *correspondence* [*entsprechend*] with the image of God” (1958, 197; 1945, 222),²² is created speaking (*sprechend*) out (*ent-*)²³ in answer

¹⁹It might be helpful at this point to remember the title of Eberhard Jüngel’s fine book (1976b) on Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity, *Gottes Sein is im Werden*, or *God’s Being Is In Becoming*.

²⁰Though translated (in 1958, 184 and *passim*) as “counterpart,” the literal meaning of *Gegenüber* is “over-against,” “that which is opposite.” Consequently, it is often translated in other contexts as “object.” The meaning here is that there is in God not homogeneity, but a living movement, a *vis-à-vis*, a reciprocal outgoing. Explicating this idea yields, of course, Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity.

²¹Barth’s German translation (1945, 221) centers on the phrases “in our image” (*in unserem Urbild*) and “according to our likeness” (*nach unserem Vorbild*). These German nouns, *Urbild* and *Vorbild*, are not easy words to translate. The prefix *ur-* indicates that which is primordial, originary. The prefix *vor-* indicates that which is or goes before. Since *Bild* simply means image, these prefixes say something subtly important about the kind of image in relation to which human being is created. That is, humans have not been created with God’s image *in* them, they have been created with a certain *direction to* an image that is originary in God, with a certain direction to an image that is happening already in God. Thus human being is called *ein Abbild* (in contrast to the divine *Urbild*) and *ein Nachbild* (in contrast to the divine *Vorbild*): literally that which is lower than the image and that which goes after the image, respectively (1945, 212). The image that is originary in God, the image that goes before in God, is an otherness (*ein Gegenüber*), a divine You to the divine I, at work at the heart of the divine life.

²²The emphasis in this phrase has been added.

²³“Ent-, insep. and unaccented prefix; in composition with other words indicates establishment of or entry into a new state or abandonment of an old state” (*The New Cassell’s German Dictionary* 1971, s.v. “ent-”).

to the divine image; speaking freely with what it is and is called to be, and only thus being human.²⁴ The image of God is God's being that in going out calls to us. The human "correspondence" with the image of God is our being the answer to that very image which is God himself as his call, his voice, his word (see Jüngel 1976a, 231-236; 1989, 124-153).

It is, Barth says, this complexity in God that moves behind the Pauline understanding that Jesus Christ, unlike Adam, *is* the *very image* of God.²⁵ His history is identified with God's image not because he exceeds human life, but because he *is* human life in its most comprehensive sense. God created Adam and Eve to correspond to, i.e., to answer his call, his image. What the early chapters of Genesis lay out as failing to occur in their history is precisely what happens *as* the history of Jesus Christ. In fact, the correspondence of Jesus Christ to God's image is unrestricted: whatever he is about is what God's outgoing is about. Therefore, to say "Jesus Christ" is to say "the image of God" (Barth 1960a, 62, 64; 1958, 201-203). In this way Jesus Christ, *qua* the image of God, is the point of the creation of human life. Adam and Eve were called into being as a hope that opens to the coming history of the fullness of God with us. That is precisely what the history of Jesus is. Therefore, it is to this that they are essentially related; when God created Adam and Eve, it was to the coming Christ that he looked (1958, 191, 204-205).²⁶

This remains the destiny of human life, whether or not one turns from God, whether or not one "falls." Since it is not a human possession but a gift, and a gift of a most persistent giver, the image, the voice of

²⁴Rather like Martin Buber's prayerful "I-You" (Buber 1970, 54 and 122-182).

²⁵Paul's daring equation of the man Jesus . . . directly with the divine image is an unprecedented and radical innovation" (1958, 202).

²⁶This exposition of Barth's conception of the image of God has left aside his famous discussion of the *analogia relationis*, the notion that involved in our being created in God's image is our being created in relation as male and female (a discussion owing much to Bonhoeffer's work). There are two reasons why this has not been drawn into this study: (1) it is not directly related to the main line of argument of the paper; and (2) it is not central to Barth's own discussion. Barth makes clear that when placed outside the more important notion of the *analogia fide* (our being created *in* and *for* God's image, related to [*ana-*] the image [*logos*]), our being male and female merely makes us akin to the animals, which are similarly differentiated (1958, 194-197). Thus, on this point Barth is not quite as far removed from the position of Phyllis Bird as she thinks (Bird 1991, 5-20).

God, cannot be lost. It continues to call to every child of Adam and Eve, whom the gracious creator will never leave or forsake (1958, 200).²⁷

The being of the human is, therefore, that which acknowledges its source, ground, and object as that which lies outside itself and yet has come in mercy and grace.

We may thus say that the being of man is a being in gratitude. His history as constituted by the Word of the grace of God, his being therefore, continues and must continue in the fact that it is a being in gratitude. . . . The Word of grace and therefore grace itself, it can only receive. But as it does this, as it is content to be what it is by this Word, as it thus exists by its openness towards God, the question is decided that it is a being in gratitude. It has not taken the grace of God but the latter has come to it; it has not opened itself but God has opened it and made it this open being. And it now is what it has been made. But it cannot be without itself actualising this event. It is, as it is under an obligation to the God who has seized the initiative in starting this history; as it is referred to Him in respect of its whole attitude. It is in the strength of its promise which God makes to it, that He is its Helper and Deliverer. As God comes to it in His Word, it is a being open towards God and self-opening, transcending itself in a Godward direction (1960a, 167-168).

Such gratitude is the essence of prayer.²⁸ To be human for Barth is to move in the open relation which is initiated by God. That is, to be human

²⁷Westermann quotes Horst's positive reading of Barth: "When he speaks of human existence he is not speaking of a quality in the person, or of something which the person, cut off from God, can dispose of, or of something or other which might be counted among one's possessions. He is speaking rather of human existence as blessed by God, who in his sovereign freedom has ruled that the human being alone out of all creatures is to be his counterpart and to correspond to him, and with whom he will speak and share and who in turn must talk to him and live 'in his presence' (lit. before his face)" (1984, 151).

²⁸Cf. what Barth writes of theology as prayer: "Human thought and speech cannot be *about* God, but must be directed *toward* God, called into action by the divine thought and speech directed to men, and following and corresponding to this work of God. Human thought and speech would certainly be false if they bound themselves to a divine 'It' or 'Something,' since God is a person and not a thing. But human thought and speech concerning God could also be false and would at any rate be unreal if they related themselves to him in the *third* person. What is essential for human language is to speak of men in the first person and of God in the *second* person. True and proper language concerning God will always be a response to God, which overtly or covertly, explicitly or implicitly, thinks and speaks of God exclusively in the second person. And this means that theological work must really and truly take place in the form of a liturgical act, as invocation of God, and as prayer" (1963, 164).

is to be responsive before God, in all the concreteness of daily life, in all the complexity and confusion of an uncertain world. Yet it is to be responsive in the gratitude which is joy and freedom before the mercy and love and openness of the God who in Jesus Christ has said a resounding “yes” to human being, and thus has called to the newness of life what otherwise would be swallowed by death. Thus, for Barth to take human being as something approachable and knowable apart from the history of Jesus is to fail to understand what his history in fact signifies for those who have the hope of being human only in his death and resurrection.

Christ Is All And In All

The ideas at work in Barth’s account of Genesis 1:27 resonate with many of the ideas at work in the theology of John Wesley: God’s grace is God himself lovingly at work in the lives of his creatures; God is preventive, going out to us before we are in any position to respond; God addresses the human being as a whole; God’s address liberates us to the Christ who is the human reality that we, too, were created to be; in Christ we find our destiny. However, Wesley’s explicit account of the meaning of the *imago dei* clashes with Barth’s. Indeed, it is striking how much Wesley draws attention to the human being as a reality whose meaning is found in itself, as a proper substance in which proper qualities reside. Thus it is also striking how much his position falls prey to the critique of Westermann. However, there is something more at play in Wesley, something that eludes the simple definitions that he had been taught so well and which were part of the stock-in-trade of the typical learned divine of his time.

As one would expect, there is in the more than 60 years of Wesley’s commentary on the doctrine of the *imago dei* a great deal of traditional material.²⁹ He is doing little more than repeating classic treatments when he speaks of the doctrine in 1730 as “a truth that does so much honour to human nature” (1987c, 292) and in 1790 as indicating “the greatness, the excellency, the dignity of man” (1987b, 162); or when he speculates about the strength, clarity, infallibility, justice, and speed of human understanding, will (or “affections”), and “liberty” in their original, paradisiac state

²⁹One of the more significant recent treatments of the history of the notion of the *imago dei* is *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen. The essays by Børresen and Douglass in particular help provide a context for understanding Wesley’s thought on the doctrine.

(1987c, 293-295; 1985d, 188; 1985a, 475; 1985c, *passim*; 1985b, 409-410; 1987b, 162-163); or when he describes undefiled human being as “resembling” God (1987c, 293), as “an incorruptible picture” of God (1987d, 354), as “like” God (1985b, 409). Even when Wesley speaks of the “total loss” of the image (1985e, 185; 1987b, 162) or more moderately of the loss of “the moral image” (1985b, 410), he is repeating a then familiar Protestant notion.

Though making use of these ideas (however ineffectually), Wesley writes with considerably more energy and interest when he attends less to the human subject, its powers and dignity, and more to the gracious God who delivers us in Christ. The work of God in Christ is a liberation for Wesley, viz., *from* the darkness and despair of sin, *to* the God who thus “restores” and “renews” us in his own image (1987c, 293; 1987d, 354; 1985e, 185; 1986, 204). Even as he affirms the notion that the image of God can reside *in* us, Wesley shifts attention *away from* us to the God who lovingly comes to us.³⁰ Further, though the terms that he inherits make the *imago* proper to the human subject, the vision within which Wesley locates these terms is profoundly expropriating: “It is of his mercy that he made us at all. . . . But if he has made us, and given us all we have, if we owe all we are and have to him, then surely he has a right to all we are and have, to all our love and obedience” (1987a, 153). There is finally no claim to possession in Wesley. What God does in us is not our property. Indeed, the hallowing, which is our being restored in the image of God, is a “living sacrifice” in which whatever I am is yielded to God.

Moreover Wesley’s elucidation of the *imago dei* is not all talk of substance and quality. It can also be explicitly and profoundly relational. Life in God’s image is, for Wesley, “man dwelling in God and God in him, having uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son through the eternal Spirit” (1985a, 475-476; see 1984b, 184). That is, human being in God’s image is a being whose center is shifted to the outside, to the one who in love has come first to us. Such divine love is an outgoing granted by the outgoing grace of God. Again:

³⁰The favor of God is greater, for Wesley, even than life itself: “the best, indeed the only means under heaven given to man whereby he may regain the favour of God, which is better than life itself, or the image of God, which is the true life of the soul, is the submitting to the ‘righteousness which is of faith,’ the believing in the only-begotten Son of God” (1984c, 214).

O trample under foot . . . all the things which are beneath the sun—"for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus"; for the entire renewal of thy soul in that image of God wherein it was originally created. . . . Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a religion that is spirit and life; the dwelling in God and God in thee . . . (1984d, 498).

Wesley in his last years by no means abandons the categories he had used for decades to explicate the *imago dei*. However, he began to describe the doctrine in a rather different way. It became clear to him that phenomenal human qualities (the understanding, the affections, freedom of will, etc.) are shared with animals and that the distinctiveness of human life is to be found elsewhere. Such qualities remain part of the meaning of our being created in God's image, but they are not constitutive of "the supreme perfection" of the human being. That which is most uniquely human, that which when lost most deprives us of what we essentially are, is our being "capable of God," "capable" of knowing, loving, obeying, and enjoying God (1985c, 439, 441-442, 449-450; 1987a, 153).

This term "capable of God," however, is not clear. It seems to affirm that human beings, at least when not ravaged by sin, have resident in them a power which makes them able to grasp the divine reality.³¹ Yet the term as used by Wesley can be read differently. If one thinks of the word "capability" in the light of its history, it begins to speak not of a quality *in* the centered human subject, but of an openness, a capaciousness, that calls the centered subject into question.³² In other words, in our time the word "capability" carries about it connotations of a kind of native potency that under the right circumstances might be actualized. The word, of course, does not in fact have such a narrow denotation and indeed there is nothing in the theology of Wesley that would lead one to expect him to maintain that even the most Godly creature has an inherent power to grasp the divine. "None feel their need of Christ," he writes, "like these

³¹The *Oxford American Dictionary* (1980) defines the word as "1. competent. 2. having a certain ability" (s.v. "capable").

³²"F., Late L., *capabilis*, receptive, in early theol. use, from *capere*, to hold" (Weekley 1967, s.v. "capable"). See also the *O.E.D.*, s.v. "capable." Further, the suffix "-able" is a much more ambiguous term than its spelling might first suggest. It has the sense "given to, tending to, like to, fit to, able to." The adjective "able" (though used, of course, at the end of this string of terms) grows from an entirely different root (*O.E.D.*, s.v. "able," "-able," "-ble"). Neither *capere* nor *-ble* is a power-word.

[who live without sin]; none so entirely depend upon Him” (n.d., 53); and “it is pride . . . to ascribe anything we have to ourselves” (n.d., 95). If Wesley again and again maintains the utter dependence of the redeemed upon the Redeemer, of the sanctified upon the Sanctifier, then it is unlikely that his conception of the human “capability of God” would be attributed to inherent human nature as it exists in itself, even under the power of the Spirit. His is a theology of grace which struggles to expropriate what we otherwise are so inclined to claim as our own. The work of the Spirit is not to deposit new goods in our storehouse of property. The Spirit “fills” us with the love, the openness of God.

This is not to say that being “capable of God” is merely a passivity, something which comes to us as if we were not involved. Wesley’s usage is richer than that. For Wesley, a “capable” human being receives from God, certainly; but the receiving human also restores to God what has been received. In that sense capability is a gratitude, a thanksgiving, a joy, a prayer fluctuating in its facility *between* the passive and the active. To be “capable of God” means to be utterly yielded to God, to be *agape*, heart, soul, mind, and strength. To be “capable of God” is to be “capable of being filled” by God. Thus:

When we have received any favor from God, we ought to retire . . . into our hearts, and say, “I come, Lord, to restore to Thee what Thou hast given; and I freely relinquish it, to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or earth in Thy presence, but a void capable of being filled with Thee and by Thee; as the air which is void and dark, is capable of being filled with the light of the sun, who withdraws it every day to restore it the next, there being nothing in the air that either appropriates this light or resists it? O give me the same facility of receiving and restoring Thy grace and good works! I say, Thine; for I acknowledge the root from which they spring is in Thee, and not in me” (n.d., 113).³³

³³The whole remarkable passage from which the selection has been taken is as follows: “Charity cannot be practiced right, unless, First, we exercise it the moment God gives the occasion; and , Secondly, retire the instant after to offer it to God by humble thanksgiving. And this for three reasons: First, to render Him what we have received from Him. The Second, to avoid the dangerous temptation which springs from the very goodness of these works. And the Third, to unite ourselves to God, in whom the soul expands itself in prayer, with all the graces we have received, and the good works we have done, to draw from Him new strength against the bad effects which these very works may produce in us, if we

Being capable of God is an openness to God which receives whatever God gives and receives it without laying claim to it. Being capable of God is being a “void,” a “nothing,” that waits in active anticipation of what is to come. It is a rhythm which is gifted, which is and remains a grace-gift.

Further, this is not for Wesley a private matter between me and the Spirit of God. Restoration in the image of God comes to me only in the Christ who threw his life open and thus is prophet, priest, and king. That is, to be filled with God is, according to Wesley, to be filled with God in the Christ who enlightens, hallows, atones:

The holiest of men still need Christ, as their Prophet, as “the light of the world.” For He does not give them light, but from

do not make use of the antidotes which God has ordained against these poisons. The true means to be filled anew with the riches of grace is thus to strip ourselves of it; and without this it is extremely difficult not to grow faint in the practice of good works.

“Good works do not receive their last perfection, till they, as it were, lose themselves in God. This is a kind of death to them, resembling that of our bodies, which will not attain their highest life, their immortality, till they lose themselves in glory of our souls, of rather of God, wherewith they shall be filled. And it is only what they had of earthly and mortal, which good works lose by this spiritual death.

“Fire is the symbol of love; and the love of God is the principle and the end of all our good works. But truth surpasses figure; and the fire of Divine love has this advantage over material fire, that it can reascend to its source, and raise thither with it all the good works which it produces. And by this means it prevents their being corrupted by pride, vanity, or any evil mixture. But this cannot be done otherwise than by making these good works in a spiritual manner die in God, by a deep gratitude, which plunges the soul in Him as in an abyss, with all that it is, and all the grace and works for which it is indebted to Him; a gratitude, whereby the soul seems to empty itself of them, that they may return to their source, as rivers seem willing to empty themselves, when they pour themselves with all their waters into the sea.

“When we have received any favor from God, we ought to retire, if not into our closets, into our hearts, and say, ‘I come, Lord, to restore to Thee what Thou hast given; and I freely relinquish it, to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or earth in Thy presence, but a void capable of being filled with Thee and by Thee; as the air which is void and dark, is capable of being filled with the light of the sun, who withdraws it every day to restore it the next, there being nothing in the air that either appropriates this light or resists it? O give me the same facility of receiving and restoring Thy grace and good works! I say, Thine; for I acknowledge the root from which they spring is in Thee, and not in me’” (112-113).

This passage does not harmonize well with those in Wesley that suggest the placement of the image of God *in* the human subject. Here, whatever the human is or has is given back to its source in God. The implication is that the restoration in the image of God is restoration of oneself away from oneself and to God.

moment to moment; the instant He withdraws, all is darkness. They still need Christ as their King; for God does not give them a stock of holiness. But unless they receive a supply every moment, nothing but unholiness would remain. They still need Christ as their Priest, to make atonement for their holy things. Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ (n.d., 82).

Such giving retains the precariousness of every gift *qua* gift. Christ as love bestows love. He gives himself and as we receive him we take on his nature. In this way *we* come to give. To grasp after the light, to hoard the holiness given by the holy one, to take that holiness as holy in itself, is to fail to understand that light and holiness are Christ and Christ is *agape*. Only in the crucified one is there the free resurrection life of joy, thanksgiving, and prayer. Moreover, to be filled with God in Christ is to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

[T]he life of God in the soul of a believer . . . implies a continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit: God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, the re-action of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; and an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all the words of our tongues, all the works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus. (1984a, 442)

“Restoration in the image of God” is the restoration of a capability of God which opens us to God the way lungs are opened to fresh air. We receive and we yield what we have received in a rhythm of love, praise, and prayer. Restoration in the image of God is bringing back to God what he has given, it is releasing one's grip, emptying one's pockets, yielding one's very life as a sacrifice to the One to whom the crucified one prayed.

It would have been all but impossible for Wesley to abandon a tradition which for over a millennium and a half had located the image of God *in* the human being. However, though the *imago* is dear to him, though he refers to it time and time again, he looks finally not to something we can get, something that can be made proper to us, but to something we can give. Oddly, what makes us most truly human is adherence to Jesus who

in his absolute human perfection, in his being all that a human is to be, emptied himself, gave himself away, with his eyes and ears trained on a silent sky. Though Christ utters a prayer from the cross, it is perhaps better to say that the crucifixion as a whole is one long, uninterrupted prayer that begins with his first cry in that dirty stable in Bethlehem. Wesley calls for us to turn to God and trust God even as we hang abandoned and alone. This is finally what it means to be a creature in the image of God.

The One Who Calls You Is Faithful

The term “restoration in the image of God” is a synonym in Wesley for the hallowing of human being (1985b, 204). It is, therefore, not without significance for the meaning of the *imago dei* that Wesley explicates the idea of entire sanctification by appealing to the phrase that makes up 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “pray without ceasing” (n.d., 17-19, 61, 84, 114).

God’s command to “pray without ceasing,” is founded on the necessity we have of His grace to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it, than the body can without air. Whether we think of, or speak to, God, whether we act or suffer for Him, all is prayer, when we have no other object than His love, and the desire of pleasing Him (n.d., 109).

To be hallowed is to be in Christ what we were created to be; it is to be creatures in God’s image and after his likeness; it is to be human; it is to pray. To pray is to ask of an other earnestly, humbly, without demand. Prayer is supplication, a plea for grace. To pray is to place oneself at the mercy of an other. It is to seek the favor of this other and to *wait*. It is to voice one’s concern and to *listen* for the other’s reply. It is to forsake one’s rights, to *yield* to the other, and there to *abide*.

Prayer has no certain outcome. Since one makes no demand and claims no privilege, its end is from the perspective of the supplicant completely out of control. Therefore, the customary posture of prayer is kneeling with one’s head bowed and one’s neck exposed and vulnerable. One gives oneself to the possibility of a fatal blow from the other, over whom one has relinquished all rights. It is therefore no small wonder that our English word “precarious” has been derived from *prec_rius*, the adjective form of the Latin *prec_r_*.

Genesis 1:27 invites us to think of human being as called forth by the freedom of God. Human being is a vulnerability *coram deo*. It has vis-

à-vis God no right or privilege, no ground upon which to stand and make a demand, no foundation upon which to build its case. Human being lives simply by the mercy of God, from moment to moment, and that since the first day that God breathed into Adam's nostrils. Humans are created to be vulnerable and to acknowledge vulnerability—oddly, with thanksgiving. Thus, humans are created to pray. Let us for once be humble enough to admit that none of us is *homo sapiens*. Let us for once be humble enough to admit that we are created not as something in ourselves, but as something for God; that you are and I am *homo precarius*. “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's” (Romans 14:7-8). This is an uncertain way to be, no doubt; there is, nonetheless, a significant blessed assurance to such a life of prayer. It is as if God in going out to us provides us with all that is needed for us to freely live from and to his outgoing, in his image and after his likeness.

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CHRISTIAN PERFECTION: TOWARD A NEW PARADIGM

by

H. Ray Dunning

It is generally recognized by insightful analysts of the Holiness tradition that this movement is in the midst of a serious identity crisis. Such an observation was raised in a dramatic fashion by Keith Drury's recent presidential address to the Christian Holiness Association. He spoke of the demise of the movement,¹ suggesting that, even though there is continuing talk and action among its adherents as though it were still alive, the corpse is upstairs in the bed without life. My own analysis of Drury's address and personal conversation with him, however, have yielded some interesting alternative insights. While he made some valid points, highlighting certain factors that would tend to divert the church (any church) from being the church today, what he chiefly declared to be dead was only a culturally and historically conditioned form of spiritual experience. The flow of history virtually makes it inevitable that such would be the case.

In order to understand the significance of this point, we note that a number of "paradigm shifts" have taken place in holiness theology as the Wesleyan message first moved to America and then within the history of the American Holiness Movement.²

¹Keith Drury, "The Death of the Holiness Movement," published in the God's Bible School *Gazette*, Spring, 1994.

²For an analysis of one of the more obvious examples of these shifts, see Victor P. Reasoner, "The American Holiness Movement's Paradigm Shift Concerning Holiness," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol. 31, Number 2, Fall, 1996.

Past Paradigm Shifts

The concept of a “paradigm shift” was made popular by the work of Thomas Kuhn in describing what has occurred in the field of natural science. The history of science, he pointed out, is a history of paradigm shifts. One of the simplest and easily accessible examples was the shift from a geocentric to a heliocentric understanding of our universe credited to the work of Copernicus and Kepler. A paradigm is a model in terms of which we interpret all of reality. It has become a popular idiom for discussing changes in theological models that have taken place over time.

One of the important paradigm shifts that has taken place in the Holiness movement in the United States has been a shift from the *Authority of Scripture* to the *Authority of Experience*. Wesley Tracy, in an introduction to *A Layman’s Guide to Sanctification* highlighted this shift in a dramatic way that also explains why it took place.

A hundred years ago our spiritual ancestors who led the American holiness movement saw the world they inherited crash in pieces at their feet.

What they had always believed about the Bible crumbled before the onslaught of European biblical criticism.

What they had always believed about their nation had just a generation before been shattered by the Civil War.

What they had always believed about the Christian faith withered before the attacks of what was then called “theological modernism.”

What our spiritual ancestors had always believed about the origin and destiny of humankind was washed away like a sand castle at high tide in the eyes of many when Charles Darwin popularized and seemed to legitimize evolution.

What they had always believed about the nature of truth, reality, and value was punctured by the new pragmatic philosophy of the father of progressive education, John Dewey. Dewey, just after the turn of the century, surveyed the wreckage of the way the world had been and philosophized that perhaps there were after all no absolutes. Truth, right, and reality are whatever works, he declared.

And even as those early Nazarenes were gathering at Pilot Point, Tex., the thought of Sigmund Freud was festering in Europe and would soon challenge second generation Nazarenes about what they had always been taught about who

and what they were as human beings. In popular thought man would become id, ego, and superego rather than body, soul, and spirit. The way was already paved for this by 1900 by men such as George Albert Coe, who had already nearly reduced Protestant Christian education to mental hygiene.

From the ruins of this multiple paradigm shift there arose a breed of men and women who were not ready to give in to the popular trends of the day. They believed in traditional Christianity, the Bible, social justice, and holiness of heart and life. They were passionate and compassionate, conservative and tough, innovative and courageous, energetic and shrewd. They believed that what persons and nations needed was the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. Like John Wesley they believed that sanctifying grace was God's cure for the private and corporate life of the race.

This group spread revival, organized churches, established orphanages, and planted holiness colleges all over the landscape. They proclaimed timeless truths. They did a lot of things gloriously right.

They had, predictably, a natural built-in resistance to intellectuals. After all, it was the intellectuals—the scientists, theologians, philosophers and scholars who could read Greek and Hebrew Bibles—who had destroyed the world they had inherited from their parents.

In an almost instinctive survival move they, more or less, cut themselves off from the biblical scholarship, the theological reflection, and the philosophical hypothesizing then taking place. Avoiding such things, it is not surprising that the good people of this movement came early to rely heavily on testimony and religious experience. They developed a way of being that was long on personal experience and short on in-depth understanding of the Scriptures and open-minded theological reflection. Such an imbalance was almost bound to appear.

Avoiding intellectualism and relying heavily upon testimony and experience produced a phenomenon of all but codifying the experiences of the influential and gifted people. As they powerfully testified about how God broke through to them in sanctifying grace, the methods themselves became the rule and practice of many followers.

The movement became largely internally sufficient, with no need for outside counsel. As the movement gained strength

and momentum it became more and more self-validating. In time it all but cut itself off even from its own roots in Wesleyanism.³

As this powerful statement points out, the authority for the preaching of the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification came to be experience itself. Two considerations, then, are crucial for good perspective.

1. Biblical Interpretation. Biblical texts were often treated out of context and what biblical exegesis that was employed depended largely on “types” and allegory, along with an ill-advised appeal to the aorist tense of the Greek. The latter has been authoritatively called into question by contemporary holiness scholars of the original language. Stephen Lennox, in his doctrinal dissertation on the exegesis of the early holiness movement, pointed out that the defense for such a use of scripture was a so-called “spiritual hermeneutic.” The point was that, if one were “filled with the Spirit,” one could see entire sanctification in these passages, whereas the unsanctified were blind to the biblical truth.⁴

Thus, in the absence of good exegetical work that could have provided a strong foundation if properly employed, experience itself became the source of understanding about experience. If one reads the numerous periodicals of the early Holiness movement, one would find a plethora of testimonies and biographies of spiritual journeys, all designed to enforce the idea of a second great experience in the life of the person. These became the paradigms that were preached as normative for all believers.

What is significant here is that the form of experience that came to be widely claimed as normative was derived from frontier revivalism. In the late 19th century the holiness proponents adopted the methods of the campmeeting and frontier revivals as means for the promotion of holiness. This type of experience was generally very emotional and traumatic and both conversions and sanctifications reflected this characteristic. This is not to say that this type of experience was inauthentic, but simply that it was a natural expression of a particular cultural ethos, as many studies have demonstrated.

³“Foreword” to H. Ray Dunning, *A Layman’s Guide to Sanctification* (K. C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1991), 9-11.

⁴Stephen J. Lennox, “Biblical Interpretation in the American Holiness Movement: 1875-1920,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1992).

It needs to be emphasized that scriptural support is not lacking for the authentic holiness message. But the deep suspicion about scholarly biblical work (see Tracy's comment above) resulted in not being exposed to the best of biblical studies that could have provided solid underpinning for the essence of the truth of sanctification in the Christian life. With the passing of time and significant cultural changes, the way people make meaning also changes and the nature of experience shifts. One can almost identify precisely the time of such a shift within the history of the American Holiness Movement. It came with World War II when, among other things, America moved from being largely a rural culture to an urban culture. The song that was popular then has more truth than poetry: "How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Patee?" The incisive words of Robert Chiles in his book *Theological Transitions in American Methodism* are really appropriate here. He observes: "It seems clear that a particular formulation cannot be imposed successfully on a religious disposition to which it is essentially alien."⁵ Whatever we may conclude about the demise of the modern Holiness movement, there is a consensus that it is presently suffering an identity crisis.

2. Theological Work. A second consideration concerns the nature of theology. Contrary to some perceptions, theology, especially theology of Christian experience, is not reality but simply a model of reality. Quite frequently such models take on a life of their own and come to function like Francis Bacon's "Idols of the Mind," particularly what he called the "Idol of the Theater." They come to stand in the way of Truth.

A simple analogy might throw more light on this point. A theological structure may be viewed either as a blueprint or a hypothesis. These are essentially different. A blueprint functions to determine the size, shape, and structure of a house. What is built is required to conform to the previously drawn pattern. By contrast, a hypothesis (as an important component of the modern scientific method) has the nature of tentativeness. On the basis of preliminary experience a hypothesis is formed and then it undergoes intensive testing to determine its adequacy in relation to reality. In fact, scientists have told me that the very nature of the scientific community is to challenge proposed hypotheses by repeated experimentation.

⁵Robert Chiles, *Theological Transitions in American Methodism, 1790-1925* (N. Y.: Abingdon Press, 1965), 16.

When experience does not support the hypothesis, then it is changed to conform more closely to reality, not vice versa.

All who know John Wesley's work would recognize that his theology of experience did not function as a blueprint, but as a hypothesis. Unfortunately, that approach was reversed among many of his successors, notably with such influential figures as Adam Clarke who insisted that experience must conform to the "pattern."⁶

Putting these two preliminary observations together, we can see the significance of what Mildred Bangs Wynkoop referred to as a "credibility gap." As she said: "Of all the credibility gaps in contemporary life, none is more real and serious than that which exists between [certain forms of] Christian, and particularly Wesleyan, doctrine and everyday human life. . . . We seem to proceed from a different world of thought when preaching doctrine than when we preach 'practical' sermons."⁷

It is easy enough to construct theological houses in which each part fits neatly together, complete consistency between words and ideas may be made to exist, yet few if anyone actually lives in that house. Many pastors have ceased to invite people to live in that house because so few seem to feel "at home" there. Of such, one may say, as has been said of the grand system of philosophy of Hegel by the end of the 19th century, "nothing has been disproved, everything has been abandoned."

Reorienting Our Thinking

These observations move us from analysis to this simple prognosis: We can either mummify the blueprint or modify the hypothesis. Is there a way forward, theologically, for today's Holiness movement? I believe there is and I want to hypothetically suggest that it may be found in certain themes in Wesley that have not been centrally cultivated in the modern Holiness movement, but nonetheless have come to expression in a contemporary model that has been used by certain Christian ethicists like Stanley Hauerwas, Bruce Birch, Larry Rasmussen and others, namely that Christian ethics should be viewed in terms of *virtue* and *character*.

The two themes in Wesley that come into place here are, first, what Hauerwas has referred to as "Wesley's insistence on the empirical charac-

⁶Adam Clarke, *Christian Theology* (N. Y.: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), 206-9.

⁷Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (K. C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 39.

ter of Christian convictions,” by which he means that “Christianity, for Wesley, is about changed lives and any belief that does not serve that end held little interest for him.”⁸ It should be recognized that Wesley’s very definition of sanctification as “a real change” indicated the truth of this observation. He always understood sanctification in ethical ways. Change was understood empirically. How crucial this qualification is for a doctrine of holiness may be seen by noting how the successors of Wesley became preoccupied with cultic language that obviated the necessity of empirical change.

Language that speaks of “cleansing” and “purity,” while biblical in origin, is also cultic in origin and became the dominant idiom among American holiness theologians. This can be seen clearly by reading H. Orton Wiley’s section on “entire sanctification” where the near exclusive use of “cleansing” language appears. The problem here is that the use of this language does not necessarily retain the empirically ethical element, as was the case with the normed biblical use and Wesley’s terminology. One can speak of an experience of “purity of heart” and “cleansing from sin” in such a way as to result in a divorce between “inner, inaccessible experience” and empirical ethical transformation. The same thing may be said of the dominant paradigm introduced into holiness theology by Phoebe Palmer. It too places us squarely in the context of ceremonial holiness.

The second theme from Wesley is directly related to a paradigm shift that he, himself, effected. He was seeking to provide a conceptual model in order to make intelligible his teaching about Christian perfection as a present possibility. In both Catholic and Protestant thought, sanctification had generally been thought of in terms of the law, and still is in popular evangelicalism. Particularly in Protestant theology, it is taught that the faith that is the basis for justification will manifest itself in good works. At least with Calvin this meant an increasing conformity to the law. But, in all cases, this model led unerringly to the conclusion that “entire sanctification” was impossible in this life and Calvin was careful to emphasize this point in the context of some beautiful descriptions of the life of holiness. Hence, Wesley had to interpret sanctification according to a different paradigm if his teaching was to stand.

⁸Stanley Hauerwas, “Characterizing Perfection: Second Thoughts on Character and Sanctification,” *Wesleyan Theology Today*, ed. by Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985), 251.

He apparently first discovered this paradigm in reading four works early in his Christian pilgrimage: Jeremy Taylor's *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*, Thomas a' Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, and William Law's *Christian Perfection and Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. From the first two in particular he came to see the importance of "simplicity of intention and purity of affection." He shifted the emphasis on sanctification from law-keeping to intentionality and this came to focus in terms of "love." Thus he came to uniformly define "entire sanctification" or "Christian perfection" as "loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself."

Support for and clarification of this paradigm comes from an unexpected source, St. Thomas Aquinas. Historically, love and knowledge had been understood as correlatives. Perfect love was possible only on the basis of perfect knowledge. In this light, Thomas suggests three possibilities for "perfection" in this life:

A. Loving God for all He is worth. Perfect love for God would depend upon perfect knowledge of God. This degree of love is possible for God alone, since He alone knows or comprehends himself with this degree of completeness.

B. Loving God for all we are worth. Since our full capacity for knowledge will exist only in the life to come, this too is excluded from present possibility.

C. There is a third sort of perfection that excludes "everything contrary to the motive or movement of love for God." This third sort of perfection is possible in this life in two modes: "in the exclusion from the will of anything contradictory to love, that is, mortal sin, and in the will's rejection of anything that prevents the disposition of the soul toward God from being total."⁹

Practically, this makes clear that "perfection" does not mean that less than perfect feelings, motives, or dispositions may not rise up within one. It certainly does not mean, as E. Stanley Jones uncharacteristically taught, that in entire sanctification the subconscious is cleansed. It does mean that when the less-than-perfect motives and dispositions present themselves to

⁹See Paul Bassett and W. M. Greathouse, *Exploring Christian Holiness, The Historical Development* (K. C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985), 137-138.

us from within, we are aware of the fact that they fall short of the “mind that was in Christ” and will that they not be present.

One might note incidentally that some holiness teachers have recognized the presence of these, but have attempted to avoid the implications involved by seeking to make a distinction between matters that arise from within and those suggestions that come to us from without. This is usually described in terms of temptation. In fact, this is a distinction without a difference. Who can distinguish “temptations” in such a fashion? No one since all such motions, without exception, are felt or experienced “within.”

According to the contemporary ethicists named above, the concept of “character” suggests that the form and structure of our lives express certain configurations of action, affection, and responsibility. Character is reflected in the tendency to act, feel, and think in certain definable ways. Generally speaking, ethical character refers to the sum and range of specifically moral qualities an individual or community possesses. This means that there are certain normative dispositions that are characterized as virtues. Virtues may be defined as dispositions that comprise persistent attitudes or “habits” of the heart and mind that dispose one to a consistency of certain action and expression. The cultivation of virtue has traditionally been the aim of character formation.

In addition to dispositions or virtues, two other factors have been identified as basic structural elements that make up character: perception and intention. We may summarize in this way: “virtue” refers to the affective aspect of human life; “perception” refers to the cognitive aspect; and “intentionality” expresses the volitional aspect. In the moral language of character, perception is more than simple observation. It involves the selective internalization and integration of events, thereby giving shape to the way people experience events and render them meaningful. The role of perception is important because the subject matter of character is in essence the self in relation to the perceived world, including God, the other person, and the earth.¹⁰ It might be immediately recognized that this encompasses the parameters of the *imago dei* as identified by exegeting the biblical texts, and which Randy Maddox argues is Wesley’s own con-

¹⁰William P. Brown, *Character in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996), 7-8.

ception.¹¹ When sanctification is properly perceived as the “renewal of persons in the image of God” (Wesley) and the paradigm for this ideal is the person of Christ, the crucial significance of perception is apparent.

This is an important consideration in spiritual maturation and is reinforced by the frequent scriptural references to “knowledge” as a component of growth in grace (see 2 Peter 3:18). Many treatments of the theme of spiritual growth are developed by drawing parallels to organic growth. But the essential elements in organic growth are external to the plant itself, in a word, environment. Spiritual growth is radically different and, as with all personal development, entails an internal dimension that necessarily includes a concept of “adulthood.” From the biblical perspective, it is clear that the epitome of adulthood is to be found in Jesus Christ, the only “full grown” person from a spiritual perspective. This means that perception, or knowledge, of the Christ-pattern of adulthood is an essential ingredient in sanctification.

The second element of moral character is intention. Intentions consist of “expressions of character which show aim, direction, purpose; they express the volitional side of character.”¹² “Presupposing a degree of self-determination, intention expresses purpose and gives direction to choice. Intention builds upon free choice and thus provides a basis for ethical accountability. More than discrete acts of the will, intentions provide coherence to the decisions and actions of an individual or community. They are by nature ‘goal-oriented determinations.’ In short, through intention, the language of character casts the self as having duration and growth, the self in formation.”¹³

Major Implications

I see three major implications of this analysis for the theology of holiness. They will be summarily stated without extensive elaboration here.

1. Implication One. The emphasis on “choice” resists the reduction of the moral to the magical and addresses the concern expressed in an

¹¹Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 68.

¹²Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), quoted in Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 8.

¹³Brown, *Character in Crisis*, 8.

insightful quote from Mildred Wynkoop in which she is emphasizing the moral character of a relational vs. a substantival interpretation of spiritual experience:

If God acts toward man apart from his thinking and choice; if salvation is “applied” to man by a supernatural alteration of his mind, body, psyche, “deeper down” than his conscious life, where he cannot be held responsible; if man can expect a “psychological mutation” so that he no longer needs to feel the full force of temptation, then—though God is a personal Being and man is a person—“personal relationship” is a fiction, biblical salvation is a myth.¹⁴

This statement is made in the context of insisting on a “moral” understanding of holiness rather than a “magical” one. As she says, “In the Christian way of thinking, religion without ethical consequences would be sterile and meaningless.”¹⁵ At the practical level, Wynkoop’s perspective provides a barrier to the all-too-common claims to inner “cleansing” accompanied by unethical behavior and attitudes.

2. Implication Two. A viable model is provided for addressing what has been both an enduring and a plaguing problem through the history of the Holiness movement, the problem of conceptualizing how sanctification can be both “crisis” and “process.” The traditional formulations have had great difficulty in avoiding the collapsing into one or the other. “Intention” presupposes a “set direction” and at the same time a continuous pursuit of this direction without needing to claim some sort of completion in terms of static perfection. Albert Outler has distinguished between the idea of “perfected perfection,” which he claims has been advocated by some of Wesley’s followers, and “perfectible perfection,” which he insists is Wesley’s view. The latter is obviously the only viable claim and it makes sense in terms of “intentionality.”

Holiness people have often quoted Kierkegaard’s famous dictum that “purity of heart is to will one thing,” but I suspect that we have failed to take seriously the full implications of this statement. This proposal does so. If “purity” is interpreted in this “intentional” way, then Outler’s rather severe criticism of the dictum that distinguishes purity from maturity as a way of speaking of moment and process can be obviated and the concept

¹⁴Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 169.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 173.

has real significance.¹⁶ “Virtue” or disposition (the affective realm) is the result of the maturation of character as the outcome of the interplay between perception and intention.

3. Implication Three. The third implication is closely related to the second. Certainly it is not unrealistic claim to hold to the possibility of a focused intentionality which may or may not exclude the uprising of less than perfect feelings or motives or attitudes as well as occasional (even repeated) falling short of “perfection,” but which wills that such negatives not be present and continues to pursue the more perfect actualization of the ideal on which the total person is focused.

Hauerwas’ way of stating this is instructive, partly because it places it squarely within the context of the central structure of New Testament theology:

Character can provide a way of explicating the kind of determination of the believer in Christ without necessarily destroying the tension between the “already but not yet” quality of the Christian life. The idea of character, while not removing this tension, will at least provide a way of making the Christian life intelligible as a definite form of life that results from the commitments distinctive to being a Christian. It can do this because it makes clear the kind of orientation and direction a man’s life acquires through God’s determination without isolating that orientation as a separate entity from the source that provides its basis and substance.¹⁷

Recall that Paul’s testimony in Phil. 3:12-14 using the dynamic language of “perfection” (*telios*) “perfectly” reproduces this pattern. The perfection he claims (focused direction for his life [“this one thing I do”]) is characterized by the intentionality of unswervingly pursuing the perfection he denies but has perceived to be proper goal of all Christian existence. Here is a preachable and possible version of experience that articulates in a contemporary idiom what we have traditionally (but perhaps inadequately) referred to as entire sanctification.

¹⁶Albert Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Tidings, 1975), 80.

¹⁷Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1985), 183.

The perceptive reader may have discerned an important omission in the above analysis and prognosis, the element of the work of the Spirit or transforming grace. I am not suggesting a psychological reorientation merely, but a controlling focus that can only occur when enabled by Divine assistance and then functions in the realm of the moral rather than the magical. Here is a programmatic proposal (a hypothesis) for further exploration and testing in the fires of human experience which is, after all, the acid test of all theological interpretations.

A RECONFIGURATION OF POWER: THE BASIC TRAJECTORY IN JOHN WESLEY'S PRACTICAL THEOLOGY¹

by

Kenneth J. Collins

In an age when human life has been devalued through numerous wars, the instrumental use of the unborn, the exploitation of the poor, and an arrogant use of power, it is surprising that the Wesleyan community has not responded to this repudiation of human dignity by drawing on John Wesley's doctrine of God, in particular his understanding of the Trinity, as well as on his anthropology which specifically affirms that human beings are ever created in the image of God. For example, in terms of the former emphasis, only two articles of any note have appeared on Wesley's teaching on the triune God.² And though much more has been done with respect to Wesley's anthropology, few of these studies treat the issue of oppression and the abuse of power which emerge from an autonomous—and usurping—conception of humanity.³

¹An earlier version of this article was presented by Dr. Collins to the Tenth Meeting of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies.

²Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, "Why Wesley was a Trinitarian," *The Drew Gateway* 59 (Spring 1990): 26-43, and Thomas Wright Pillow, "John Wesley's Doctrine of the Trinity," *The Cumberland Seminarian* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 1-10.

³Some of the more significant studies on Wesley's doctrine of humanity are as follows: A. R. Tippett, "Church Which is His Body: A Model from Physical Anthropology," *Missiology* 2 (April 1974): 147-59.; John C. Luik, "Marxist and Wesleyan Anthropology and the Prospects for a Marxist-Wesleyan Dialogue," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 54-66.; John Chongnam Cho, "Adam's Fall and God's Grace: John Wesley's Theological Anthropology,"

To address this deficiency, the following essay will maintain that, since Wesley considered the essence of God to be fundamentally relational (holy love) at its core, human redemption, as a restoration of the *imago dei*, consequently involves the undermining of autonomous, self-possessive pride—a pride which is the engine of human oppression. Furthermore, this essay will demonstrate that, according to Wesley, God is humble and lowly, not simply as *revealed* to creation (Matt. 11:28) but also in terms of the divine *nature* itself since each of the persons of the Godhead is other and relationally directed. In light of this, it is not surprising to learn that Wesley highlights the salient virtue of humility, which expresses a proper relation to others, in his sermon “The Circumcision of the Heart,” as very conducive to human sanctification and betterment.

Moreover, it will be argued that, given Wesley's understanding of the nature of God and the requisites for human redemption and liberation, salvation is necessarily communal in nature. That is, salvation ever involves a death to sinful independence, pride, and exploitative self-will to become a part of a larger and more meaningful whole, namely, the body of Christ, the community of the redeemed, the church. More importantly for the task at hand, this essay will contend that Wesley's conception of God as well as his understanding of human salvation jointly evince a transvaluation of “power.” Accordingly, in a setting of relational trust, where the sinful self now humbly acknowledges the higher realities of God and the church, surrender brings power; submission to that which is greater than the self brings strength. Put another way, the old sinful independence is now judged as the enslavement that it always was and connectedness to others is deemed liberation.

This essay will conclude by noting that the power of the church, as a community of the redeemed, according to Wesley, constitutes a different kind of power than the grasping, acquisitive, self-absorbed power of the sinful self and oppressive communities which are rife in the world. To be sure, it is the “otherness” of this power, informed by love and strengthened by community, which is both remarkably attractive and healing, and

Evangelical Review of Theology 10, no. 3 (July 1986): 202-13.; Hiroaki Matsumoto, “John Wesley's Understanding of Man,” *Wesleyan Quarterly Review* 4 (1967): 83-102.; Michael J. Scanlon, “The Christian Anthropology of John Wesley” (S.T.D. Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1969); and John Chong-nahm Cho, “John Wesley's View of Fallen Man,” in *Spectrum of Thought*, ed. Michael Peterson (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Press, 1982), 67-77.

it is the uncanniness of this power that characterizes the distinctiveness of the church's mission to a hurting world.

I. God as Triune

A. Wesley On Trinitarian Language. Though the terminology of "Trinity" and "triune"⁴ surface in Wesley's writings, his usual way of referring to the Godhead is basically descriptive, not systematic, a way which keeps close to the biblical idiom. Thus, Wesley often refers to the Godhead as the Three-One God as revealed, for example, in his letter to Miss Ritchie in 1777 in which he writes: "Do you never lose your consciousness of the presence of the Three-One God? And is your testimony of his Spirit, that you are saved from inward sin, never obscured?"⁵ And a few years later, in 1785 to be exact, Wesley depicts the coming eschatological renewal, in his sermon "The New Creation," as a time when there will be

a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin. And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!⁶

Beyond this, in 1789, Wesley explores the experiential dimensions of the Godhead for a life of piety in his letter to Mrs. Cock in which he questions: "How is it with you now, my dear friend? Is your soul now as much alive as ever? Do you still find deep and uninterrupted communion with God; with the Three-One God; with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit?"⁷

⁴There are actually very few uses of the term "triune" in Wesley's writings. Cf. "Thoughts Upon Jacob Behmen," in Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 9:511, and John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 6:253.

⁵Telford, *Letters*, 6:266.

⁶Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vols. 1-4. *The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 2:510 ("The New Creation").

⁷Telford, *Letters*, 8:183. This letter shows the importance which Wesley attached to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. Though often accused of enthusiasm, Wesley realized the impossibility of living the Christian life, in any satisfactory way, without the Spirit. Cf. Lycurgus M. Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962); Albert C. Outler, "A Focus of the Holy Spirit: Spirit and Spirituality in John Wesley," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1991), 159-74.

Wesley's preference for the nomenclature of Three-One and his reluctance, at times, to use the term "Trinity" grew out of a number of considerations. First of all, Wesley took exception to the religious bigotry and intolerance that would burn a person at the stake for not using the specific term Trinity. Thus, in reference to Calvin's treatment of Servetus, Wesley exclaims: "I think them very good words [Trinity and Person]. But I should think it very hard to be burned alive for not using them; especially with a slow fire, made of moist, green wood."⁸ Although the irony of this ungodly action was lost on Calvin, it clearly was not lost on Wesley.

Second, Wesley made an important distinction between the *fact* and the *manner* of the Trinity, as revealed in his letter to Miss March in 1771 in which he writes: "The mystery does not lie in the fact 'These Three are One,' but in the manner of accounting how they are one. But with this I have nothing to do. I believe the fact. As to the manner (wherein the whole mystery lies) I believe nothing about it."⁹ Given this distinction, Wesley naturally did not insist on assent to the Athanasian Creed for salvation,¹⁰ nor did he require the use of the words "Trinity" or "person" for the sake of orthodoxy.¹¹ In each instance, Wesley was content to let the unsystematic biblical language remain.

Nevertheless, such reserve on Wesley's part does not mean that he failed to explore the significance of the *nature* of this Three-One God, especially in terms of the process of human redemption. In fact, Wesley

⁸Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10: 350. For other references to Servetus in Wesley's writings, cf. Reginald W. Ward, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 18, *Journals and Diaries I* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 19:204; and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:168, 266, 350 and 351.

⁹Telford, *Letters*, 5:270.

¹⁰Outler, *Sermons*, 2:377 ("On the Trinity"). Wesley also notes in this sermon, "On the Trinity" that Dean Swift wrote a tract on this subject and demonstrated that everyone who attempted to explain it have "utterly lost their way." Cf. 2:377.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 2:377-378 ("On the Trinity"). Also in his sermon, "The Way to the Kingdom," Wesley notes: "I say of the *heart*. For neither does religion consist in *orthodoxy* or *right opinions*; which although they are not properly outward things, are not in the heart, but the understanding." See also Outler, *Sermons*, 1:694 ("The Way to the Kingdom"); 2:483 ("The End of Christ's Coming"); 4:66 ("The Unity of the Divine Being"); and 4:146 ("On the Wedding Garment") for some of Wesley's more important comments on the issue of orthodoxy.

was so impressed with Marquis de Renty's claim that he bore about him an experimental verity, "a plentitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity,"¹² that he used this observation as a kind of standard by means of which he assessed the experience of the Methodists. Thus, while Wesley was preaching in Bristol in 1786, he observed one who could say with Monsieur De Renty, "I bear with me an experimental verity, and a plentitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity."¹³ Earlier, during the 1770's, Wesley had considered Christian experience in terms of the presence of the Trinity, but he indicated that such spiritual depth pertains not to babes but only to "fathers in Christ."¹⁴ Beyond this, Wesley suggests something of a correlation between the persons of the Trinity and the maturation of human spiritual experience when he observes in 1777 that Charles Perronet, a trusted friend, was led "at first to Jesus the Mediator. . . . Afterwards, he had communion with the Father, next with the Spirit, and then with the whole Trinity."¹⁵

Interestingly enough, at one time Wesley had actually believed that all those who were perfected in love had the experience of the distinct persons of the Father, Son, and the Spirit in their souls and of the oneness of the Godhead, but he eventually changed his mind on this issue. In 1787, for example, in a letter to Lady Maxwell, Wesley points out:

I think there are three or four in Dublin, who likewise speak clearly and scripturally of having had such a manifestation of the several Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity. Formerly I thought this was the experience of all those that were perfected in love; but I am now clearly convinced that it is not. Only a few of these are favoured with it.¹⁶

¹²Ibid., 2:385 ("On the Trinity").

¹³Reginald W. Ward, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 18. *Journals and Diaries I* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 23:386.

¹⁴Outler, *Sermons*, 2:385 ("On the Trinity"). For more on Wesley's distinction between babes or children, young men and fathers, see Outler's note number 32 with respect to the sermon, "On Sin in Believers," 1: 321.

¹⁵Telford, *Letters*, 6:263. Charles Perronet was the second son of Vincent Perronet. Now it was Vincent Perronet to whom Wesley addressed *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* and who was sometimes referred to as "the archbishop of Methodism." For other references which associate the Trinity and spiritual experience, cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13: 59, 60, 77, 107, 112.

¹⁶Ibid., 7:392. In this letter Wesley also indicates that Charles Perronet was the first person he was acquainted with who was blessed with the same experience as Marquis de Renty; Miss Ritchie was the second; and Miss Roe (Mrs. Rogers) the third.

So then, on the one hand, the experience of the distinct persons of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, as in the case of Charles Perronet, is apparently reserved only for the spiritually mature; on the other hand, not all who are perfected in love will enjoy such a gracious experience. For whatever reason, Wesley did not offer an explanation as to why some who were perfected in love enjoyed this experiential knowledge of the Trinity while others did not. What remains important, however, is that some of the Methodists, Miss Ritchie and Miss Roe (later Mrs. Rogers) among them, did indeed receive such grace. The question now becomes, what is it about the nature of the Trinity that a spiritual and experiential knowledge of the Three-One God is apparently reserved only for the pure in heart. Does such an association provide any clues concerning the being of God, the nature of spiritual experience, and the larger processes of redemption? It is to these questions that we now turn.

B. The Nature of God. It is quite clear that Wesley read at least two of the Cappadocian Fathers since there are several references in his writings to Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nazianzen. More importantly for the task at hand, the idea that the Godhead is essentially a *relation* of persons in love and whose persons are ever other-directed, so developed in the writings of the Cappadocians, surfaces in Wesley's own thought, especially when he considers love itself to be God's reigning, darling attribute. In his treatise *Predestination Calmly Considered*, for example, Wesley observes:

So ill do election and reprobation agree with the truth and sincerity of God! But do they not agree least of all with the scriptural account of his love and goodness? that attribute which God peculiarly claims, wherein he glories above all the rest. It is not written, "God is justice," or "God is truth" (although he is just and true in all his ways). But it is written, "God is love," love in the abstract, without bounds; and "there is no end of his goodness."¹⁷

The effulgent other-directedness of the love of God is also evident in Wesley's treatise *Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty*, where he points out that God, out of sheer freedom and no doubt as an expression of love, brought forth the Creation through "his own sovereign will."¹⁸ Elsewhere,

¹⁷Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:227.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 10:361. In his "Thoughts Upon Divine Sovereignty" Wesley makes an important distinction between God as Creator and Governor. In the former role, the Almighty acts according to "his own mere sovereign will," but as Governor, the Lord acts according to "the invariable rules both of justice and mercy." Cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:362.

in his sermon “Salvation by Faith,” Wesley underscores the freedom, grace, and sheer favor of God in bringing humanity into existence.¹⁹ “All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man,” Wesley observes, “are of his mere grace, bounty or favour: his free, undeserved favour, favour altogether undeserved, man having no claim to the least of his mercies.”²⁰

Further clues to John Wesley’s understanding of the triune God as holy, outgoing, energetic love are found in some of the trinitarian hymns which he selected for publication from those penned by his brother Charles. In hymn 248 (of the 1780 collection), for example, Charles wrote:

And when we rise in love renewed,
Our souls resemble thee,
An image of the Triune God
To all eternity.²¹

Elsewhere, in hymn 253, the younger brother wrote with the elder’s considerable approval:

Soon as our pardoned hearts believe
That thou art pure, essential love,
The proof we in ourselves receive
Of the Three Witnesses above.²²

Though John Wesley has much to say about the Trinity and the love of God, there is no evidence that he ever read the third Cappadocian, Gregory of Nyssa, nor did he develop the idea of *perichoresis*, so important to Gregory, in any significant way. This is something of an oddity, to be sure, because the general flavor of Wesley’s theology, especially in its val-

¹⁹Outler, *Sermons*, 1:117 (“Salvation by Faith”).

²⁰Ibid. Though Wesley’s theology is characterized by divine/human cooperation, his understanding of grace, especially as the favor of God, reveals the freedom and the sheer unmerited flavor of such grace. Cf. “Free Grace,” in Outler, *Sermons*, 3:544 ff. Note a contemporary Wesleyan systematic theology developed entirely around this understanding of God (Barry Callen, *God As Loving Grace*, Evangel Press, 1996).

²¹Franz Hilderbrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds., *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 7: A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1983), 390.

²²Ibid., 394.

uations of love, humility, and service, resonates quite well with Gregory's emphases. Clearly, Wesley could have strengthened his soteriology as well as his anthropology by a more serious consideration of what modern theologians call the "economic" Trinity or what the Eastern orthodox refer to as the "energies" of God. In other words, it would have been better if Wesley had explored the revelation of the Three-One God both in creation and in the history of salvation and in a way which would have underscored *perichoresis* or *coinherence* with respect to the divine activity. But for whatever reason, Wesley chose not to pursue this theme.

At any rate, additional clues to Wesley's understanding of the nature of God can be garnered from his Christology where there is no essential difference between the Christ who is revealed to us, as self-giving humble love, and what God essentially is. Commenting on Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, not on some sleek dark stallion, the favorite of Roman generals and dignitaries, but atop a donkey, Wesley underscores the deep humility of the Savior which undermines our normal valuations. Wesley explains:

Was it a mean attitude wherein our Lord then appeared? Mean even to contempt! I grant it: I glory in it: it is for the comfort of my soul; for the honour of his humility, and for the utter confusion of all worldly pomp and grandeur.²³

On a more contemporary note, the twentieth-century theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer referred to Christ as "the man for others," as one who was the servant of all. Wesley would have understood such wisdom.

Add to these preceding observations on the divine love and freedom Wesley's clear teaching that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God, and we begin to get an understanding that men and women were created for nothing less than fellowship with God, that they were brought into being to participate in the intimacy of the divine life, and that out of this communion, the love of neighbor would invariably flow. Put another way, the communal nature of the Three-One God, whose essence is aptly expressed in the relations of love, suggests that human beings evince that image in which they were created, not in isolation nor individ-

²³John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmull Publishers), 69. (Matt. 21:5). See also p. 42 (Matt. 11:29) where Wesley indicates that meekness or lowliness is indicative of a proper relation to God and of the serenity which is a consequence of that relation.

ualistically, but as they are drawn out of themselves, as they transcend themselves, in both the love of God and neighbor.

II. Humanity as Created for Relationship with God

Since the Three-One God is relational in nature, a communion of holy love, and since humanity itself was created for fellowship with the triune God, it is not surprising to learn that Wesley describes the root of human evil, not in terms of pride as do other theologians such as Augustine, but in terms of the language of relationships, of unbelief and alienation in particular. Put another way, the root of all sin for Wesley is faithlessness, a perverted relationship to God, out of which all other evil flows. Commenting on John 16:9, for example, Wesley explains: “Unbelief . . . is the confluence of all sins, and binds them all down upon us.²⁴ Even more emphatically, Wesley points out with respect to Hebrews 3:12 that “unbelief is the parent of all evil, and the very essence of unbelief lies in departing from God, as the living God—the fountain of all our life, holiness, happiness.”²⁵ Elsewhere, in his sermon “On the Fall of Man,” Wesley again underscores unbelief as the primal factor and exclaims: “Here sin began, namely, unbelief. The woman was deceived, says the Apostle. She believed a lie: she gave more credit to the word of the devil than to the word of God.”²⁶

For Wesley, then, a lack of faith in God, the desire to be independent, is the true foundation for the subsequent evils of pride and self-will. Again, out of alienation and unbelief, pride and self-will inevitably flow; out of alienation and unbelief every other evil disposition emerges. That this assessment is correct is also borne out in Wesley’s further comments as he considers the solution to the problem of human wickedness: “As

²⁴Ibid., 260 (John 16:9).

²⁵Ibid., 570 (Hebrews 3:12). See also Wesley’s comments on Luke 15:12 and John 16:9. Although Wesley states that “pride is the great root of all unkind affections,” in his notes on James 4:6 this does not detract from his earlier emphasis since his references to unbelief are far more numerous and substantial. Indeed, even in his notes on James, Wesley is, no doubt, presuming that unbelief lies behind pride which is then productive of “all unkind affections.” Put another way, pride is penultimate (and therefore the root of much evil), but not ultimate.

²⁶Outler, *Sermons*, 2:402-03 (“On the Fall of Man”).

Satan began his work in Eve by tainting her with unbelief, so the Son of God begins his work in man by enabling us to believe in him.”²⁷

But Wesley not only considered unbelief in terms of the origin of sin, the Fall of humanity in particular, but he also viewed it as an ongoing problem that even characterizes, to a certain degree, the hearts of the children of God. To be sure, the tendency “to self-will, to atheism, or idolatry and, above all, to unbelief, whereby, in a thousand ways, and under a thousand pretences, we are ever departing, more or less, from the living God,” forms the basis for the repentance of believers, a topic which Wesley explores in a number of his sermons.²⁸ Thus, even after they are justified and born of God, believers still feel in their heart “sometimes pride or self-will, sometimes anger or unbelief. They find one or more of these frequently *stirring* in their heart, though not *conquering*.”²⁹ Naturally, this characteristic of the Christian life indicates the continuing need of believers to be in a proper relation to a God of love and to trust in the grace of the Most High.

Though unbelief is the root of sin in Wesley's eyes, its irreducible essence, it is almost immediately manifested in the form of autonomous pride. Commenting on the fall of Eve, Wesley remarks: “So unbelief begot pride. She thought herself wiser than God, capable of finding a better way to happiness than God had taught her.”³⁰ In this context, as elsewhere in Wesley's writings, it is important to realize that pride is not a particular vice such as greed or envy; it is not a species of “moralism,” but refers to a far more serious “existential” and systemic problem: that is, it

²⁷Ibid., 2:480-81. For other references to Wesley's teaching that unbelief is the root of all sin, cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:208, 223, 288 and Outler, *Sermons*, 2:129. For two valuable studies on John Wesley's doctrine of original sin, cf. Leon O. Hynson, “Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 65-83.; and Craig Alan Blaising, “John Wesley's Doctrine of Original Sin” (Th.D. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979).

²⁸Outler, *Sermons*, 2:165. See also the sermons “On Sin in Believers” and “On the Repentance of Believers,” 1:144-156 and 1:156-170.

²⁹Ibid., 2:159. For additional references to unbelief as an ongoing problem, cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:447; 10:297; and 12:294.

³⁰Ibid., 2:477. In this sermon (“The End of Christ's Coming”) Wesley also indicates that unbelief gives rise to self-will and foolish desires. For additional studies on Wesley's doctrine of sin, cf. John R. Tyson, “Sin, Self and Society: John Wesley's Hamartiology Reconsidered [his sermons on several occasions],” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 77-89.; Barry Edward Bryant, “John Wesley's Doctrine of Sin” (Ph.D. Dissertation, King's College, University of London, 1992); and Donal J. Dorr, “The Wesleyan Doctrine of Sin and Salvation” (D.D. Thesis, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1964).

refers to the establishment of the self (and its will) as the highest value in life. For example, in correcting Thomas Maxfield, a fanatic who was disrupting the Evangelical revival in the early 1760s, Wesley alludes to more than simply a character defect or vice when he writes:

But I dislike something which has the appearance of pride, of overvaluing yourselves, and undervaluing others; particularly the Preachers; thinking not only that they are blind, and that they are not sent of God, but even that they are dead; dead to God, and walking in the way to hell. . . .³¹

Moreover, Wesley's critical and sophisticated understanding of the nature of pride also took account of those intellectual movements during the Enlightenment of his own age which celebrated, among other things, human autonomy. And though such leading thinkers as Kant still affirmed the importance of belief in a higher being, their thought was often used to sustain a practical if not a theoretical atheism in the sense that the self was now "free" to draw simply from its own resources—what in Wesley's estimation was otherwise an apt definition of sin. For Wesley, on the other hand, the moral law which informs ethical and spiritual life does not represent the rational insights of a largely self-legislating self; instead it represents the will of an evoking, holy God who transcends us in being, power and glory.

III. The Path of Return: Faith and Humility

If the diagnosis of human ills, according to Wesley, is ultimately unbelief and penultimately pride, then the prescription, the way back to health and salvation, to the Three-One God of relational love, should entail not self-assertion, not self-aggrandizement nor autonomy, but both faith and humility. And this is precisely what is found in Wesley's writings. Indeed, though earlier in his life Wesley had confused sanctification with justification, particularly when he was in Georgia, after 1738 he clearly taught that faith and grace mark the path of return, that they point the way not only to acceptance by a holy God but also to human integrity.³²

³¹Ward, *Journals and Diaries*, 21:395. Wesley also notes in this context that he disliked Maxfield's depreciating justification by saying that a justified person is not 'in Christ,' is not 'born of God' . . ." for such a judgment is a prescription for antinomianism.

³²Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:111. In particular Wesley writes: "I was ordained Deacon in 1725, and Priest in the year following. But it was many years after this before I was convinced of the great truths above recited. During all that time I was utterly ignorant of the nature and condition of justification. Sometimes I confounded it with sanctification (particularly when I was in Georgia)."

Few can read Wesley's writings without soon discovering that his definition of faith is remarkably sophisticated. Faith not only is a "species of belief," an "assent to a proposition upon rational grounds,"³³ it is not only a spiritual sense, a "divine evidence of things unseen,"³⁴ but it is also—and perhaps most importantly of all—a sure trust and confidence in Jesus Christ.³⁵ This last sense of faith, which is often referred to more technically as *fiducia*, is prevalent in Wesley's writings after 1738 and formed the basis of much of his preaching throughout his life.

Though it is remarkably clear that Wesley taught both justification and sanctification by grace through faith from 1738 forward as the antidote to the evil of alienation and unbelief,³⁶ and though his consideration of faith as a redemptive grace has received much scholarly attention, his other soteriological prescription which addresses the penultimate problem of human pride has virtually been neglected by Methodist theologians and historians.³⁷ Such neglect has often led to a skewed reading of Wesley's

³³Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley, The Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25:175-76. In this letter of July 29, 1725, Wesley maintains more specifically that "I call faith an assent upon rational grounds, because I hold divine testimony to be the most reasonable of all evidence whatever. Faith must necessarily at length be resolved into reason."

³⁴Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13:428. See also Wesley's letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton, 10:77.

³⁵Ward, *Journals*, 18:233-34. This last definition of faith was mediated to Wesley largely through the wise counsel of Peter Böhler, although Wesley later explicated this faith, especially after he had returned from Herrnhut, using the Anglican doctrinal standards. Cf. Ward, *Journals*, 19:21.

³⁶For a good example of the importance which Wesley attached to faith in his soteriology, see his summary sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in Outler, *Sermons*, 2:153 ff.

³⁷There are over twenty-five scholarly articles and manuscripts on the importance of faith in Wesley's doctrine of salvation. Some of the more significant include the following: David Lowes Watson, "The Much-Controverted Point of Justification by Faith and the Shaping of Wesley's Evangelical Message," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21, no. 1 and 2 (Spring-Fall 1986): 7-23.; Thomas Anderson Langford, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification by Faith," *Bulletin of the United Church of Canada Committee on Archives and History* 29 (1980-1982): 47-62.; and Albert C. Outler, "The Rediscovery of John Wesley Through His Faith and Doctrine," *Historical Bulletin* 12 (1983): 4-10. However, there are no articles or manuscripts which directly address the emphasis which Wesley placed upon humility in his soteriology!

soteriology where Wesley's valuations are not informed by the significance of humility, as they should be, but by other more mundane considerations.³⁸ Moreover, since the grace of humility has to do with the issues of power, self-reference and of proper relationships to both God and humanity in a significant way, it is again difficult to comprehend such inattention. In fact, there are over one hundred and fifty references to humility in Wesley's writings, many of which serve as a clue to his overall soteriology as will be apparent shortly.

In considering the value of humility for pagan antiquity, Wesley took exception to the ancient Roman language itself, even with the improvements of the Augustan age, since it "did not afford so much as a name for humility (the word from whence we borrow this, as is well known, bearing in Latin a quite different meaning)."³⁹ In fact, in classical Latin, as the late Albert Outler correctly pointed out, *humilitas* was always a negative term whose meaning ranged from "'lowness' (of stature or status) to 'insignificance' to 'baseness.'"⁴⁰ However, in terms of a specifically Christian context, which is much more informative, Wesley explored the broader category of poverty of spirit and humility in two distinct though very positive ways. Accordingly, for Wesley, "initial" poverty of spirit and humility are inextricably tied in with repentance, and "subsequent" poverty of spirit and true Christian humility pertain to the ongoing reception of the love of God and its consequence for the Christian life.

Of the former terms Wesley maintains in his writings that the foundation of all true religion is spiritual poverty and that "real Christianity always begins in poverty of spirit,"⁴¹ that is, in the conviction of sin and in the renunciation of ourselves. Here, then, poverty of spirit, initially understood, is linked with self-knowledge, humility and repentance. Moreover, observe in this context that the phrases "poor in spirit," or "poverty of spirit" do not refer to the material or economic condition of the sinner, but refer to something far more basic and systemic, as revealed in Wesley's following comments:

³⁸This point will be evident by the conclusion of this essay.

³⁹Outler, *Sermons*, 1:480 ("Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse I").

⁴⁰*Ibid.* Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:480 ("Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse I"), note #85.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 1:475 ("Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse I").

This sense [an economic reading] of the expression “poor in spirit” will by no means suit our Lord’s present design, which is to lay a general foundation whereon the whole fabric of Christianity may be built; a design which would be in no wise answered by guarding against one particular vice; so that even if this were supposed to be one part of his meaning, it could not possibly be the whole.⁴²

Again, the very demand of John the Baptist and Jesus for repentance prior to the reception of the kingdom of heaven demonstrates that it was a spiritual kingdom to which they were directed, as Wesley aptly points out, and that “no wicked man, how politic, brave, or learned soever, could possibly be a subject of it.”⁴³ The phrase “poor in spirit,” then, concerns not economic relations, relations to substances or things, but personal relations, relations to both God and humanity who confront the self or the group as a genuine other, as a real “Thou.” So then, that which is most precious in the Christian faith is never a thing or substance, but always a *person*. Simply put, the giver is the gift.

The poor in spirit, then, at this initial stage, are all those of whatever outward circumstances who “have that disposition of heart which is the first step to all real substantial happiness.”⁴⁴ Again, the poor in spirit are those who are penitent, who are convinced of their sin and utter helplessness, and who have a just and realistic sense of their inward and outward sin and of their improper relation to a God of love. The humbled sinner is convinced, Wesley states, “that he is spiritually poor indeed; having no

⁴²Ibid., 1:476-477 (“Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse I”). Bracketed material is mine.

⁴³Wesley, *NT Notes*, p. 15; Matt. 3:2. For a different view of how Wesley understood the “poor in spirit,” cf. Theodore W. Jennings Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 51 ff.

⁴⁴Outler, *Sermons*, *ibid.*, 1:476. Nevertheless, Wesley did not always keep his two definitions of the poor apart. At times, for example, he conflated them and identified the qualities of the poor in spirit, like humility and gentleness, with the penniless. And, on the other hand, he associated pride—the opposite of poverty of spirit—with the rich. “O what an advantage have the poor over the rich!” the Methodist leader writes. “These are not wise in their own eyes, but all receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save their souls.” Cf. Nehemiah Curnock, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), 7:436.

spiritual good abiding in him. ‘In me (saith he) dwelleth no good thing; but whatsoever is evil and abominable.’”⁴⁵

As valuable as the humility which is associated with repentance is (and initial poverty of spirit for that matter), it must not be confused with true Christian humility, as Harald Lindstrom correctly points out.⁴⁶ That is, the former disposition of the heart occurs in the context of conviction and accusation and is often marked by fear of God, regret over past sins, and guilt. The latter dispositions of subsequent poverty of spirit and true Christian humility, however, which take rise *after* (or concomitant with) justification and the new birth, grow out of a sense of “being loved and reconciled by God.”⁴⁷ In his sermon, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse I,” Wesley explains:

Then thou learnest of him to be “lowly of heart,” And this is the true, genuine, Christian humility, which flows from a sense of the love of God, reconciled to us in Christ Jesus. “Poverty of spirit,” in this meaning of the word, begins where a sense of guilt and of the wrath of God ends; and is a continual sense of our total dependence on him for every good thought or word or work; of our utter inability to all good unless he “water us every moment.”⁴⁸

This means, of course, that when Wesley urged his followers to be humble in the sense of having the mind of Christ, he was not referring in the least to initial poverty of spirit or to initial humility which always entail a consciousness of sin. Instead, he was pointing to the meek and lowly mind, characteristic of Christ, which is expressive of the love of God and which arises out of a grateful reception of divine grace. Indeed, the humility of Christ is not associated with the self-knowledge that emerges from a painful perception of the “distance” between God and humanity, but is intricately identified with the divine righteousness itself. In his sermon “The Lord Our Righteousness,” Wesley elaborates:

⁴⁵Ibid., 1:477 (“Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse I”).

⁴⁶Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Francis Asbury Publishing Co.), 114.

⁴⁷Ibid. Appropriately, Lindstrom explores these issues of humility and true Christian humility (and repentance after justification) under the broader heading of the “stages” in the Christian life.

⁴⁸Outler, *Sermons*, 1:482 (“Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse I”).

His [Christ's] internal righteousness is the image of God, stamped on every power and faculty of his soul. It is a copy of his divine righteousness, so far as it can be imparted to a human spirit. It is a transcript of the divine purity, the divine justice, mercy, and truth. It includes love, reverence, resignation to his Father; humility, meekness, gentleness; love to lost mankind, and every other holy and heavenly temper; and all these in the highest degree, without any defect, or mixture of unholiness.⁴⁹

Furthermore, though Wesley explores the humility of Jesus not under the heading of the divine righteousness but under the human righteousness of Christ, this characteristic of humility is again descriptive, in some sense, of the divine being since Wesley links it with the very image of God itself. Accordingly, for Wesley, God is not simply meek and lowly as *revealed* to us in Jesus Christ, but is also *essentially* humble, other-directed love. Put another way, these attributes, so resplendent in Christ, are expressive of nothing less than the being (*in se*) of God. Simply put, God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ discloses the very nature of God. The kenotic movement of Philippians chapter two, then, entails not only how God *appears* to sinful humanity, but also what God actually *is*: humble, sacrificial, ecstatic love.

This association of love and humility with respect to the divine being, Christology in particular, is paralleled in Wesley's consideration of the dynamics of human spiritual development. For example, Wesley notes in his sermon "On Zeal": "Now, one of the chief properties of love is humility. Love is not puffed up."⁵⁰ Elsewhere, in his sermon "On Charity," Wesley affirms the proper estimate of both love and humility when he writes: "As is the measure of love, so is the measure of humility. Nothing humbles the soul so deeply as love."⁵¹ So understood, though love is

⁴⁹Ibid., 1:452. Wesley took issue with the notion that sin is necessary for the inculcation of true humility, that awareness of our sin, in other words, will make us holy. Again, true Christian humility, which is characteristic of Jesus Christ, does not need evil for its being for it is fostered by nothing less than the love of God. Cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:312 and Outler, *Sermons*, 1:479.

⁵⁰Ibid., 3:312 ("On Zeal").

⁵¹Ibid., 3:296 ("On Charity"). In his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* Wesley points out that "humility and patience are the surest proofs of the increase of love. Humility alone unites patience with love." Cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 11:437.

the source of humility, humility is yet necessary for love; indeed, it is nothing less than the freedom to love, the prerequisite for that abandonment of self which issues in the richest devotion. Put another way, only those meek and lowly in heart are free to love deeply, only those who are directed not towards themselves in sinful pride, but toward others can fathom the deepest recesses of love. In fact, when Wesley explores in several of his sermons one of the chief obstacles to love, namely riches, he reveals that they impede humility as well, so closely are love and humility linked in his thought: "From the love of God, and from no other fountain, true humility flows. Therefore, so far as they hinder the love of God, riches must hinder humility likewise."⁵² Again, if "I have not humility, gentleness and resignation," Wesley points out, "I am nothing in the sight of God."⁵³

The meekness and lowliness of Christ as descriptive of God, as well as the call which human beings receive to participate in humble, sacrificial love, suggest that the valuations implied in such observations will naturally be in conflict with those valuations which place the self or a particular group at the center of meaning. Here, then, both egotism and ethnocentrism are precluded. Here both selfishness and tribalism, for want of better terms, are repudiated. In addition, since humility is so crucial to both power and love, Wesley's understanding of divine and human power will undoubtedly be different from conventional wisdom which champions self-referential schemes in one form or another as the pathways to power and enhancement. For Wesley, on the other hand, real power is not self-referential nor is it grasping and acquisitive; rather, it is the power to love. Put another way, true power ever entails humility, that is, the self-forgetfulness that issues in the freedom to be for others. "Be humble," Wesley counsels Miss Bolton in 1771, "Let all that mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. And be clothed with humility."⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid., 3:522 ("On Riches"). See also 3:242 ("The Danger of Riches") and 3:252 ("On Dress"). Clearly, Wesley feared that riches, more than anything else, would undermine the spiritual vitality of Methodism, and this explains his numerous variations on this theme.

⁵³Ibid., 3:301 ("On Charity").

⁵⁴Telford, *Letters*, 5:286. For additional references to the link between humility and having the "mind of Christ," cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:452; 2:316-17 ("The Reformation of Manners"); and 3:74 ("On Perfection").

IV. The Setting of Return: The Church

The path of return to the love of God and neighbor, marked by both faith and humility, can be viewed as a gracious movement from self to others, from independence to connectedness, and from autonomy to community. As a good pastor, Wesley knew all too well that the forces of pride and self-absorption were so strong that unless men and women were invited to practice their faith in a context much larger than themselves, that is, in a community of faith, rebellious self-will and sinful independence would quickly triumph again. "Christianity is essentially a social religion," Wesley remarks in his "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On the Mount, Discourse IV," and to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it."⁵⁵

To prevent such a calamity and also in order to sustain and foster faith, Wesley established a number of groups, the design of which was borrowed from the insights of others, that is, from the religious society movement and from the Moravians in particular.⁵⁶ Thus, in July 1739, Wesley established the first distinctively Methodist society under the name of the United Society.⁵⁷ And though the only condition required for admission to the society was a "desire to flee the wrath to come," once admitted, members were expected to obey the General Rules which took the first two precepts of natural law, among other things, as their guide. Consequently, members of the society were expected to give evidence of their sincerity and earnestness by first of all doing good and secondly by avoiding evil.

There is, however, perhaps no better explanation of the purpose and intent of the Methodist society meeting than that expressed in Wesley's

⁵⁵Outler, *Sermons*, 1:533 ("Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse, IV").

⁵⁶Wesley was, to some degree, influenced by the earlier religious societies movement in England. For a development of this thesis, cf. Henry D. Rack, "Religious Societies and the Origin of Methodism [Societies for the Reformation of Manners]," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (October 1987): 582-95. Beyond this, Wesley borrowed from some Moravian ideas and structures in his employment of band meetings.

⁵⁷Rupert E. Davies, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9. *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 9:10. Interestingly enough, Davies maintains that the Oxford Methodists did not form the model for the later Methodist societies "either in their theology or practice." The Oxford Methodists pursued their own personal holiness. Their vision, in other words, did not go beyond their own religious world. Cf. Davies, *Societies*, 9:5.

“Nature, Design, Rules of the United Societies.” In this treatise, Wesley elaborates:

This was the rise of the United Society, first in London, and then in other places. Such a society is no other than “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”⁵⁸

Observe that in the context of the Methodist society, men and women—though they already had the form of religion—were earnestly seeking its power. In other words, the power to live the Christian life in righteousness and holiness was best fostered, according to Wesley, not in a solitary or individualistic Christianity, where the danger of spiritual narcissism was ever great, but in a relational setting of a responsible and accountable community. The band meetings, for example, being of a more intimate nature, entailed confession to others, the bearing of one’s soul, among other things, as a suitable means to inculcate the graces of humility and, of course, to deepen a lively faith. Here, then, vulnerability in the face of others, so rejected by the world, led not to weakness and shallowness, as was often mistakenly supposed, but to real power and depth.

But the Methodist societies not only fostered mutual accountability, they also required obedience as well as submission to the structure and rules of the societies in general and to Wesley’s spiritual judgment in particular. Indeed, the discipline of the Methodist societies looks similar, in some important respects, to the discipline of a Benedictine community with an abbot as its head. Like Benedict, Wesley emphasized the importance of humility and obedience for spiritual growth.⁵⁹ Like Benedict, Wesley exercised a loving yet firm discipline in the societies that sought as its highest end the love of God and neighbor. And though Wesley obviously never held the title of abbot, he actually functioned in a way that essentially made him the spiritual director, *par excellence*, of the Methodist societal infrastructure. While some scholars, like Southey, view

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 9:69.

⁵⁹Compare Benedict’s discussion of the value of humility in chapter 5 of his *Rule* with that of Wesley in his sermons. Cf. Anthony C. Meisel, trans., *The Rule of St. Benedict* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1975), 54 ff. and Outler, *Sermons*, 2:316, 317; 3:74; 3:242, 252; 3:301; 3:312; and 3:522.

Wesley's significant leadership role (at least initially) as yet another instance of his ambition, such a role was actually required to bring order and spiritual focus to a burgeoning community.⁶⁰ "The power I have," Wesley writes, "I never sought: it was the undesired, unexpected result of the work God was pleased to work by me. I have a thousand times sought to devolve it on others; but as yet I cannot."⁶¹ Contrary to Southey, the power which Wesley had received during the course of the eighteenth-century revival was not the fruit of a burgeoning ambition, but the happy consequence of an indefatigable desire to serve.

It was in the context of the Methodist societies that the poor, the neglected, and the despised came to learn of a different power: not the power of self-assertion and pride, not the power of force and coercion, nor even the power of self-will, but of the remarkable and sustaining power of the humble love of God manifested in Jesus Christ and received through the Holy Spirit. Again, in the Methodist society, the poor, so neglected in eighteenth-century England, learned of their high dignity and calling as men and women created in the image and likeness of the Three-One God, a God of satisfying and abiding love. They understood, perhaps for the first time, that their identity was rooted not in themselves, nor in the groups to which they belonged, nor even in the circumstances of their lives, but in the Three-One God who had called them to participate in nothing less than the divine life and who continued to love them in Jesus Christ. This transvaluation, so readily perceived by the poor, is no doubt one of the chief reasons why the common people often heard John Wesley gladly.

V. Conclusion

We have seen how Wesley's depiction of the nature of God as holy love, the essence of the divine being conceived as a community of relations, moved his practical theology in a direction that underscored both selflessness and concern for others. Similarly, we have observed that Wesley's understanding of humanity as created in the image and likeness of a holy and loving God, as well as his consideration of the fall of humanity

⁶⁰It was Southey, among Wesley's biographers, who has been noted for claiming that "the love of power was a ruling passion in his mind." Cf. Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley; and Rise and Progress of Methodism*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), 98.

⁶¹*Ibid.* (as cited in Southey).

into unbelief and rebellion, necessarily characterized the way of return for fallen humanity as one of faith and deep humility. Beyond this, we have pointed out that the context of return to a life of holiness and love, given Wesley's understanding of the nature of God and humanity, was not individualistic, but was ever communal in nature and occurred within the therapeutic setting of the church as well as within its parachurch structures such as the Methodist societies.

So then, it should be apparent that all of these doctrines—that of God, humanity, salvation, and the church—are implicatorily related. It is Wesley's seasoned thought on the Three-One God which is actually the lodestar of all, for it had consequence for the remainder of his theology and received practical application in the Methodist societies themselves where the poor and neglected of eighteenth-century Britain encountered not only genuine and refreshing transvaluation, where they really mattered, but also, and more importantly, a gracious and loving God.

In the Methodist societies, the circle was now complete: the love of God which is ever directed towards the other was actualized among the very least of this world through the proclamation of the gospel. Such a proclamation, which placed a premium on faith, obedience, and humility, no doubt challenged many of the values of the world, with the latter's emphasis on autonomy, self-will, and pride. The proclamation of the gospel in the context of the Methodist societies, then, helped to bring about, at least in a small way, nothing less than good news indeed; that is, it helped to bring about nothing short of the Kingdom of God on earth: the power and liberty to love both God and neighbor in a rich, deep, and satisfying way.

THE PENTECOSTAL LEAGUE OF PRAYER: A TRANSDENOMINATIONAL BRITISH WESLEYAN-HOLINESS MOVEMENT

by

Ian M. Randall

In 1895 H. W. Webb-Peploe, a forceful Anglican clergyman who was one of the founders of the British Keswick Convention, reaffirmed Keswick's distinctive doctrine of sanctification. The power of the Holy Spirit could counteract sin, he taught, but not eradicate it in the lives of believers. Reader Harris (1847-1909) was outraged by Webb-Peploe's statement and wrote in *Tongues of Fire*, the magazine of the Pentecostal League of Prayer (the organization he had founded in 1891), that he would give £100 to anyone who could prove from Scripture that sin must of necessity remain in the believer. The British Christian press was delighted at such a dramatic news item and publicized Harris' offer, together with responses from various evangelical figures, which ranged from the measured to the outraged. They were featured, for example, in *The British Weekly*, *The Methodist Times*, and *The Christian World*.¹

The strand of Wesleyan thinking represented by Harris was present within mainstream denominational Methodism. Its most prominent British exponent in the early twentieth century was Samuel Chadwick, Principal of Cliff College, the Methodist lay training center in the Derbyshire Peak District of England.² Cliff College represented what has

¹R. Harris, *Is Sin a Necessity?* (London, 1897), 12-13, 37-42.

²D. H. Howarth, "Samuel Chadwick and Some Aspects of Wesleyan Methodist Evangelism, 1860-1932," University of Lancaster M. Litt. thesis (1977).

often been seen as the poor relation of official Methodist orthodoxy.³ Movements associated with Cliff or the League of Prayer were determined to revive what they saw as traditional Wesleyan spirituality. Thus, Chadwick urged on his students in 1920 the “Pentecostal gift of power” and portrayed in his *Joyful News* a grandiose vision of “living testimony, impassioned enthusiasm, and intense spirituality,” which would “spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the land, evangelise the world, and reform the nation.”⁴ John Wesley was often said to have believed that entire sanctification or Christian perfection was Methodism’s “grand depositum,”⁵ but the use of “Pentecostal” language by Harris and Chadwick signified an association of entire sanctification with Spirit-baptism not found in Wesley.⁶ It was in the nineteenth century, in North America and Britain, that such pneumatological terminology became common holiness currency.⁷

The enhanced pneumatology of later nineteenth-century revivalism produced both Keswick and the traditionalist Methodist Southport Convention.⁸ In the same period other lesser-known holiness movements began to take shape in Britain, each with its own distinctive emphasis, often evangelistic in nature. Of these, the League of Prayer was unusual in attempting to create a transdenominational locus for Wesleyan-Holiness

³W. Strawson, “Methodist Theology 1850-1950,” in R. Davies, A. R. George and G. Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol. 3 (London, 1983), 225.

⁴*Joyful News*, 26 February, 1920, 4; 23 September, 1920, 1.

⁵J. Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, Vol. VIII (London, 1931), 238.

⁶H. McGonigle, “Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol. 8 (1973).

⁷For North America, see D. Dayton, “The Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit: Its Emergence and Significance,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol. 13 (1978), 116-20. For Britain, see D. W. Bebbington, “Holiness in Nineteenth-Century British Methodism,” in W. M. Jacob and N. Yates, eds., *Crown and Mitre: Religion and Society in Northern Europe Since the Reformation* (Woodbridge, 1993), 161-74.

⁸I. M. Randall, “Spiritual Renewal and Social Reform: Attempts to Develop Social Awareness in the Early Keswick Movement,” *Vox Evangelica*, Vol. 23 (1993); I. M. Randall, “Southport and Swanwick: Contrasting Movements of Methodist Spirituality in Inter-War England,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol. 50 (1995).

revivalism. This article will concentrate on the significance of the League in the period to the 1930s. It will argue for the League's creativity as evidenced by its vision for Wesleyan spirituality's influence across the evangelical spectrum, its attempt to transcend class, gender, and clerical/lay divisions, its contribution to the fostering of leadership in British evangelicalism, and its combination of practical holiness and theological reflection on Wesleyan-Holiness issues.

An Interdenominational Vision

The Pentecostal League of Prayer was founded in 1891 as an interdenominational organization explicitly dedicated to praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit for all believers, for revival in the churches, and for the spread of Scriptural holiness.⁹ Reader Harris, after a distinguished career as a construction engineer in Bolivia, entered the legal profession, becoming a Queen's Counsel in 1894. By then, however, his deepest passion was for spiritual revival. From 1889, when he and his wife Mary claimed entire sanctification through the influence of two North Americans, F. D. Sandford and G. D. Watson, he had a vision for spreading his new convictions. By the end of the century the emphases of Harris and the League were promoted by almost 150 networked local prayer groups throughout Britain with a total of 17,000 members.¹⁰ When Harris died in 1909 leadership passed to his wife, although considerable support was also offered to the League by a penetrating exponent of evangelical spirituality, Oswald Chambers (1874-1917), made most famous through his widely-used book of daily readings, *My Utmost for His Highest*.¹¹

Reader Harris had experienced an evangelical conversion when in his thirties, partly through an evangelical Anglican church in Clapham, and he became and remained an Anglican. Strongly undenominational missionary instincts, however, led him to acquire (for £3,100, with funds from his own considerable wealth and from money raised by the sale of his wife's jewellery) and then to manage Speke Hall in Battersea, London, as an evangelistic center. From 1887, Harris drew up to 1,400 people each Sunday evening to outreach services and in 1890 he decided to name the

⁹M. R. Hooker, *Adventures of an Agnostic* (London, 1959), 112.

¹⁰J. Ford, *In the Steps of John Wesley: The Church of the Nazarene in Britain* (Kansas City, Missouri, 1968), 91.

¹¹D. McCasland, *Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1993), chapter 13.

Hall a “Pentecostal Mission.” Church of England custom had relatively little influence on Harris. The Lord’s Supper was regularly celebrated at Speke Hall without ordained presidency. From the 1890s groups affiliated with the growing number of League of Prayer centers were meeting in Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, and Anglican churches.¹² Chambers, who made a significant contribution to the League from 1901 to 1917, was a Baptist. The League’s perspective was that ecclesiastical distinctions were relatively unimportant: all denominations required the renewal which Wesleyan experience offered.

In 1907 the League’s transdenominational philosophy was challenged when it suffered a serious schism. A prominent convert and then associate of Reader Harris, David Thomas, a prosperous draper, seceded with four other leaders to form what became the International Holiness Mission. In his magazine, *Tongues of Fire*, Harris vigorously opposed the new group, hoping it would gain negligible support from League members, but Thomas was equally vociferous in propagating the view that operating within most existing churches was unrealistic since they were “hopeless as a body.”¹³ The official policy set out by Thomas was to avoid starting a local Mission center in competition with any cause “preaching Scriptural Holiness.” There were, nevertheless, accusations of the Mission encouraging church members to leave churches, and certainly emerging Mission leaders such as W. J. Willis, a Baptist minister, and E. A. J. Bolt, an Anglican curate, had seceded from their denominations—in Bolt’s case after having alienated his bishop.¹⁴ Thomas himself launched virulent attacks on the whole professing Church, describing it in 1924 as “crippled and crushed.” Pleasure seekers in the churches, he announced baldly, were going to the devil.¹⁵

In addition to the set-back caused to the League by this division, its inclusivist ecclesiastical policy was put under severe strain by the emerging British Pentecostal movement, which portrayed itself as the true heir

¹²G. N. Fewkes, “Richard Reader Harris, 1847-1909: An Assessment of the Life and Influence of a Leader of the Holiness Movement,” University of Manchester M.A. thesis (1995), 55, 61.

¹³*Tongues of Fire*, March 1907, 7; Ford, *In the Steps*, 94-5; *The Holiness Mission Journal*, April 1908, 4.

¹⁴*The Holiness Mission Journal*, October 1924, 4; Ford, *In the Steps*, 107.

¹⁵*The Holiness Mission Journal*, April 1924, 4; July 1924, 4.

of older revivalism.¹⁶ In Britain, the main center in the early Pentecostal period was All Saints Church, Monkwearmouth, near Sunderland, where the Vicar, Alexander Boddy, and his wife Mary led conventions designed to provide energy for renewal in the denominations. Boddy had been the secretary of the League of Prayer's center in Monkwearmouth, as well as being a Keswick supporter, but he was to find himself isolated from his former associates, especially after his efforts to circulate a pamphlet, *Pentecost for England*.¹⁷ In 1907 Reader Harris was in Sunderland for a League Convention at the same time as T. B. Barratt, a Methodist who became a prominent Pentecostal advocate, was addressing meetings which Boddy had arranged. A parting of the ways between the League and Boddy took place, with *Tongues of Fire* claiming in 1908 that the term "Pentecostal Blessing" had been "widely prostituted by the enemy of souls."¹⁸

The League mounted two main objections to Pentecostalism. The first was that Pentecostalism made speaking in tongues, a gift which in theory Harris accepted, a *necessary* sign of Spirit-baptism. This the League regarded as a dangerous error.¹⁹ Harris also took the view that Pentecostalism's extreme features, such as people rolling on the floor, indicated that it was marked by "confusion, errors of doctrine and errors of conduct," and might even be satanic.²⁰ The International Holiness Mission continued to take this approach, dismissing the Pentecostal movement as "fanaticism."²¹ There was a particular problem for the League because of its own use of the term *Pentecostal*, usage which came from its equation of the baptism of the Spirit and entire sanctification. The League repeated on many occasions that it had absolutely no connection with "the Tongues movement."²² This stance united it with most British conservative evangelical thinking of the period. In 1930, *Spiritual Life*, which

¹⁶I. M. Randall, "Movements of Evangelical Spirituality in Inter-war England," University of Wales Ph.D. thesis (1997), chapter 8.

¹⁷A. A. Boddy, *Pentecost for England, with Signs Following* (Sunderland [1907]), held at the Donald Gee Centre, Mattersey Hall, Mattersey, UK.

¹⁸*Tongues of Fire*, September 1908, 6.

¹⁹*Tongues of Fire*, April 1907, 2.

²⁰Reader Harris, *The Gift of Tongues: A Warning* (London, n.d.), 6, 8, 9, 14, 15.

²¹*The Holiness Mission Journal*, June 1919, 48.

²²*Spiritual Life*, February 1923, 2.

replaced *Tongues of Fire* after the First World War, insisted that the League was in line with evangelical churches, having nothing to do with modern Pentecostalism.²³ The League's policies offered it possibilities for acceptance within wider evangelicalism in a way which was true neither of the International Holiness Mission nor of Pentecostalism.

Inclusivism in Operation

The League was not only denominationally broad, but it also sought to bridge social divides. Harris' background, a privileged one, contrasted with the social origins of many traditional Wesleyan-Holiness adherents of the period. Leaders such as David Thomas and Frank Crossley, who began the well-known Star Hall in Manchester,²⁴ were successful businessmen, but many others within the constituency came from the relatively powerless segment of society. Cliff was known as "the College of the Underprivileged."²⁵ T. R. Warburton has argued that in the 1930s, with economic depression, there was an upsurge of socially marginalized holiness and pentecostal groups.²⁶ But Warburton's own study of the Emmanuel Holiness Church, which had its center in Birkenhead, suggests that its period of charismatic growth was from 1921 to 1931.²⁷ Certainly for Reader and Mary Harris, and those who followed them, it was a belief in the urgent need for revival rather than the pressure of economic factors which was the major stimulus for their activity. They did, however, seek to implement a dream of a spirituality which embraced all socio-economic classes.

There were tensions within Wesleyan-Holiness thinking about the extent to which the gospel involved social action. In 1932, in his last published piece, *The Pentecostal Life*, Samuel Chadwick pronounced social service a "poor substitute for spiritual power."²⁸ Nevertheless, Chadwick and Reader Harris were both deeply concerned about addressing the

²³*Spiritual Life*, March 1930, 2.

²⁴E. K. Crossley, *He Heard from God* (London, 1959).

²⁵J. Brice, *Saved and Sent* (London, 1939), 29.

²⁶T. R. Warburton, "A Comparative Study of Minority Religious Groups—With Special Reference to Holiness and Related Movements in Britain in the Last 50 years," University of London Ph.D. thesis, 249.

²⁷T. R. Warburton, "Organisation and Change in a British Holiness Movement," in B. R. Wilson, ed., *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London, 1967), 119-26.

²⁸*Joyful News*, 6 October 1932, 3.

needs of the poor. *Joyful News* criticized the Oxford Group, another inter-war revivalist movement, for appealing to the socially well-placed.²⁹ Through Speke Hall, Harris became involved in setting up facilities for the provision of blankets, coal, clothing, and books for people from the slums in the Battersea area.³⁰ Predictably, temperance was an issue. While stating that no rule was binding, the use of intoxicants was deemed to be “inconsistent with the objects of the League.”³¹ The ministry which Speke Hall offered probably meant that Harris associated himself with the poor to a degree which would have been unusual for a Queen’s Counsel. He trenchantly criticized “fashionable churches” where people were “loaded with the trappings of the world.”³² Many volunteers were mobilized for social service through Speke Hall. Hugh Price Hughes, the most prominent leader of the Wesleyan Methodist Forward Movement, commended the League as a movement seeking to bring every denomination to “the place of blessing and power and usefulness.”³³ Although the League did not match Hughes’ breadth of social vision, for Speke Hall and its associated missions holiness was both individual and social.

The mobilization of holiness adherents, initiated by the League within conservative evangelicalism, involved significant opportunities for ministry being offered to women as well as men. Of the League’s local secretaries, fifty-nine (approximately one-third) were women. Harris was fully committed to women engaging in public forms of ministry.³⁴ He was indebted, among others, to Phoebe Palmer, who had also influenced Catherine Booth. In 1897, in the book *Pentecost in the Churches*, Harris argued for the place of women preachers to be recognized. He used Old Testament references to Miriam and Deborah, the example of the women who proclaimed Christ’s resurrection, and instances of women speakers such as Priscilla mentioned by Paul in the New Testament. Harris believed that, when Paul told women to keep silent (e.g., 1 Cor. 14), the reference was to disruptive chattering in the services. His conclusion in

²⁹*Joyful News*, 1 October 1936, 4.

³⁰Fewkes, “Reader Harris,” 22-3.

³¹*Tongues of Fire*, May 1896, 7.

³²*Tongues of Fire*, July 1903, 6.

³³*Tongues of Fire*, September 1895, 6.

³⁴Fewkes, “Reader Harris,” 60.

Pentecost in the Churches was that the Scriptures “plainly teach that women are called to preach the Gospel to every creature.”³⁵

Six years later, *Tongues of Fire* published a controversial defense of “Women Preachers” at a time when Keswick evangelicals were uncertain about the public role of women such as Jessie Penn-Lewis.³⁶ Alice Phillips, a travelling secretary for the League of Prayer, was described by Harris as “a clear teacher of full salvation.”³⁷ Mary Harris was a militant holiness advocate, suggesting in 1919 that sanctification was the greatest of miracles, and in 1922 arguing that those who had not known the “baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire” would be left “earth-bound” when Christ returned.³⁸ This was a variant of the partial-rapture premillennial position promoted by the controversial Brethren preacher G. H. Lang.³⁹ Biddy Chambers, the wife of Oswald, was a League speaker, as was Mary Hooker, a daughter of Reader, and Mary Harris, who became head of Ridgeland Bible College, London.⁴⁰ By the 1930s, however, there was less evidence of women taking a prominent part at League events, perhaps reflecting a period of institutionalization in the movement. In 1934 the General Council of the League seemed to discount the place of women when it agreed that it was important to attract “younger men” to the Council.⁴¹

Clerical/lay distinctions were seen by the League as having relatively little importance. Harris himself was not ordained. Oswald Chambers, who testified in November, 1901, following a League of Prayer event, that by “an entire consecration and acceptance of sanctification at the Lord’s hands, I was baptized with the Holy Ghost,”⁴² was never denominationally authorized. The League utilized Methodist ministers such as Samuel Chadwick and also holiness leaders outside the ordained ministry such as the founder of the inter-denominational British “Faith Mission,” John Govan, and missionary leaders such as A. Paget Wilkes,

³⁵R. Harris, *Pentecost in the Churches* (London, 1897), 72, 77, 82, 86.

³⁶*Tongues of Fire*, March 1903, 7; J. Penn-Lewis to E. Hopkins, 12 May 1908, in Donald Gee Centre, Mattersey Hall, Mattersey.

³⁷*Tongues of Fire*, January 1908, 2.

³⁸*Spiritual Life*, September 1919, 2; March 1922, 2.

³⁹*The Witness*, May 1919, 78; September 1919, 143.

⁴⁰*Spiritual Life*, December 1924, 2.

⁴¹Minutes of the General Council of the League, 8 November 1934.

⁴²*Oswald Chambers: His Life and Work* (London, 1933), 28, 79.

founder of the Japan Evangelistic Band.⁴³ Although Wilkes was the most important of the Wesleyan-Holiness missionary figures, the League had links with the World-Wide Evangelization Crusade, a mission which encouraged John Drysdale, a League of Prayer worker before founding Emmanuel Bible College, Birkenhead, to instill the message of Spirit-baptism into its missionaries.⁴⁴ In these pan-denominational Wesleyan groups it was spiritual power rather than ecclesial position which was crucial.

Fostering New Leadership

The conviction of Reader Harris was that the age in which he lived was one of transition and that, in previous eras of fundamental change, “transitioners” had a key part to play.⁴⁵ Often such people had come through painful spiritual experiences. Oswald Chambers was, within the League, a prime example. In 1897, when he was on the staff of a small Baptist Bible College in Dunoon, Scotland, Chambers heard F. B. Meyer, the leading Baptist on the Keswick platform, speak about the Holy Spirit. Chambers recalled: “I determined to have all that was going and went to my room and asked God simply and definitely for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whatever that meant. From that day on for four years nothing but the overruling grace of God and the kindness of friends kept me out of an asylum.” He had, he asserted, no conscious communion with God for those four years.⁴⁶ Although outwardly he continued as a popular teacher, he considered this period to have been inner hell on earth.⁴⁷ It was through the League of Prayer in 1901 that his turmoil gave way to transforming peace, and his first public address following that experience resulted in forty people coming to the front.⁴⁸ As Chambers put it, in language heavy with Wesleyan crisis theology, after some years of “almost

⁴³*Spiritual Life*, April 1926, 2; November 1927, 2; July 1931, 2. See I. R. Govan, *Spirit of Revival: Biography of J. G. Govan, Founder of the Faith Mission* (London, 1938); M. W. D. Pattison, *Ablaze for God: The Life Story of Paget Wilkes* (London, 1936).

⁴⁴*Spiritual Life*, June 1921, 2; *The Whole World for Jesus Now*, No. 96 (1932), 19.

⁴⁵R. Harris, *Things to Come* (London, 1911), 8.

⁴⁶*Life and Work*, 78.

⁴⁷D. W. Lambert, *Oswald Chambers* (London, n.d.), 23.

⁴⁸*Life and Work*, 79; McCasland, *Abandoned to God*, 84-6.

deeper pain than reason could stand,” sanctification “merged me into a life lost in Him.”⁴⁹

From November, 1906, Chambers found himself for almost a year functioning as part of the international Wesleyan-Holiness network. He taught for six months at God’s Bible School in Cincinnati, USA, warning the students to avoid the “intellectual sloth” of “Holiness adventurers” and offering his own alternatives.⁵⁰ From America he travelled to Japan, conducting holiness meetings with Oriental Missionary Society leaders such as Charles and Lettie Cowman, J.E.B.’s Paget Wilkes, and particularly Juji Nakada, who in 1917 became the first bishop of the Japan Holiness Church.⁵¹ Fresh from these experiences, Chambers threw himself into League of Prayer gatherings throughout Britain. His reports make it clear that Chambers, inspired by Harris, saw the doctrine of entire sanctification as needing to be spread among Keswick devotees.⁵² In the years 1907-10, when the League was convening over 13,000 services annually,⁵³ Chambers, with his brilliantly imaginative presentation of the message of holiness, was the League’s most effective speaker. Speaking of his experiences in Scotland in 1908, Chambers commented: “John Wesley’s teaching has had no hold in Scotland in the past, but it seems now as if it is going to be grasped with a tenacious hold unequalled in the country.”⁵⁴

The impact of Chambers was to be cut short, however, by his death from peritonitis in 1917 at the age of forty-three. In the 1920s it was from the International Holiness Mission, not the League, that new and powerful Wesleyan-Holiness leadership was to emerge. In 1929, at the age of twenty-seven, Maynard James, who had trained under Chadwick, was appointed pastor of the Holiness Mission’s Manchester Tabernacle, a strategic church which met in an imposing ex-Presbyterian building.⁵⁵ His evangelistic ability and personal dynamism soon ensured that James

⁴⁹*Life and Work*, 29.

⁵⁰McCasland, *Abandoned to God*, 106.

⁵¹R. D. Wood, *In These Mortal Hands* (Greenwood, Ind., 1983), 61-2, 71-2.

⁵²*Life and Work*, 125-60.

⁵³The number of services grew from 2,000 in 1894 to 13,243 in 1897: *Reader Harris KC 1847-1909: Thanksgiving and Remembrance* (London, 1934), 10.

⁵⁴*Life and Work*, 156.

⁵⁵P. James, *A Man on Fire: The Story of Maynard James* (Ilkeston, Derby, 1993), 33; Ford, *In the Steps*, 112.

would become the Mission's most formidable force.⁵⁶ James drew from any source where he believed he saw authentic spirituality. He had been deeply impressed by Chadwick and in turn Chadwick had encouraged James' leadership gifts.⁵⁷ The success of the British Pentecostal campaigns conducted by the brothers Stephen and George Jeffreys also made a considerable impact on James, who began to incorporate prayer for physical healing into meetings.⁵⁸

Interest in Pentecostal phenomena such as healing and speaking in tongues continued, however, to be unacceptable to the League and the International Holiness Mission. This did not deter James, who believed that at the close of the age God was restoring abilities to perform miracles.⁵⁹ Such differences of opinion led to James and three colleagues, Jack Ford, Leonard Ravenhill, and Clifford Filer (all trained at Cliff College) separating from the I.H.M. and in 1934 forming the Calvary Holiness Church, with James as President. The I.H.M. lost impetus, while Calvary Holiness congregations increased from two in 1934 to nineteen six years later.⁶⁰ James launched a magazine, *The Flame*, which emphasized healing, full salvation, and Christ's second coming and achieved a circulation of 18,000 by the 1940s.⁶¹ At this stage League membership had dropped to 3,138 and *Spiritual Life* had a circulation of 6,000.⁶² In 1943, J. S. Logan, a prospective League General Secretary, had to give an assurance that he had no connection with Pentecostalism, and two years later the word "Pentecostal" was dropped from the League's title.⁶³ New dynamism had been injected by Maynard James into a section of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition which had grown out of the League, but which had been less cautious than the League in exploring new emphases.

⁵⁶James, *A Man on Fire*, chapter 4; Ford, *In the Steps*, 113.

⁵⁷James, *A Man on Fire*, 27-8.

⁵⁸Ford, *In the Steps*, 115.

⁵⁹*The Holiness Mission Journal*, December 1930, 3.

⁶⁰*The Holiness Mission Journal*, December 1934, 4; James, *A Man on Fire*, 46-54.

⁶¹*The Flame*, April/May 1935 (first issue); James, *A Man on Fire*, 60-1.

⁶²M. Winterton, "Centenary Celebrations of the League of Prayer," unpublished paper, 1991.

⁶³Minutes of the Executive Council of the League, 4 December 1943; Minutes of the Council of the League, 5 November 1945.

Despite intra-Wesleyan disagreements in the inter-war period, there were shared holiness values. In 1929, commenting on his third address to the League of Prayer, Chadwick, referring to its holiness spirituality, enthused: “Everything Pentecostal appeals to me.”⁶⁴ J. H. Stringer, a tutor at Cliff College for nearly four years, left to become General Secretary of the League in 1937, with J. A. Broadbelt, Chadwick’s successor, offering full support.⁶⁵ By 1939 the rupture between James’ Calvary Holiness Church and the original Holiness Mission, with its roots in the League, was on the way to being healed. In 1955 this led to a merger with the American Church of the Nazarene, which had previously absorbed the Pentecostal Church of Scotland, whose founder, George Sharpe, had ordained Ford, Ravenhill, and Filer.⁶⁶ The inclusivist spirit of the League was, it could be argued, at work. The League even invited to its conventions Keswick speakers such as E. L. Langston, S. D. Gordon, and Bishop Taylor Smith,⁶⁷ as well as Sidlow Baxter, pastor of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh, and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.⁶⁸ Hopes for a holiness revival drew Wesleyan groups closer together and encouraged the League to see non-Wesleyan revivalists as allies.

Integrating Active Revivalism and Reflective Spirituality

The major concern of the League was for Christian living rather than theological analysis. In this it was at one with other movements. Chadwick bemoaned the extent to which what was offered in Wesleyanism was “milk and eggs—good and nutritious, soft and luscious, but not exactly strong meat.”⁶⁹ But there was reflection. Following a Japan Evangelistic Band conference at Swanwick in 1924, when Paget Wilkes argued against consecration as a condition for receiving the Holy Spirit (since that would imply “works”), Chadwick’s words that “we only get sanctified on consecration ground” were used as a refutation of Wilkes.⁷⁰ In 1938 the Band

⁶⁴*Joyful News*, 9 May 1929, 4.

⁶⁵*Spiritual Life*, March 1937, 2; *Joyful News*, 8 April 1937, 4.

⁶⁶Ford, *In the Steps*, 69.

⁶⁷*Spiritual Life*, June 1922, 4; September 1931, 2.

⁶⁸*Spiritual Life*, March 1930, 2; August 1934, 3; Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council of the League, 7 May 1936. Martyn Lloyd-Jones did not speak.

⁶⁹*Joyful News*, 21 June 1923, 4.

⁷⁰*The Holiness Mission Journal*, March 1924, 3. Also, for Wilkes, *Spiritual Life*, April 1928, 4.

did not demur when Barclay Buxton, a respected League of Prayer leader, called on those wishing the fulness of the Holy Spirit to “search your heart unto repentance.”⁷¹ Nevertheless, it was the experiential crisis of sanctification, rather than a detailed exposition or critique of its theology, which in traditionalist circles was regarded as fundamental.

Joining the League was said to be quite separate from any assent to doctrine, dogma, or creed. Rather, joining signified a sense of need for the energizing power of the Holy Spirit.⁷² Although Chambers was to become the outstanding thinker of the League, it was in his *experience* that he had found the reality of God. His preaching prior to his crisis of sanctification was at times so unattractive—he majored at that time on the fear of God—that one church which requested Dunoon College to supply a preacher specifically ruled out Chambers: “Dinna send us yon lang-haired swearin’ parson.”⁷³ As he analyzed in 1916 the spiritual revolution which had affected his life so deeply, Chambers affirmed: “I am more convinced than ever that the basis of the Pentecostal League of Prayer is the right one. . . viz that revival must be amongst Christians.”⁷⁴ In traditional Wesleyan terms he saw entire sanctification as meaning that “if we obey the life of God in us, we *need not sin*.”⁷⁵ There was, however, for Chambers, a great danger that the pietistic tendency within holiness movements would produce an introspection in which the practice of one’s own earnestness was worshipped.⁷⁶

It was Chambers who attempted the task of understanding personal holiness within the larger story of the outworking of God’s purpose. The League itself was not dogmatic about how revival and eschatology were related. Reader Harris espoused the British Israelite theory that the Anglo-Saxon races had a special part, with the Jews, in God’s purpose in history.⁷⁷ In Chambers’ teaching at Dunoon College and later, from 1911 to 1915 as Principal of a small Bible training college in London, Chambers dedicated himself to stimulating his students to think more broadly.

⁷¹*The Pathway to Blessing* (London, 1938), 11.

⁷²*In Memoriam* (London, 1911).

⁷³*Life and Work*, 62.

⁷⁴*Ibid*, 330.

⁷⁵O. Chambers, *The Psychology of Redemption* (London, 1930), 35.

⁷⁶*Ibid*, 167.

⁷⁷R. Harris, *The Lost Tribes of Israel* (London, 1908).

Increasingly his view was that holiness was not simply inward and individualistic. As an amateur psychologist, artist, and poet, he found it easy to conceptualize human relations and the cosmos as God's sphere. "The Higher Life movements," he argued, "tend to develop a life along the lines of spiritual isolation."⁷⁸ In 1917 Chambers prophesied that socialism was to be "enacted on a universal scale for astonishing good and atrocious bad and until this has had its vogue our Lord will not return."⁷⁹ Mary Harris even suggested that decline in "Holy Ghost spirituality" in the 1920s was a general apostasy that signaled the possible return of Christ in 1932.⁸⁰

It was the willingness of the League to permit a variety of perspectives which allowed it to avoid aligning itself to the rigid Fundamentalism of the period.⁸¹ Whereas David Thomas of the International Holiness Mission could take up explicitly Fundamentalist themes, arguing that it was criminal to support higher critics or evolutionists, and asserting that his Mission comprised "genuine Fundamentalists," ferocity was not part of the ethos of the League.⁸² Indeed, Reader Harris accepted an invitation to Reunion Conferences at Grindelwald, Switzerland, at which representative mainstream church leaders from Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism were present.⁸³ Dinsdale Young, who was associated with the Fundamentalist Wesley Bible Union, was an occasional League speaker, but the militancy of Fundamentalism was not consonant with the League's spiritual ethos.

Nonetheless, there was an increasingly militant evangelistic thrust to the League's work. Drawing from the example of Chadwick, with his evangelistic "Methodist Friars," the League organized bands of Trekkers who undertook itinerant missions in England from 1935. The League quoted Chadwick's statement that "a Pentecostal League of Prayer cannot be dissociated from the Pentecostal witness."⁸⁴ Chamber's Bible College

⁷⁸*Life and Work*, 331.

⁷⁹*Life and Work*, 376.

⁸⁰*Spiritual Life*, December 1920, 2; January 1921, 2.

⁸¹For background see D. W. Bebbington, "Martyrs for the Truth: Fundamentalists in Britain," in D. Wood, ed, *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 30 (Oxford, 1993), 417-51.

⁸²*The Holiness Mission Journal*, October 1924, 4; April 1927, 4.

⁸³Fewkes, "Reader Harris," 62.

⁸⁴*Spiritual Life*, November 1923, 2.

in London, set up to embody the spirituality of Harris, trained 106 men and women students, forty of whom became missionaries, going to France, China, India and Africa.⁸⁵ Following his principalship, Chambers worked for the Y.M.C.A. in Egypt and seems to have questioned aspects of traditional evangelism. On his way to Egypt he commented: “How unproselytising God is.” He also voiced wariness about soul-winning campaigns. “The ordinary evangelical spirit,” he mused, “is less and less congenial to my own soul.” To engage personally with others had become more important.⁸⁶ Chambers might have led the League in a new and less revivalistic spiritual direction.

Chambers, whose audiences invariably found him cultured, unconventional, and stimulating, left a legacy expressed in twenty-eight books. His curiosity is evidenced by the interest he showed for a time in the theology of Swedenborg.⁸⁷ He recommended engagement with philosophy, psychology, and current thought, believing that lack of such reading had weakened evangelical theology. When someone remarked that he read only the Bible, Chambers responded: “The trouble is you have allowed part of your brain to stagnate for want of use.”⁸⁸ Chambers was prepared to speak publicly against theological liberalism, but appreciated T. R. Glover’s *The Jesus of History*.⁸⁹ He was deeply indebted to the Congregational theologian P. T. Forsyth, and in turn Forsyth spoke of Chambers’ *The Shadow of an Agony* as combining in an unusual way “moral incision and spiritual power.”⁹⁰ Chambers’ focus, in his understanding of redemption and sanctification, was Christ. Union with Christ, as in mystical thinking, provided a paradigm for holiness. His argument in *The Psychology of Redemption* and *Biblical Psychology* (books reflecting his lectures) was that every characteristic in Christ’s life was possible for the believer filled with the Spirit.⁹¹ As was to prove the case at Keswick, pneumato-

⁸⁵*Life and Work*, 171-4; McCasland, *Abandoned to God*, 201.

⁸⁶*Life and Work*, 87.

⁸⁷O. Chambers, *The Philosophy of Swedenborg* (Paisley, 1902).

⁸⁸*Life and Work*, 132.

⁸⁹*Ibid*, 144, 221.

⁹⁰Lambert, *Chambers*, 86.

⁹¹O. Chambers, *Biblical Psychology* (London, 1946), 104.

logical holiness revivalism was giving way to a more Christological approach to the life of faith.⁹²

Conclusion

The League of Prayer was one of a number of Wesleyan-Holiness groups in Britain which owed their ethos to the later nineteenth century. Some of these movements had a missionary focus, others were intent on achieving renewal within Methodism, some were independent mission centers, and still others became holiness denominations. The League of Prayer was distinctive for its commitment to the spread of Wesleyan spirituality in all denominations. This vision found expression in a movement which went some way toward transcending divisions of class, gender, and ministerial caste, at a time when such divisions were strong. New leadership was fostered, with Chambers becoming one of the more compelling devotional speakers of his time. But the League's network could never compete with Keswick. There was also a fear of Pentecostal excess, so that the League's early creativity seemed to give way to a more conservative stance. Nonetheless, the League offered to significant numbers of British evangelicals the possibility, within their own ecclesiastical context, of creative Wesleyan spiritual renewal.

⁹²I. M. Randall, "Capturing Keswick: Baptists and the Changing Spirituality of the Keswick Convention in the 1920s," *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 7 (1996), 331-48.

A WESLEYAN “GRAMMAR”: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AND WESLEY TEXTS

by

Maxine E. Walker

The following hymn text by Charles Wesley will serve as a case study for the following exploration of the relation of linguistic analysis and Wesley texts in general:

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown!

Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation!
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit,
Let us find Thy second rest;

Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy grace receive;

Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.
Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.¹

This well-known hymn has been and remains an act of praise for the faithful, a poetic piece of “experimental and practical divinity.” It is a hymn with familiar doxological phrases, but what features of a Wesleyan “grammar” might be disclosed if the poem were “read closely”? That is to say, what if it were “read” by a New Critic, a Structuralist, a Deconstructionist? That such ways of reading are situated in recent cultural-linguistic perspectives is well-known, but what is less determined is whether those ways of reading open the questions and issues that are essential in reflections on the Wesleys’ understanding of religious experience and normative doctrinal statements.²

¹*Oxford Edition of The Works of John Wesley: A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, ed. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, vol. 7 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 374.

²A working version of this paper was presented to the Practical Theology Group at the Tenth Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies, August 1997. “Love Divine, All Love’s Excelling” is selected because frequently in categorizing this hymn significant attention is given to Charles Wesley’s intentions both historically and theologically, considerations that formalists reject as impossible to determine. See in particular Teresa Berger’s very valuable study in which she notes the difficulty in deciding whether hymns are poems, raises the issues of intentionality, but then suggests that “Love Divine” is an “excellent example of the manner in which the poetical corpus of Charles Wesley connects with its *literary* [italics mine] context. . . .” *Theology in Hymns? A Study of the Relationship of Doxology and Theology According to A Collection of Hymns for the Use of The People Called Methodists (1780)*, trans. Timothy E. Kimbrough (Nashville,

Readings from these perspectives—New Criticism, Structuralism, Deconstruction—with their respective assumptions and methodologies, discover the Wesleyan emphasis on the metonymic context as an alternative to metaphoric self-certainty. Metaphor is based on similarity and substitution; metonymy holds contexts together. A metonymic emphasis sets an expanding context in space and time; objects are placed in the larger world of ordinary things. As an alternative to metaphoric representation and substitution, the hymn uses metonymic participation. This is to say that religious knowing is being born into and living a life shaped by a religious tradition transmitted through committed communities. Accepting the central and distinctive practices and convictions of that tradition is to learn the language, to learn the "grammar." Thus, the thesis of this article is that *the metonymic accents of this Wesley hymn suggest that an essential feature of a Wesleyan "grammar" begins with the lived reality of the believer and the faithful community in space and time, in contrast to establishing propositional meanings.*

Why is it valuable to "read closely" when others have "closely read" the corpus of Wesley's hymns and offer such vital comments as: "it was his [Charles Wesley] blend of the biblical witness with Augustan poetic diction, and classical theology—a synthesis born in and shaped to induce Christian experience—which gave Charles Wesley's soteriological expressions (and the hymns that bear them) a life even into our own day"³ Can any advance in understanding occur when a representative Wesleyan hymn from the eighteenth century, an age that accepted the premise that art imitates life, is read with what some label "postliberal hermeneutical strategies"? Thematic, traditional, unequivocal readings of any poem, particularly of religious poetry, have served the academy as well the community of believers. To abandon reading the poem's connection in light of thematic or doctrinal statements may lead to some kind of "anarchical" reading.

As a professor of literature in a Christian college, my bright students grapple with the metaphorical complexities of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and learn faith described in symbolic paradoxes. They recognize the

TN: Kingswood, 1989/1995), 100. Barry Bryant, in his helpful essay, also suggests that the "Wesley's hymns were intended to be metrical theology and should be read as such" and that the hymns have a didactic use. "Trinity and Hymnody: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Hymns of Charles Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 25 (1992), 64-5.

³John R. Tyson, "Charles Wesley's Theology of Redemption: A Study in Structure and Method," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 20 (Fall 1985), 21.

metonymic images in Robert Frost's *Stopping by a Wood on a Snowy Evening* as part of their own journey. Then, someone always wants to know whether, as a Christian in the Wesleyan tradition, one can/should read deconstructively, whether core writings in one's own heritage are to be "read" as one reads Thomas Hardy or John Milton for the "hinges" and points of unraveling. Critic J. Hillis Miller, whose own deconstructive critical efforts have highly influenced deconstruction practices in America, understands this dilemma:

Any method of criticism which presupposes that meaning in literature is exclusively derived from the interrelations of words, or from the experiences of a self-enclosed mind, or from the living together of a people will be unable to confront religious themes in literature as such. . . . Only if there is such a thing as the spiritual history of a culture or of a person, a history determined in part at least by God himself as well as by human beings in their attitude toward God, can religious motifs in literature have a properly religious meaning. The scholar's position on this issue will follow from his religious convictions, which returns me to the assertion that the religious commitment of the critic, or lack of it, cannot be considered irrelevant to his work [*italics mine*].⁴

A similar point is well-made by Miroslav Volf:

The history of Jesus Christ is more than a complex "web of significance." Even though the history is accessible to us only with the help of a system of intersignifications, this history itself is always much more than this system of intersignifications. . . . The history of Jesus Christ is about how symbolic fields intersect with relations of force, how the systems of signification that come from Jesus Christ influence the systems of significations and the fields of forces around him, how his own nondiscursive and nonsemiotic behavior shapes the field of multiple forces and influences the webs of significations of the culture in which he lived.⁵

⁴J. Hillis Miller, "Literature and Religion," *Relations of Literary Study: Essays on Interdisciplinary Contributions*, ed. James Thorpe (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1967), 125.

⁵Miroslav Volf, "Theology, Meaning & Power: A Conversation with George Lindbeck on Theology & the Nature of Christian Difference," *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals & Postliberals in Conversation*, ed. Timothy R. Philips & Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 56.

These two scholars, Miller and Volf, rightly posit a divine referent for “religious” meaning in space and time, and yet the strength of current secular linguistic studies dominates in its seeing and describing relationships between the signs. The referent appears to be of little consequence, and, if this is the case, then reading a Wesley hymn in light of these linguistic considerations is contrary to Wesleyan theology. Thus, it seems important to forge ahead to uncover the ways that language works in this Wesley hymn. We seek to discover how culturally-coded “structures” are riddled with human presumption and power, and yet are the very places of divine action and transformation.

Reading 1: New Criticism and the Mock-Metaphor

New criticism gives literary theorists an assurance that the language in the text provides meaning and returns Wesleyans to the Wesleys’ texts and to the primary sources that shaped their theology. For New Critics, the organic work of art is self-revealing and self-contained and serves as its own authority.⁶ Readers “read” in isolation, and then compare their readings in search of the right “keys” to the meaning of the poem. Metaphor is *the* trope in New Criticism, for it pulls the transcendent external world into poem. Metaphor maintains the possibility of a vertical world that links the transcendent with the immanent, or at least an abstract conceptual realm linked to a concrete world, and the central metaphor is explained and analyzed so that the mystery of the transcendent becomes apparent and accessible.

The controlling metaphor of “Love Divine” is essentially an incarnational one, the indwelling of the Divine in persons. Human beings are

⁶In order to shift the emphasis from the author to the work, the main principle of this critical approach was based on a concept called “the intentional fallacy”—arguing that an author’s intention (if it could be established) was not necessarily a guide to a work’s meaning. As Nancey Murphy has pointed out, “theories aiming at the recovery of historical referents or authorial intentions run into grave difficulties,” (“Textual Relativism, Philosophy of Language, and the Baptist Vision,” *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice & Future of Theological Truth*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy, & Mark Nation, Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994, 269). She also notes that a “text’s ability to perform a definite speech act depends upon the existence of a community with shared conventions and proper dispositions,” and the resulting textual stability will be the “illocutionary force” of the primitive church and the church now. (270) This “deconstructing” of the modern assumptions informing deconstruction then grants a way to think about reference, historical distance, and intention.

“temples,” a place where the Divine comes and where human beings come to worship, and this temple is defined as “new creation.” The metaphor proper is introduced in stanza five. In preparation for this metaphor, the opening line in each of the preceding stanzas is about the nature of God and the line immediately following comments on what God is doing for human beings. In stanza two, “unbounded love” comes down to earth; in stanza three, “Thy loving Spirit” is breathed into every loving breast; in stanza five the Almighty gives “grace” (“life” in some editions). Following the fifth stanza, each first line does not comment directly on an attribute of the Divine, but either identifies what persons do in response to this indwelling or notes God’s continuing action in this “new creation.” The metaphor at the mid-point links the vertical and horizontal. The fullness of God and human need are linked. In the progression of the stanzas, the new creation takes on the characteristics of the divine, “purity” that has the sense of qualitative difference and “spotlessness” that evokes quantitative difference. The metaphor comes full circle.

In the structure of the stanza sequences, the poet links the divine to the human by the horizontal and vertical application of “all.” The adjective “all” is connected to the divine attributes in a vertical way: “all loves excelling,” “all Thy faithful mercies,” “all compassion,” “pure, unbounded love,” “Thy perfect love.” In these phrases, “all,” especially used in conjunction with “perfect,” refers to the total entity or the extent of all—the utmost about the divine from a human view. On the other hand, the adjective “all” when applied to humanity refers to the entire number and duration on the horizontal plane of human existence—“Let us all in Thee inherit; “Let us all Thy life receive; “Thee we would be always blessing.” The inclusion of Alpha and Omega, synecdoche for the entire Greek alphabet, in addition to the paradox of the faith as both end and beginning, again draws attention to the junction where the vertical and horizontal planes cross.

Reinforcing this link between the eternal and the temporal, persons have the confidence to speak to God in the imperative. Regardless of the creature’s low estate, the descending movement of the Almighty to earth allows the poet to address the divine—“Fix, Visit, Enter, Breathe, Take Away, Set, Come, Finish”—as well as the repeated use of “let” as an auxiliary verb for the imperative—“Let us inherit . . . find . . . receive.” The poet makes the assumption that “Thy salvation,” the reception of “Thy life,” “second rest,” and deliverance are possible. This Triune Being

descends as a special visitor and apparently has every intention of entering into the physicality of human life. The repetition of the emphatic "never" also reinforces this tone of confidence that the poet has in addressing the Divine. Sweeping categories of "all" and "never" include the scope of existence begotten and created.

The metaphor appears straightforward enough and appears to contain all that is necessary for faith and salvation. Throughout the poem, however, paradox pulls at the harmony of the metaphor, the paradox that characterizes the Incarnation itself. The paradox that is at the heart of Christian mystery and that is the key to the meaning of this poem is essentially this: He who is limitless love dwells in the limited; He who cannot be "bound" comes to dwell in a physical heart, a "troubled breast." Moreover, as persons become aware of their poor plight, they also become confident to address God and to participate in that divine life.

In the last stanza something happens to the language that does not fit in with the metaphorical harmony. The poet fast forwards to the end of the Christian's life. Once again, the believer is "lost." The redeemed are set at liberty only to be "lost" in heaven. The various denotative meanings of this word "lost" (deriving from the past participle of "to lose") are all at variance with the context of the word in the poem. "Lost" does not mean here "strayed or misplaced," "gone in time," "morally astray or fallen," "bewildered," "unable to function," or "no longer practiced." Instead, the word "lost" in the last line of the last stanza, "lost in wonder, love, and praise," takes on an ironical yet accommodating connotation of doing what "we" want to do, what "we" are "made" to do as a new creation. The New Critic argues that the metaphor takes on an additional ironic complexity in that "we" are "lost" as temples of the Divine.

The poet makes it clear that the Divine is known as the Three-One God throughout the way of salvation, and that it is the Trinity who does/will cause this three-fold response in the believer—"wonder, love, and praise." The tone of command and assurance, the central paradox, and the final irony—and thus the ontological status of the poem—reveal that the Triune God has chosen metaphor, paradox, and irony to disclose His life. The organic unity of the hymn finds its boundaries and meaningful conclusion in the ultimate contradiction of being, the Three-in-One God. New Criticism, with its emphasis on "close reading" and the harmonious resolution into a "well-wrought' urn," implies that a perfect text can be discovered and is apprehended at the moment of completion. The isola-

tion of a central metaphor or paradox in the poem highlights the search for parallels of similarities and contrasts, and in this poem all the poetic elements “link” God and humanity at critical vertical and horizontal points. The paradox of three persons in one being informs the whole poem and affirms the Trinity to the entire Christian life. The poem stands as a metaphor for the experience of conversion and how one worships a triune God both now and in eternity.

At this point critic Murray Kreiger is particularly helpful because as a staunch New Critic in the 1950’s, he might have said about this poem that a formalist reads it to determine the precise framework, to provide thematic and metaphoric affirmations about the Trinity.⁷ However, as Kreiger over the years examined what appears to be closure in metaphor, he notes in *Reopening the Closure* that the metaphorical fusion that occurs in the presence of God-in-Christ is the model for the operation of metaphor in the language of poetry, and as such profane metaphors cannot bear that complete literal identity. Thus, Kreiger argues that there is the presence of a “mock-metaphor” that will keep a poem from sacralization and pulls the metaphor out toward the horizontal metonymic.⁸ Mock-metaphor in this hymn does not carry a skepticism that disavows belief in the original metaphor; instead, the mock-metaphor opens the closure of the first one. The atonement is indeed finished once and for all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and yet this “new creation” still has work to do, as does the Divine who is implored to “finish then Thy new creation.” Lines 1-3 in stanza four celebrate the One who continues to do both first and last work in the created world. The new creation is “set at liberty.” The “new creation” remains unfinished so that the poem itself is not teleological.

This mock-metaphor with its opening toward the metonymic is noted in the use of the word “lost.” If holiness is about the restoration of

⁷Murray Kreiger, *A Reopening of Closure: Organicism Against Itself* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1989), 65.

⁸Kreiger notes in Renaissance poetry, for example, that “the conflict between desire and chastity leads the poet, in particular Edmund Spenser, to use classical poetic machinery while invoking the Christian to deny its sensual consequences” (12). According to Kreiger, poets can be so singlemindedly Platonic that they fail to question the two-sidedness of their metaphors. Also see Jane Hedley, *Power in Verse: Metaphor and Metonymy in the Renaissance Lyric* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1988).

the lost image of God in humanity as noted in line 4 of stanza 7, “perfectly restored in Thee,” how is the word “lost” used? (Cf. “Come Father, Son, and Holy Ghost/Whom on all-perfect God we own/Restorer of thine image lost, Thy various offices make known. . . .”⁹ What can be lost, recovered, and “lost” again? Does this suggest that something is going on in the structure of language and the speech-act shaping Wesleyan understandings? Is the opposite of lost is not “found” but “restored”?

Kreiger offers a way to think about the inability of the metaphor in the hymn to “be” the Christian life. Kreiger believes that metaphor retains its power to enclose meaning and also celebrates the presence of a transcendent realm, but to be “stricken by metaphor” warns against a dangerous enclosure that fails to account for *how* persons live in this kind of liberty. The mystery of the original metaphor, although evident in justification of the sinner, remains the mystery of the incarnation. But metonymy opens the possibilities of restoration as the image of God occurs in space and time.

Reading 2: Structuralism and “Privileged” Metonymy

Although structuralism as a method of analysis is usually applied to realistic fiction and narrative, it may be appropriate to apply structuralism here since the hymn may be considered as an abbreviated poetic narrative—not only an individual account of religious experience, but also as narrative appropriated by the larger community of believers. For a structuralist, the meaning in the Wesley hymns is acquired and discovered by the language of religious experience. Reality is seen through the categories and relations that language establishes. Important questions are:

- What are the basic interpretative units?
- What tropes require special attention—metaphor or metonymy?
- What system is at work that allows interpretation?
- What ideology is present in this work of literature?
- What ideology and power structures are based on opposing forces?
- How is that ideology and power articulated in characteristic patterns of language and thought?

These questions are not about the mimetic “truth” of the work, but about how human beings behave (perform). It is an immanent “tendency of

⁹“Hymns and Prayers,” *Collection*, 253.1.1-3, XIV.

thought.”¹⁰ The immanent structures discovered in the work indicate that the hymn uses ordinary language to extraordinary ends, but it must use language and its codes. The religious language of the poem is not somehow another “language” or even “dialect,” but its “displaced function”¹¹ reveals the core oppositions that are fundamental to relational differences that make meaning.

In “Trinity and Hymnody: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Hymns of Charles Wesley,” Barry Bryant argues that the hymns on the Trinity were/are intended to be “metrical theology” and to serve as application of the doctrine of the Trinity to “our hearts and lives” lest the doctrine be merely speculative.”¹² Bryant’s comments suggest a hierarchy of structures that might characterize the grammatical units of Wesleyan thinking from a structuralist’s analysis. This hierarchy may be described as an homology:¹³

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{\text{God}} & = & \underline{\text{Doctrine}} \\ \text{Person} & & \text{Hearts \& Lives} \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{ccc} \underline{\text{Hearts \& Lives}} & = & \underline{\text{Person}} \\ \text{Doctrine} & & \text{God} \end{array}$$

Essentially this homology observes that the transcendent God and doctrinal abstractions, privileged in the first equation, are “equal” in meaning with the divine work in persons and communities. The metaphors that require interpretation are subverted to highlight the metonymic message-context.

This shift from metaphor to metonymy is seen in the hymn “Love Divine” as core binary opposition is examined: God/humanity. Other binary oppositions in the poem pull against each other vertically (paradigmatically) and horizontally (syntagmatically). Paradigmatically, the divine is related to humanity, and humanity is explained by different parts of experiences; both the divine and the human are described by different parts of human understanding.

First, the poem exhibits paradigmatic moves along the vertical axis of language that reveal the similarities between things otherwise different. Essential metaphors of the poem are these: the heart is a prisoner and human beings are temples—two metaphors that are by the end of the

¹⁰Gerard Genette, “Structuralism and Literary Criticism,” *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), 68.

¹¹Gennette, 66.

¹²Bryant, 65.

¹³See n. 18.

poem reversed in their literal and figurative uses. In mimetic criticism and New Criticism, the external and transcendent tenor is united with the vehicle and becomes the moment of "incarnational" mystery. At this point for the structuralist, it is important to "naturalize" the text, to interpret the metaphor and make it intelligible, and this is only possible by placing the metaphor in its oppositional structure. In structuralism, there is no getting outside of language; language is innately figurative and not transparently referential. Meaning is sustained by reference to other meanings. This tension is exemplified in the simple binary opposition that the heart is a prisoner, a prisoner "bent to sinning" and must be "set at liberty." Equally, the heart is a structure/place, a "humble dwelling," dedicated to the worship of a deity. These two elementary models of opposition take the thematic form of bondage and freedom: persons are "built" to worship the deity, but they do not possess the freedom ("liberty") to worship.

John Wesley explores this same idea in that "freedom" and "liberty" have varying connotations. In his sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," Wesley elaborates on ways men speak of "freedom": "I am free (may he say) from all the *enthusiasm* of weak and narrow souls; from *superstition*, the disease of fools and cowards, always righteous overmuch; and from *bigotry*, continually incident to those who have not a free and generous way of thinking.'" ¹⁴ However, it is the one crying "Abba Father" who is in "true glorious liberty." "Freedom" in both senses is "under" something—either under nature, law, or grace. ¹⁵ Randy Maddox in *Responsible Grace* notes that this "liberty" is the integration of the rational and emotional dimensions of human life into a holistic inclination toward particular choices or actions—the freedom that comes from disciplined practice (e.g., the "freedom" to play a Bach concerto). The sense of "subordination" still is retained, but the binary opposition says something about human will to enact or not to enact. ¹⁶

The other paradigmatic relationship used in this poem is synecdoche, and this trope affirms the virtuosity of the part. The part stands for the whole: "trembling breast" for human fear. The genus is substituted for

¹⁴"The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1746), *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 136.

¹⁵"The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," 142.

¹⁶Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1994), 69.

the species: “new creation” for what God has done for the world through Christ. The species is substituted for the genus: “second rest” for grace continued. The thematic complex is developed as the deity is described in various figures: the Divine is Love, the Divine is the joy of heaven: the Divine is a visitor who can enter human space; the Divine is one who “breathes”; the Divine is one who wills and takes at will; the Divine is one who is a deliverer, who creates new things, and is known by several proper nouns—Love Divine, Jesus, Spirit, Alpha and Omega. In the structuralist’s analysis, the many “fragments” of the human to describe the divine (metonymy) provides “close-up” shots to provide semantic contiguity, that is to say, with more of the same kind of thing. God is recognized in space and time as well as in human responses by the expanding of what is familiar in human experience.

What becomes disturbing about a structuralist’s analysis is the elimination of the sacramental nature of the subject. As a strong contrast to a structuralist, John Tyson, in his fine essay “Charles Wesley’s Theology of Redemption: A Study in Structure and Method,” notes that “in [Charles Wesley’s] parlance Christ’s blood became the ‘power of Thy passion below.’”¹⁷ Thus, Tyson has read the single noun to speak for the power of the transcendent and external God. In opposition to Tyson’s reading, the structuralist favors indicating the place of the subject within the signifier itself. The connection between the power of the passion and blood is nowhere but in the signifier.

“Ideology” was mentioned earlier in regard to structuralism in the sense that structuralists suggest that individuals are “made up of” ideologies and that identity is comprised by an allegiance to certain forms of thought. Ideology becomes “privileged” as the first element of the binary making up the power struggle between ideologies. Evidence indicates that the oppositions in the hymn are present, but also that it is equally difficult to conclude with certainty that binaries “control” the meaning of the poem, even though they “should.” There is the dialectical resolution of the binary oppositions that concludes the poem with the four-term homology.¹⁸ Humanity is to bondage as Love Divine is to freedom. How-

¹⁷Tyson, 11.

¹⁸Homology in mathematics is a topological classification of configurations into distinct types that imposes an algebraic structure or hierarchy on families of geometric figures. The equation could be stated $X \text{ over } A = Y \text{ over } B$; $X \text{ over } Y = A \text{ over } B$; $A \text{ over } X = B \text{ over } Y$.

ever, the "new creation" is also described as "Thy salvation." Curiously, the polarity is there and yet not there.

At this juncture, Jerry Gill's work on tacit knowing and dimensional models of knowing in religious discernment and aesthetic experience is most helpful. First, he suggests that the possibilities for knowing are "mediated" rather than cognitively separate; the dualistic or reductionistic nature of meaning does not take into account the unified, holistic character of experience. One dimension mediates the significance of the other. A particularly helpful point is the way Gill interprets Polanyi's "indwelling": "We come to know some realities because we engage them, indwelling their particulars in order to reach beyond them. One would expect the transcendent to be known in this way."¹⁹ For Wesley, the "new creation" affirms the love of God, but not just as a concept functioning as a binary to a performance: "There is no love of God but from a sense of his loving us."²⁰

The Love Divine that stands "superior" to all other love about which doctrinal truth claims are made—"He is the 'true God,' the only Cause, the Sole Creator of all things"—exists in and for persons, metonymically, in space and time, through the witness of the Spirit:

Then it is that heaven is opened in the soul, that the proper, heavenly state commences, while the love of God, as loving us, is shed abroad in the heart, instantly producing love to all mankind: general, pure benevolence, together with its genuine fruits, lowliness, meekness, patience, contentedness in every state. . . .²¹

With the third person of the Trinity, "Thy loving Spirit," there is "a semi-otically mediated power that is more than the power created by the semi-otic impact of the system of symbols and practices."²² It is paradox and metaphor in the hymn that bring this way of power to light. So New Criti-

¹⁹Jerry Gill, "Transcendence: An Incarnational Model." *Encounter*, vol. 39 (1978), 42.

²⁰Quoted in Theodore Runyon, "The New Creation: The Wesleyan Distinctive," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (1996), 15.

²¹Sermon 77, "Spiritual Worship," in *Sermons on Several Occasions: By The Rev. John Wesley, M. A. with a Life of the Author, By the Rev. John Beecham, D.D.* Vol. 2 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1868), 401-11.

²²Volf, 22.

cism is not to be abandoned, but there is also something at work moving between the binaries.

Structuralism works on the idea that arbitrariness is at the heart of language and that it is the systematic relationships between words that enable them to communicate meaning rather than the relationship between words and things. When the binaries are discovered in “Love Divine” binaries that show how things stand in relationship, it is evident that Love Divine as triune is not just numerical superiority, but witnesses to how relationships exist, move, and have their being. It is the Spirit that witnesses to the power and significance of the Incarnation as metaphor and also the Spirit that justifies and sanctifies the metonymic, enabling and empowering performances and practices of holy living. However, for the structuralist, how will the speaker of this language know if a mistake is being made in performance? What keeps the reading from being subjective and impressionistic? Without extratextual propositional and thematic statements for standards and guidelines, what will keep individual and/or community religious practices from being just cultural taste and preference?

How will one choose the most satisfactory language for this grammar of faith among the diverse grammars? Jerry Gill helps by affirming that conflicting views show their grounding in the relevant particulars of the experiential and in the total configuration, which can be retraced from one to the other in an unending interpretative cycle,²³ Wesley also helps by his synthesis of personal and social holiness, both the workings of the Spirit:

How does the Spirit of God “lead” his children to this or that particular action? . . . Do you imagine it is by “blind impulse” only? By “moving” you to do it, you know not why? No, he leads us by our “eye” at least as much as by our “hand.” . . . For example, here is a man ready to perish with hunger. How am I “led by the Spirit” to relieve him? First, by “convincing” me that it is his will that I should and secondly, by his filling my heart with love toward him. . . . This is the plain, rational account of the ordinary leading of the Spirit. . . . (A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part I and II)

²³Jerry Gill, “On Knowing the Dancer from the Dance,” *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism*, vol. 34 (Winter 1975), 133.

Reading 3: Deconstruction and the Metonymic Domain

The two readings above of "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" are "provisional" according to deconstructionists since those readings do not read nearly "close" enough.²⁴ Contrary to some critics of deconstruction, deconstructive reading does not mean that the text authorizes almost anything. If it is necessary to ask which reading is preferred, the answer is that it is impossible to decide since each requires the other and contains the other within "itself." As Derrida himself notes in *Of Grammatology*, "[Without] all the instruments of traditional criticism . . . critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything."²⁵ What deconstruction attempts is "to interpret as exactly as possible the oscillations in meaning produced by the irreducibly figurative nature of language."²⁶ Deconstruction is a "deadlock of the grid of assumptions enabling metaphysics which must be negated."²⁷ It is not an end to values or to the transcendental, but it is the inconceivableness of something in the system, absence.

The dark and bewildering questions about deconstruction are typified in the usual starting query, what if there is no transcendental signified? What if there is no presence in which we can find ultimate truth? What if there is no unifying element in the universe? If signification is both arbitrary and conventional, as deconstructionists hold, then the search for a transcendental signified, an external point of reference, is the only possibility for ultimate meaning—or as Derrida says, "a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign." If God is posited as the transcendental signified then the concept of "God" becomes the unifying principle upon which the world is structured. Everything has meaning if filtered through this unifying ultimate signified: God. This transcendental signi-

²⁴M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1985), 205.

²⁵Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), 158.

²⁶Quoted in Paul Northam, "Heuristics and Beyond: Deconstruction/Inspiration and the Teaching of Writing Invention," *Writing and Reading Differently: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Composition and Literature*, ed. G. Douglas Atkins and Michael L. Johnson (Lawrence, KS: Univ. Kansas Press, 1985), 117.

²⁷Janet Blumberg Knedlik, "Derrida Meets Father Brown," *G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis: The Riddle of Joy*, ed. Michael H. Macdonald and Andrew

fied becomes the “center” of meaning, the “center” of truth. Such a center of meaning could not subject itself to structural analysis, for in so doing it would lose its place as a transcendental signified to another center. According to Derrida, Western metaphysics has invented a variety of terms that function as centers: God, reason, origin, being, essence, truth, humanity, beginning, end, and self. Each operates as a concept or term that is self-sufficient and self-originating and serves as a transcendental signified.

Since the establishing of one center of unity automatically means that another is “decentered,” Derrida concludes that Western metaphysics is based on a system of binary operations or conceptual oppositions. For each center, there exists an opposing center, as noted earlier in this Wesley hymn: Love divine/other loves; heaven/earth; up/down; unbounded/limited; fixed/changeable; breath/death; fear/hope; give/take; end/beginning; hosts above/hosts below; new creation/finished creation; glory/ Glory; worship above/worship below; found/lost; second rest/first rest; return/leave; command/obey; found/lost; crown/deform; wonder/expect; love/abhorrence; praise/lament. What happens in the hymn’s conceptual binary oppositions, sustained by cultural codes, is that the element on the top is always in a “privileged” position and the bottom element is “unprivileged,” that is, in reading deconstructively. To invert the privileged and the unprivileged elements is a starting place, but this reversal or “decentering” is merely to substitute one hierarchy for another and adds little to meaning. What does happen, however, in the examination of the decentering is an awareness of how the meaning of terms arises from the differences between them; new insights are possible. Moreover, it is interesting to mark what happens to metaphor and metonymy, figurative language, in such a reading.

That the poem is a doxology has long been valued and valid. God is praised by humankind, for God is and is doing that which is worthy of human praise as the created being. The hymn not only makes a statement but claims to be a performance of praise. S. T. Kimbrough says of this hymn and others: “. . . he [Charles Wesley] exemplifies an indispensable pattern for the search for God, the pilgrimage of faith, and the living faith . . . live in constant praise of God even when God seems distantly and painfully unknown. Endure!”²⁸ However, the poet’s language reveals that

his worship and praise are vulnerable in precisely the way he wants to worship. A literal, direct, non-figurative signification of praise about "Love Divine" is only possible through the figurative, and the figuration moves in ways that seem to counterfeit praise of the sovereign God.

Out of the thirty-two lines in the poem, approximately twenty-three lines are devoted to the human condition. The poem's second-line introduction of Jesus' coming-down and entering-in movement establishes the human arena as the primary stage for knowing God's action. Personification makes the unfamiliar familiar; the transcendental God is flesh and blood. The Spirit has "breath"; the Almighty is a "deliverer"; the finished "new" creation is described in this-present-world language. The "new creation" is the "same" as the "old creation," a created being described in comparative terms of age. The language used to describe this new creation has a beginning and ending, just as one does about anything made or as the subject-verb-object in an utterance. To "finish" a created order is the same kind of language as an artist might use in finishing an artistic design. Moreover, the concluding lines of the poem seem very similar to what any faithful eighteenth-century subject did in front of a passing monarch. The concept of taking one's place and tossing off one's hat as the magnificent royal coach and horses pass by is not necessarily a "privileged" heavenly activity.

What is "new" about humanity's action in this other world? This heavenly activity appears to replicate an earthly activity—praying, praising, serving. The desire to serve and obey is undercut and unraveled by the "setting our hearts at liberty," an action that occurs precisely mid-way in the poem. Can liberty exist apart from obedience and service? How is this liberty to be qualitatively/quantitatively different from what came before and what comes after the moment of being set free? The meaning of "liberty" that comes in salvation, according to the poem, carries with it a certain passivity (e.g., a recipient as an inheritor) and a prescribed set of actions that define this liberty, "praying and praising." What the text does is to blur the distinctions between the differences that were so important to the structuralists. There is an incompatibility between explicitly foregrounded assertions and illustrative examples or less explicitly asserted supporting material. Does the poem say more about God or about humans, and is this reason for skepticism or praise?

The final use of metonymic "crown" also sets up responses in contiguous space and time. The use of metonymy in this last stanza has value

because metonymy is a mapping in the same domain, not across domains. The “crown” in the last stanza of the poem is a metonym for eternal life, the part proceeds from the whole. The headpiece, usually associated with royalty, is a response of contiguity much as the syntax of a sentence. The idea depends on contiguity. Metonymy is a figure based on qualities shared by the two objects being compared. The poem uses this syntactical relationship earlier, “All Thy faithful mercies crown.” The verb and the noun “crown” are signifiers that indicate a measure; however, they do not portray the whole. Moreover, the signifiers have superlative connotations because of cultural contexts.²⁹ One can continue the syntactic units by substituting “circlet,” “coronet,” “pate,” “crest,” “top,” “wreath” for “crown.” The metonymic conclusion in the poem reveals that there are not two separate domains: eternal life is an extension of life here.

Additional metonymic features of the hymn reinforce this focus on human space and time. The deictic references, those references to words that give a verbal message its temporal, spatial, and interpersonal orientation, are dominated by “us” and “we.” These pronouns are coextensive with persons—all of us—so that the context broadens out from the individual to the collective. On the other hand, the proper titles given to the divine locate the one addressed in time and space, i.e., not just any “thee” and “thy,” but one whose proper name is Jesus. Further spatial contextualization occurs with the verb usage: the imperative is used throughout until the end when three past tenses appear: “restored,” “changed,” and “lost.” Thus, the present tense is affirmed from two vantage points: one largely from the immediate present and the other looking back using the language of the present.

John Wesley suggests this difficulty with language as he explores the differences between the old and the new creation in his sermon “The New

²⁸S. T. Kimbrough, *Lost In Wonder: Charles Wesley and The Meaning of His Hymns Today* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1987), 163.

Creation" and implies that what makes metaphor in the poets' world will be the major change in the new heavenly world—"all will be transparent as glass."³¹ No possibilities for metaphors there. For example, elements will be entirely changed as to their qualities, but not as to their nature. Fire will retain its vivifying power, but will lose its consuming destructive characteristics. Elements that allow for similarities and contrasts will be gone. In his final analysis of these differences in his sermon, Wesley continues to rely on binary oppositions to talk about the new creation—with one exception. ". . . [T]here will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all creatures in him!"³²

In another binary opposition, "second rest/first rest" seems to state exactly what the American Holiness Movement "privileged"—the second "rest." The two "works" of grace were set in contrast so that one gained a "superior" position and allowed distinctive functions to the Trinity—Christ in atonement; Holy Spirit in sanctification. The separate camps and theological positions of the late nineteenth-century in American Methodism are, of course, not anticipated in this hymn, but the hymn also undercuts the notion of a separate "second" rest by its positioning of the experience in the middle of the poem. Something comes before and something follows. The work of the Holy Spirit in taking away the "bent" to sinning is preceded by a full stanza on the atonement, and is followed by another entire stanza on the call to the Almighty to "deliver" and a fourth stanza on the creation that is not yet "finished."³³ The "granularity" of grace

²⁹Utopian visionaries have long played with cultural conditioning of language and reality. Sir Thomas More comments on the use of gold and silver, synecdoches for crown, on the island of Utopia. Chamberpots and other humble vessels are made from gold and silver in Utopia so that no one will overvalue gold: "the more different anything is from what people are used to, the harder it is to accept," *Utopia, Book I, The Best State of a Commonwealth, A Discourse by the Extraordinary Raphael Hythloday, as Recorded by the Noted Thomas More, Citizen and Sheriff of the Famous City of Britain, London. Northon Anthology of English Literature*, vol. 1, M. H. Abrams, General Editor, 6th edition. 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 422.

(semantic units) is seen as contiguous, and the “higher” goal may not be higher, but the completion of what was begun. Final justification is the end of the sentence.³⁴ Is the object, final justifying grace, qualitatively “higher” or “greater” than the subject, initial justifying grace? Yes and no. Does the repetition of the stanza rhyme scheme without a linking line rhyme also suggest this dual response?

Wesley says, “Go on, in virtue of the grace of God preventing, accompanying, and following you. . . .”³⁵ As Randy Maddox notes, “Justification is not a stage we leave behind to enter sanctification, it is a facet of God’s saving grace permeating the entire Way of Salvation.”³⁶ A deconstructionist describes it this way: Any given signifier is defined not in and of itself, but rather in its relationship to other signifiers. Meaning to Derrida becomes “not so much a matter of an ‘either/or’ proposition in which the semantic territory covered by a signifier is clearly marked, as it does a ‘both/and’ view, with which the semantic territory of a given signifier overlaps that of associated signifiers, thus compromising its univocality.”³⁷ The *telos* or closing referent is not outside the text but is operating infinitely and without closure in the signifiers.

A primary “both/and” oscillation occurs in the binary opposition lost/found. Undoubtedly the Scriptural paradox echoes here: Matthew 10:39. However, in the poem, there is a concluding metonymy that pulls along the horizontal landscape and shows the deadlock of the binary. That the poet reverses and thereby privileges “lost” is evident in the fact that he is “lost” in wonder, love, and praise. The binary found/lost can indeed be interchanged and decentered, but it appears forever deadlocked about which reading of “lost” should dominate. As noted earlier in the structuralist’s reading, one can be found (literally) and “lost” (metaphorically);

³⁰Paul Ricoeur and Max Black have paved the way for metaphor studies especially in the notion of “interactionary” tension that animates living and effective metaphor. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: Toronto Univ. Press, 1977) and Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962).

³¹Sermon 64, “The New Creation” (1785), *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*. Ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 497.

³²Sermon 64, 500.

³³See Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation.” “It is not the soul’s going to paradise, termed by our Lord ‘Abraham’s bosom.’ It is not a blessing which lies on the other side death, or (as we usually speak) in the other world. The very words of the text itself put this beyond all question . . . so that the salva-

one can be “lost” (literally) and found (metaphorically). Such is the case for the new creation. The vertical binary oppositions, even if reversed, show that they are inextricably linked to each other; one cannot exist without the other. The two are not diametrically opposed; meaning is deferred. There is a “trace” of one signifier in the other. In this reading, the “trace” of “found” in “lost” is that very possibility of restoration, a notion that sounds strangely like a third that will not only break, but also open the binary.

What Derrida has done is to deconstruct the implications of Saussure’s most important argument that no intrinsic relationship exists between the two parts of the sign. Saussure states that in the differential character of language, that which is signified by the signifier is never present in and of itself. Derrida’s denial of the transcendental signified is not a denial of reference or a denial of any access to extra-textual reality. However, it is meant to suggest that *meaning* [sic] can be derived only from the texts through deferral, through diff(rance).³⁸ Derrida describes that “diff(rance)” (differing and deferring) that works within as well as between elements. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls this part played by the radically other within the structure of difference that is the sign—the “trace.”

Derrida in *Of Grammatology* makes this point clear:³⁹ The “trace” creates a ceaseless undoing/preserving oscillation. I suggest that the witness of the Spirit, the peculiar work of the Trinity, creates this undoing and preserving oscillation. The binary language in “Love Divine” cannot be discarded without losing the relationship between God and human beings. The binaries are preserved by the activity of each “person” of the Trinity in the first three stanzas, each of which establishes the work of God in contrast to the state of human beings. Even in the final stanza, the “Thy/we” and “we/Thy” binaries endure; however, the binary is also thwarted by the very Trinity that preserves it, a Trinity that is present/absent in glory/glory and that defers the meaning of wonder, love, and praise by our being “lost.” If the “trace” itself is the very work of the triune God, then the Derridean idea that reference is relegated to a secondary and derivative status may indeed be a vital presence/absence that opens the reading and living of texts.

tion which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul til it is consummated in glory,” (*John Wesley’s Sermons*, Outler and Heitzenrater, 372).

Reading Wesley Texts Closely

Fifteen years ago, at the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, Albert Outler set the stage by proclaiming in “A New Future for Wesley Studies” that the marks of careful homework in the Wesley texts requires that the texts be read more closely than ever.⁴⁰ Each of the above readings do “read closely,” but each is incomplete in itself, an inadequacy rectified or strengthened or changed by even closer readings. Moreover, in the examination of any single piece, reading pitfalls abound. This linguistic analysis of a single hymn may be too mimetic for a New Critic’s hermeneutical comfort, too incarnational for a structuralist, and too determinate for a deconstructionist’s palate, but it does take linguistic analyses seriously and suggests that dominant methods of reading Wesley may be inadequate to contribute to the conversation about practices in the academy and the church.

New Criticism values the metaphor and affirms the primacy of the Incarnation, but the lure of certitude in one’s reading and the resulting closure remain constant temptations. Structuralism offers the practice of reading in terms of internal patterns of connection rather than as sets of isolated terms and their historical sequence, but, as Leonard Jackson points out in *The Poverty of Structuralism*, an objective theory of value in structuralism is a logical impossibility.⁴¹ Among the diversity of “grammars,” what happens to “I am the way, the truth, and the life”? Deconstruction, with its accusers who see a yawning abyss of nothingness, may be the adventurous submission to the both/and and the ceaseless making and unmaking.

However, each reading discovers the metonymic through its own assumptions and methods. That this hymn’s language is highly metonymic affirms choosing practices of a holy life in an interpretative community living in a way fully aware of its individual and corporate horizontal holiness.⁴² How, what, and who constitutes the interpretative com-

³⁴Compare “Love Divine” with the “privileged” second rest in Phoebe Palmer’s binary claims:

I see the new creation rise; I hear the speaking Blood,
It speaks! Polluted nature dies! Sinks ’neath the cleansing flood.
I rise to walk in heav’n’s own light Above the world and sin,
With heart made pure, and garments white. And Christ enthroned within.

(“The Cleansing Wave,” *Worship in Song: Hymnal* (Kansas City, MO: Lillenas Publishing, 1972), 300.

³⁵“On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” 492.

munity? What texts shape the grammar for those who live this Wesleyan vision? A Wesleyan grammar, with its metonymic linear expansion, does not mean that just anything is endorsed or that Wesleyan texts can mean whatever a reader chooses. The social context and conventions, the communal practices, will limit a reading and correct understanding.⁴³ A Wesleyan grammar assumes we are “born/born” into a cultural-linguistic system with a language that “creates” and “restores us.”⁴⁴ This language reveals that the witness of the Spirit makes the work of the Trinity both “new” and “finished” and sets us at liberty to break with tradition, imitation, and repetition as well as to follow tradition, to imitate, and to repeat. Linguistic studies may provide points where this centering and decentering are essential. Reading Wesley closely opens the possibilities for the myriad of metonymic ways that the Spirit actively works in the length and breadth, bits and parts, similarities and contiguities of human living.

³⁶Maddox, 172.

³⁷Derrida, 268.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM M. GREATHOUSE¹

by

Rob L. Staples

My first encounter with this year's honoree was in a church in Paris, Tennessee. I was a young boy, about age nine. My parents had driven to Paris, about 30 miles from our home across the state line in western Kentucky, to attend some church function and had taken me with them—I suppose for lack of any place to put me where they felt I would stay out of mischief. It was a gathering of persons from several Church of the Nazarene congregations in a certain geographical proximity called a “Zone.” The meeting was therefore called a “Zone Rally.” Exactly what we were rallying about has long since faded from my memory, if in fact it ever lodged in my consciousness in the first place. But one memory is still very clear. On the platform was an unusually tall, unusually slim young man aged nineteen who seemed to be in charge of something or other. Someone had introduced him as Rev. Billy Greathouse and turned the podium over to him to do whatever it was he was there to do. I remember whispering to my father: “Is that guy a preacher?” When assured that he was, I said: “That is the youngest, the skinniest, and the tallest preacher I ever saw.” Today, almost six decades later, he at least is still one of the tallest!

My second encounter with this man was in a classroom in Nashville, Tennessee. I was a sophomore at Trevecca Nazarene College (now

¹This tribute was delivered at the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society convened at Mt. Vernon Nazarene College, November 7-8, 1997. It immediately preceded the Society honoring Dr. Greathouse with its award of “Lifetime Service to the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition.”

Trevecca Nazarene University) and had registered for a course listed in the catalog as “Introduction to Theology.” It was taught by that same tall young preacher I had seen a decade earlier. He was now known as Professor William (no longer “Billy”) Greathouse. Our textbook was the one-volume abridgment by Paul T. Culbertson of H. Orton Wiley’s three-volume *Christian Theology*. Fittingly—and predictably—the Culbertson abridgment was titled *Introduction to Christian Theology*. As I look back on it, I marvel that the Culbertson volume excited me so! But excite me it did. I was enthralled and captivated, not only by the content of the text itself, but also and even more so by the enthusiasm of the teacher and his love for the subject—this tall young professor named William (no longer “Billy”) Greathouse.

I found that the subject of theology literally set me on fire. We were not more than three weeks into that course when I knew, as clearly as I ever knew anything, that no other academic subject I could ever study would interest me the way theology did. It was the most thrilling discovery I had yet experienced in a classroom. During the ensuing three years, I took every course Professor Greathouse offered. It was he who first suggested to me that I might consider making the teaching of theology my life’s vocation, which I eventually did after seminary, doctoral study, and a few years in the pastoral ministry. It is, therefore, a distinct honor and privilege to have been asked to give this tribute to my very first theological mentor.

Who, then, was—and is—this William Greathouse? William Marvin Greathouse made his entrance into the world in the year 1919 at Van Buren, Arkansas, although his parents were natives of Tennessee. When Billy was four years old the family moved back to their native city of Jackson, Tennessee. The Greathouses were Methodists, and in that church Billy was baptized as an infant and received the Eucharist at a very early age—two experiences for which he still has a profound appreciation. Both sets of his grandparents were also Methodists, and his paternal grandfather was a Methodist preacher. When in 1935, however, a new Church of the Nazarene home mission church was organized in Jackson, very near to their home, the Greathouse family visited it, found there a compatibility with their own religious heritage and beliefs, decided to help the church get established, and cast their lot with the new congregation. Thus young Bill, whose early religious foundations were formed in Methodism, would thenceforth build on that foundation in service to Christ’s church through the Church of the Nazarene.

After graduating from high school in Jackson in 1937, this young man followed Horace Greeley's advice and went West, at least as far as Oklahoma, enrolling in Bethany-Peniel College (now known as Southern Nazarene University). Here he finished his freshman year, then returned to Jackson and enrolled in Lambuth College, a Methodist school, where he took his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1941. During his three years in Jackson, interestingly enough, he also served as the supply pastor of the Nazarene church there, his home church.

In the fall of 1941 he was appointed pastor of the Franklin, Tennessee, Church of the Nazarene. While there he also studied for and received a Bachelor of Theology degree at Trevecca Nazarene College in Nashville. In the fall of 1944 he entered Vanderbilt University's Divinity School. Because he had a Th. B., he was able to bypass the B. D. and work instead on a two-year (72 hour) Master's degree in Theological Studies, concentrating on Historical and Systematic Theology. Here he got in touch with the Eastern Fathers under his esteemed professor, Dr. Roy Battenhouse, an expert on the Ante-Nicene Fathers. He also worked in the areas of Christology and Atonement, which have always been interests of his. He studied at Vanderbilt during the years 1944-48, while continuing in the full time pastorate—first at Franklin and then at the Immanuel Church of the Nazarene in Nashville, both in easy driving distance of Vanderbilt. He received the Master's Degree in 1948, having written a thesis under the guidance of Dr. Edward R. Ramsdell, with the title "A Comparison of George Croft Cell, William Cannon, and Umphrey Lee on Christian Perfection," a title that reveals the early stages of his lifelong interest in John Wesley.

In 1946 our honoree was invited to teach in the Department of Religion at Trevecca, even though a move to pastor the First Church of the Nazarene in Clarksville, Tennessee, necessitated a longer commute to the campus. Teaching two mornings a week for five years in the theological and biblical fields, he was able to combine his love for the classroom with his love for the pastoral ministry, each feeding and nourishing the other. In 1955 he went full-time with teaching at Trevecca, assuming the position then called "Dean of Religion." This made him the college chaplain as well as Chair of the Division of Religion. Back full-time in academe, he resumed his doctoral studies at Vanderbilt in 1956. But, receiving a call in 1958 to be senior pastor of Nashville's historic and prestigious First Church of the Nazarene, a congregation that was older even than the

denomination itself, and sensing divine leading to accept, he once again discontinued his graduate studies at Vanderbilt. He did, however, continue to teach part-time at Trevecca.

He was honored by Trevecca Nazarene College in 1955 with a Doctor of Divinity degree. His election to the presidency of that institution in 1963 brought an end to his pastoral ministry and cast him as an educational administrator. He served in this capacity for five years, giving meritorious service, and then was elected president of Nazarene Theological Seminary in 1968. This position seemed ready-made for a man like William Greathouse. With fewer administrative chores to handle, and fewer fires to stoke (or to smother) than in a college presidency, and surrounded exclusively with theological faculty and students, he was in “seventh heaven.” His overarching concern was to guide his denomination in the rediscovery of its Wesleyan heritage. To this end, for seven of his eight years in that office, in addition to his administrative role, he taught one class each semester in Wesley’s Theology and sometimes a course on the Book of Romans. One of my colleagues at NTS, Paul Bassett, once quipped that Dr. Greathouse had two academic interests—Wesley’s theology and the Epistle to the Romans—and for Greathouse the two were one and the same! Although uttered in jest, the comment is not too wide of the mark, for Greathouse finds in Wesley a fidelity to Paul’s *ordo salutis*.

His eight-year tenure as seminary president came to an end in 1976 when his denomination, much to the chagrin of the seminary’s faculty and students, elected him to its highest office, that of General Superintendent. The disappointment felt by these faculty members and students was tempered, however, by the prospect of having in the General Superintendency one who was more theologically astute than most who had occupied that office in recent years. It was hoped that he could bring to the Board of General Superintendents an enhanced concern for theological education. In this endeavor he would come to have some notable successes and also some frustrations.

Dr. Greathouse has written widely. For 22 years he wrote a column with the title, “Toward Christian Living” in the *Adult Bible Teacher*, a Sunday School quarterly. He is author of several books, including *The Fullness of the Spirit*, and *From the Apostles to Wesley: Christian Perfection in Historical Perspective*. He co-authored *Introduction to Christian Theology* and *Exploring Christian Holiness*, volume 2, and has contributed chapters to several other books, including *The Word and the Doc-*

trine, *Exploring the Christian Faith* and *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of Last Things*. He also wrote the commentaries on *Zechariah*, *Malachi*, and *Romans* in the *Beacon Bible Commentary*. He was joint editor of the *Beacon Bible Expositions*, to which he contributed the exposition of *Romans*. He has recently published *Love Made Perfect*, a Christian lay training book. Soon to be published is a biblical theology text entitled *Wholeness in Christ*.

Dr. Greathouse and his wife, the former Ruth Nesbitt, now reside in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, a Nashville suburb. They have three children, Mark Greathouse, Rebecca Martin, and Elizabeth Sykes. There are seven grandchildren.

In an assessment of the life and work of William Greathouse, perhaps the central theme would be his attempt to re-discover the Wesleyan heritage for the Holiness Movement in general, and for his denomination in particular. At a time when some of his colleagues among denominational leaders were sounding the warning, "Let us not lose our commitment to holiness, lest we become like the Methodists," William Greathouse never lost his appreciation for his heritage in Methodism. He believed that, in some respects at least, "becoming like the Methodists" (especially in unapologetically claiming John Wesley as a chief spiritual and theological mentor) would not be the end of the world—nor of the church. At a time when some in his denomination, and perhaps in others within the Holiness Movement, were saying, "We need not call ourselves Wesleyans in our theology, we are Holiness Movement people," Greathouse steadfastly resisted, being unwilling to draw such a line between the eighteenth-century movement and the nineteenth-century one. He was not "either/or" but "both/and," believing there were insights in both traditions that were worth preserving.

Although having deep appreciation for the contribution of the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement, and recognizing that some of these contributions were assets and aids to the spread of holiness, he always remained committed to the proposition that the very purpose of the Holiness Movement was not to plot a completely new course, but rather to renew and re-invigorate the message and mission of the eighteenth-century Wesleyan Revival.

In volume 2 of *Exploring Christian Holiness*, he writes: "The 19th century holiness movement was the peculiar product of a developing revivalism among persons in whom the principles of Wesleyan perfection-

ism, Puritanism, and Pietism were at work. Although the doctrine of Christian perfection as understood within the movement did indeed stem from Wesley's teaching, the American milieu gave it an entirely new mood and shape" (p. 298). Although Greathouse can appreciate that development, he can also express concern about some of the excesses that resulted from the pragmatism of that age that had seeped into the Holiness Movement. In the case of Phoebe Palmer, for instance, who had articulated a kind of rationalistic pragmatism in introducing what she called a "shorter way" into holiness with her so-called "altar theology," Greathouse critiques her "theological syllogism," insisting that "syllogistic holiness is not scriptural holiness." He deplores the element of fear that he thinks resulted from Palmer's insistence on holiness as a present *duty* (Ibid., 301).

I have spoken of my early encounters with Dr. Greathouse in Paris and Nashville, Tennessee. Another came later in Kansas City, Missouri. For a few years, before he retired and moved back to his native state of Tennessee, Dr. Greathouse and I worshipped in the same local church in greater Kansas City. I remember his joyous and enthusiastic singing of the great hymns of the church, the hymns which glorified God and exalted Christ. And I remember his appreciation for some time-honored liturgies which to him were not at all cold and lifeless, but richly filled with meaning. Shortly before his retirement from the General Superintendency he was a guest speaker in the chapel of Nazarene Theological Seminary. In his address, titled "The Present Crisis in Our Worship," speaking somewhat prophetically, he expressed his dismay with the "market mentality," the "give the people what they want" approach to worship. In his wide travels, he had seen the encroaching substitution of overhead projectors for hymnals, bands for organs, and "worship teams" for choirs. He deplored what he called "the growing tendency to crowd out congregational singing with special music" and "the drift toward religious entertainment" in church services. He said: "This practice represents an invasion of the church by the spirit of the age. A narcissistic culture demands entertainment, and we can be religiously entertained and left untouched by the Spirit of Christ." You may applaud such a comment, or you may think it woefully archaic and out of touch with the "real world," but it lets us know where this man stands on an issue that has been much discussed in recent years.

In 1976, under his leadership as president of Nazarene Theological Seminary, the faculty there graciously invited me to be one of their num-

ber. I had been happily situated, having taught theology on the college level for thirteen years, and was not especially inclined to move. But one of the factors that caused me to accept, and begin a twenty-year tenure there, was the prospect of rubbing elbows with, and picking the mind of, this man William Greathouse. But, alas! Shortly after I had accepted the invitation, and even before I could move my family and my furniture, Dr. Greathouse departed that institution, accepting the election to the General Superintendency, thereby depriving me of one of the joys I had anticipated.

I have forgiven him for that—I think! At least I have forgiven him enough to consider it a high honor to make this presentation here this evening. Ladies and gentlemen, honored members and guests of the Wesleyan Theological Society, it is my happy privilege to introduce to you this year's recipient of the Society's *Lifetime Achievement Award*, William M. Greathouse.



WILLIAM M. GREATHOUSE

Honored, 1997, Wesleyan Theological Society, with the Award:
“Lifetime Service to the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition”

**A SERMON:
GOD'S OUTPOURED LOVE:
OUR HOLINESS AND OUR HOPE**

by

William M. Greathouse¹

Scripture Lesson—Romans 5:1-5

The distinctive feature of the Christian dispensation—that which distinguishes the Gospel from the Law—is the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God, bringing to fulfillment the redemptive promises of the Old Testament and ushering in “the last days” of salvation history. This fulfilled promise of God was Simon Peter’s announcement on the Day of Pentecost. In the familiar words of the King James Version (Acts 2:16-21):

This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God,
I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams,
And on my servants and on my handmaidens
I will pour out in those days of my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
And I will show wonders in heaven above,

¹This sermon by Dr. Greathouse was delivered at the worship occasion which opened the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society convened on the campus of Mt. Vernon Nazarene College, November 7-8, 1997.

and signs in the earth beneath:
blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke,
The sun shall be turned into darkness,
and the moon into blood, before that great
and notable day of the Lord come:
And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall
call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

“The last days” of which Joel here speaks, says Peter, are the promised days of salvation, the Age of the Spirit which began at Pentecost and shall continue until “that great and notable day of the Lord” when Christ returns to consummate the kingdom and judge the world. The Apostle Paul’s version of the New Covenant outpouring of the Spirit is found in Romans 5:5, which I have chosen as my text. This verse has been called “The Pentecost of Romans” and reads: “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” God’s outpoured *Spirit* is the outpouring of *divine love*, the *hope* of our salvation.

I call your attention to the fact that my text comes at the conclusion of a paragraph that begins, “Therefore being justified by grace, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (5:1, KJV). *Justification by faith opens the prospect of finally sharing the glory of God.*

God’s Spirit-outpoured love upon the apostles in the upper room infused them with a holy passion to burn out their lives for Christ and the gospel, in the confident expectation that God, who had inaugurated His kingly rule of grace by raising the crucified Jesus from the dead, would consummate that kingdom in glory by sending His Son back in the end “to restore all things” and judge the world in righteousness. In the same way, when the Father pours His love out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we also are inflamed with a holy passion to give our lives for Christ and the gospel, “being persuaded of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in [us] will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6, Wesley); for in the death and resurrection of Jesus “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:36, NKJV). *God’s outpoured love is both our holiness and our hope.*

**First: God's Spirit-Outpoured Love Is Our Holiness—
The Fulfillment of the Great Commandment**

Peter Stuhlmacher speaks of Romans 5:5 as the fulfillment of the *Shema*. It is also the fulfillment of the neighbor-love command of the Holiness Code, as Jesus said: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:36-40, NRSV).

Martin Luther declared that anyone who knows the difference between the Law and the Gospel is a theologian. The Law is what God *commands*; the Gospel, that which He *freely gives*.² Consider, therefore, that while the Law of God commands perfect love for God and neighbor (Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18), it cannot instill that love. But listen to the Gospel: "God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law (love for God and others—Rom. 5:5; 13:8-10) might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4, NRSV). By pouring out His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, God thereby creates within us a loving obedience to His holy will.

Observe how Luther explains the miracle of justification: "Faith alone makes righteous and fulfills the law; for out of Christ's merit it brings the Spirit, and the Spirit makes the heart glad and free as the law requires that it shall be." John Wesley adds, when we permit God's love to "take up [our] whole heart" in sanctifying faith, sin is "excluded" from our inner being and we are enabled thereby, as Paul Bassett puts it, to be and to act in accord with the Great Commandment. Let us therefore pray God with Charles Wesley,

The sanctifying Spirit pour,
To quench my thirst and make me clean;
Now, Saviour, let the gracious shower
Descend, and make me pure within.

Wesley finds the promise of perfect love in First John, chapter 4:

²Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 110-111.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. . . . If we love one another (and “obey his word,” 2:5), God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. . . . God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world” (4:7-8, 12, 15-17. NRSV).

As our heavenly Father loves every human being unconditionally, says Augustine—the evil as well as the good, enemies as well as friends—“so are we in this world” if we love with agape.³ To love others with God’s unconditional love is to “be perfect, as [our] Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). “We know it to be *of* but not *from* us,” Bonnie Thurston comments here, “when, in our desire to follow after Jesus, we can ‘do good to’ when we do not ‘feel good toward.’”⁴ “Pure reigning alone in the heart and life,” said Wesley, “this is the whole of scriptural perfection.”⁵ “Faith working by love,” he believed, “is the length and breadth and height and depth of Christian perfection.”⁶

Perfect love, Wesley claimed, is also entire sanctification. “It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. How clearly does this express the being perfected in love! How strongly imply the being saved from all sin! For as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein?”⁷ The crowning promise of the Christian dispensation, therefore, is God’s love poured out in our hearts and perfected in us by the infilling of the Spirit. “You can go

³*Love One Another, My Friends: St. Augustine’s Homilies on the First Letter of John*, trans. by John Leinenweber (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1989), 83.

⁴Bonnie Bowman Thurston, “Matthew 5:43-48” in *Interpretation* 41(April 1987): 173 (emphasis Thurston’s).

⁵John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966), 61.

⁶*The Poetical Works of John Wesley*, ed. George Osborn (London: 1868), i:xxii (Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems, 1739 Hymnbook).

⁷“The Scripture Way of Salvation,” John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology, edited by Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 374, 379.

no higher than this,” Wesley insisted, “till you are carried into Abraham’s bosom.”⁸

**Second: God’s Spirit-Outpoured Love Is Also Our Hope,
The Guarantee and First Installment of the Glory That
Shall Be Ours When Christ Returns**

“The kingdom of God is not food or drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17, NKJV). To enjoy these fruits of the Spirit, Wesley comments in his *Notes Upon the New Testament*, is to have “heaven already opened in the soul”! The Holy Spirit “inspires the Christian soul with that even, solid joy which comes from the testimony of the Spirit that he is a child of God; and that gives him to ‘rejoice with joy unspeakable, in hope of the glory of God. . . .’” Paul employs three metaphors in this connection. The indwelling Spirit is the seal, the pledge or earnest, and the firstfruits of our final redemption. “For in him every one of God’s promises is ‘Yes,’” Paul writes in 2 Cor. 1:20-22. “For this reason it is through him that we say ‘Amen,’ to the glory of God. . . . It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment” (NRSV). Again, in Ephesians 1:13-14, he says, “In him . . . when you had . . . believed in him, [you] were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; . . . the pledge (“earnest,” KJV) of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory” (NRSV).

In these texts we find two of the apostle’s metaphors. First, the figure of the seal. Letters of all kinds and official documents were in those days sealed with wax. A warm blob of wax was placed on the letter or document; the sender or signer then pressed his signet into the wax, making an official seal. The Holy Spirit in the believer’s life is the divine seal of approval upon that life. In 2 Tim. 2:19-20 Paul writes, “God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn from wickedness’” (NIV). If the submissive heart is the warm and plastic wax, the Holy Spirit is the Seal—and the image of Christ is the visible mark of identification. The seal is at once an assurance to the believer and a sign to the world.

⁸A *Plain Account*, 99.

The metaphor of the *earnest* suggests another precious truth. The earnest is a partial payment that binds the agreement and obliges both the buyer and seller to complete the transaction.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the first installment, as it were, of the infinite treasure God plans to bestow upon us when Christ returns to complete our salvation. So long as we abide in God, and God abides in us, we have the *guarantee*, as well as the *foretaste*, of heaven. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God," Paul admonishes, "by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30, NKJV). So long as we abide in God's love, and God's love abides in us, and we "turn away from wickedness," the Spirit's seal is ours, and we have the assurance, and the foretaste, of heaven.

In Romans 8 St. Paul uses the third metaphor, speaking of "the first-fruits of the Spirit" that believers enjoy (8:23). Ponder this imagery. Just as the grapes, the milk, and the honey that Caleb and Joshua brought out of Canaan were a foretaste of the Promised Land (if they would but go in and possess it), so the Holy Spirit is the "firstfruits," the *foretaste* of the glory that will be ours when we see Christ. As C. F. Butler taught us to sing:

Once heaven seemed a far-off place
 Till Jesus showed His smiling face,
 Now 'tis begun within my soul,
 'Twill last while endless ages roll.
 Oh, hallelujah, yes, 'tis heaven,
 'Tis heaven to know my sins forgiven!
 On land or sea, what matters where?
 Where Jesus is, 'tis heaven there.

The Holy Spirit dwelling in us is the experiential counterpart, the inward witness to Christ's present heavenly reign and future coming in glory. The indwelling Spirit produces within us the certainty that Christ, by His death and resurrection, has crushed the serpent's head on our behalf, securing our salvation. "When he comes," said Jesus of the promised Paraclete, "he will convince the world . . . of judgment, *because the prince of this world is judged*" (John 16:8, 11, emphasis added). Satan is a defeated foe! In His Cross, the incarnate Son of God dethroned Satan, destroyed sin, and abolished death. He is *Christus Victor*! Even though Satan's tail still wriggles and creates chaos (as the early Fathers put it), His final doom is sure! With Luther we therefore sing,

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.

What if an asteroid should some day come crashing into our planet? We have received “a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Heb. 12:28, NRSV). “My kingdom is not of this world,” says Jesus (John 18:36, KJV). “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul,” we read in Hebrews, “both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus” (6:19, NKJV). Again, “We do not yet see all things put under him, *but we see Jesus*, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God might taste death for everyone” (2:8-9, NKJV, emphasis added). Paul sums up all this when he writes, “Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” The indwelling Spirit, flooding our hearts with agape, translates Christ’s victory in His Cross and Resurrection *into our personal victory* over Satan, sin, and death!

By God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit we “have overcome” the devil and the forces of evil, “because greater is he who is with [us] than he who is in the world”! (1 John 4:4, NKJV.) And because God in Christ has “condemned sin in the flesh,” I can testify, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2, RSV). Furthermore, when God’s love is perfected in us, “we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:17-18, NRSV). “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”! (1 Cor. 15:57, NKJV.) In the Holy Spirit, Hebrews tells us, we “have tasted . . . the powers of the age to come” (6:4, NRSV). Charles Wesley has given this glorious truth poetic expression:

Oh, what a blessed hope is ours!
While here on earth we stay;
We more than taste the heavenly powers,
And antedate that day.
We feel the resurrection near,
Our life in Christ concealed;
And with his glorious presence here,
Our earthen vessels filled.

It is an old story. A small boy was flying a kite that was so high it could not be seen. A man observing the lad holding the string to the invisible kite asked him, "What are you doing?" "Flying my kite." "How do you know the kite is up there—you can't see it." "No," the boy responded, "but I know it's up there, because I can feel its pull." The Holy Spirit flooding our hearts with God's agape is the heavenly pull assuring us of our final salvation. "Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us." "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," St. Paul writes in First Corinthians. ". . . as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit!" (2:7, 8-10, NKJV.)

One last word must be spoken. Our final redemption is no *mere private* hope; it is, says Paul in Romans 8, inextricably bound up with the redemption of the cosmos, the natural order that has been corrupted by the Fall. Accordingly, "the firstfruits of the Spirit" we believers now enjoy in Christ are simply a token of the Resurrection—for at His appearing Christ's kingdom of *grace* shall become the kingdom of *glory*. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. . . . Now when all things are made subject to Him, the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, *that God may be all in all!*" (1 Cor. 15:22-16, 28, NKJV, emphasis added.) "In *this* hope, we were saved" (Rom. 8:23, RSV, emphasis added).

Said Karl Barth, with characteristic vigor: "If Christianity be not altogether restless eschatology, there remains in it no relationship whatever to Christ."⁹ James Forbes calls this Spirit-inspired hope of glory "the experience of eschatological epistemology" such as enabled Martin Luther King, Jr., to shout, "I've been to the mountain top. And my eyes have seen the glory of the Lord." "The Spirit sees the future depth implanted in the past and in the present," says Forbes.¹⁰

⁹Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated from the sixth edition by Edwin Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 314.

¹⁰James Forbes, *The Holy Spirit and Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 74-75.

The victory over Satan, sin, and death that we now enjoy in Christ is but the prelude to God's final victory. Christian hope is not wishful thinking. No! It is a confident expectation in God, which is born of Christ's resurrection, in the sufferings of "this present time" between Pentecost and the Parousia, while the cosmos groans in the birthpangs of its final redemption. Christian hope, John Henry Newman once said, is the expression of "right faith." "Faith ventures and hazards," he wrote; "Right faith ventures and hazards deliberately, seriously, soberly, piously, and humbly, counting the cost and delighting in the sacrifice." Drawing on Newman's concept of right faith, Al Truesdale and Bonnie Perry conclude in a recent treatment of Wesley's theology, "Christian hope is 'dangerous hope' "¹¹—it is a hope-filled faith, or a faith-filled hope, that dares to die with Christ, in the confident expectation of resurrection with Him.

The great gamble on that first Good Friday in Jerusalem was not the soldiers shooting craps for Jesus' garments; it was the dying Jesus betting His life that the Father would raise Him from the dead! That faith—the hope-filled faith of Jesus, that if we die in the cause of the gospel, we shall also live with Him—is, indeed, "a dangerous hope." But, Paul assures us, "hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." *It is in that hope that we live. It is in that hope that we witness and work. It is in that hope that we die.* "When Christ calls a man," said Dietrich Bonhoeffer in words he sealed with his own blood, "he bids him come and die."

As it has always been, Jesus says to us all today, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

¹¹A *Dangerous Hope* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998).

BOOK REVIEWS

Noel F. Titus, *The Development of Methodism in Barbados, 1823-1883* (Bern, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994). 292 pps. ISBN 3-906752-08-9.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Associate Professor of Church History and Librarian, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, IN.

The modern history of Barbados was born of the slave trade and plantation system as an English Colony. Large numbers of Africans were imported as slaves and by the time of the arrival of Methodism, persons of African descent far outnumbered the Europeans and those of mixed racial identity. The churches, especially the Church of England, worked to support the goals of the planters and of the London-based financial interests. Special care was taken to limit or severely sanction the work of mission agencies, such as the Moravians and Quakers who were willing to engage in evangelistic activities among the slaves.

Methodists first indicated interest in the West Indies because of the conversion of Nathaniel Gilbert and two of his slaves from Antigua through contact with Wesley in London. Coke established a mission in Antigua in 1786 and visited Barbados in December, 1788. At that point he discovered a small Methodist congregation begun by Methodist Irish soldiers assigned to the island who met in facilities provided by a merchant. A missionary, William Pearce, was assigned to the island.

As the years passed, considerable persecution occurred. The expulsion of a Methodist missionary actually raised the passion of the Methodist-connected anti-slavery groups in London. However, the later Methodist missionaries exercised extreme care not to offend the planter classes, even after slavery was abolished in the British Empire. When

emancipation came, the Africans were receptive to the messages of the various groups not immediately identified with the slave system, but the former slaves had neither the educational formation nor the financial resources to maintain the chapels and clergy on the model of the English and American Methodists. Therefore, the Methodist Church in Barbados remained dependent upon the decisions and financial contributions of the English Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. Consequently, the Methodist Church in Barbados did not during this period develop indigenous structures or significantly shape the design of the structures.

Other problems arose. The Methodists became involved in public education, but from a stance critical of the government, including their refusal to have their students sit for nationwide examinations. The Methodist clergy strongly resisted lay involvement in the administration and ministry of the church and therefore faced the anger of important segments of the laity. The problem of non-English leadership was particularly difficult. Missionaries refused to see persons of non-English descent as equal in the ministry and refused to serve in the conference if persons of West Indian birth, whether of European and/or African descent, were recognized as leaders. Barbadians of European descent did not want to work with those of African descent. These crises led to the formation of the West Indian Conference in 1883.

These social and missiological compromises are clearly part of the story that follows. An examination of the membership and attendance statistics from 1822-1883 (pps. 267-270) suggests several interesting trends. Firstly, membership reached 1,470 in 1842, reached a peak of 4,046 in 1854 and moved steadily downward to 1,939 in 1883. However, attendance in Barbados moved from 4,550 (1842) to 10,200 (1854) and then to 12,500 in 1882. It appears clear that, while the message of Methodism was attractive, the social, political, and ecclesiological policies kept the Methodist Church in Barbados a small church.

This story is told with passion and in detail by the Reverend Noel Titus, a native of Tobago, who after studies at the University of Durham and the University of the West Indies, is now the Rector and Lecturer in Church History at the University of the West Indies. It is a cautionary tale in which the missiological questions are starkly posed and in which the consequences of the decisions are clear. This story is an important case study in the history of Methodist missions.

The work depends on the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, public and private collections of unpublished resources, government records, Methodist Conference records and newspapers. The secondary literature with which Titus interacts is extensive. The sources are used in exemplary fashion. The only problem is the extremely meager index to the very detailed text.

The only part of the story that might have been developed more fully, and which I believe has more implications for later developments than Titus allows, is the mission theory and praxis of Thomas Coke. While the numbers for the pre-1823 period are small, patterns were established early. Among those was the refusal to recognize the status of local leadership which was always made secondary at the arrival of a Methodist clergyman missionary from London. This desire for more information is not intended to detract from the impressive work of Titus. It is merely a suggestion of more work to be done on the development of Methodism in the West Indies. Certainly any subsequent analysis will have to take this volume into account.

Michel Weyer, Editor, Vorwort von der Bischof Dr. W. Klaiber, *Eine offene Flanke zur Welt. Die Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche in der DDR: Dokumente und Erfahrungen. Gremium zur Darstellung der Geschichte der Ostdeutschen Jährlichen Konferenz* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche, 46; Stuttgart: Christliches Verlaghaus, 1997). 348 pps. ISBN 3-7675-9546-X.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Associate Professor of Church History and Librarian, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, IN.

It was in the Bishop's message in 1972 that Bishop Armin Härtel of the Evangelical Methodist Church in the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR=GDR) wrote the words which frame the title of this book: "The Church of Jesus Christ must have 'an open flank to the world.'" This analysis reflected the delicate place of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Germany which necessarily had a different stance toward its culture and government than is the experience of most churches in other societies. It was not to be "over" the world, "against" the world, or "like" the world. It was vulnerable to the world. This was a much more difficult role to play. It was a part for which there were few models, and one in which compromises were made to survive and sometimes to profit.

Now, in the new reality of central Europe and Germany, an effort is being made by German Methodist archivists and historians to understand and analyze the past half-century of German Methodist history. Central to the questions which brought this project from the floor of the 1993 Conference of the German Methodist Church was the nature of the relationship of individuals and the church to the DDR *Staatsicherheitsdienst*, the feared and renowned Stassi. What compromises had been made and at what cost? Because rumors are often more devastating than fact, and where fact and unreality are difficult to distinguish, it was decided to compile a dossier documenting the period.

The present volume is a major contribution to that effort. It provides a wealth of oral history, testimonies, and documents. The 126 items include extracts from the quadrennial bishop's addresses, private letters, and materials from the Stassi archives. The documents were selected to illumine the development of the German Methodist Church in the DDR and to provide a factual basis for ongoing discussions about a very complicated period when global political realities bore down heavily upon the small East German Evangelical Methodist Church. These documents are perhaps our best window yet into the realities of that context.

In presenting the documents from the extensive collections on Free Churches assembled by the Stassi, efforts were made, within German law, for the publication of texts without names or locations when the privacy of individuals could be illegally compromised. Sometimes the texts are shortened. Therefore, the reader will find “X’s” in the addresses and sometimes within the texts. The texts, even in edited form, provide a breathtaking view of a church under pressure from the government to prove its loyalty and innocence, to represent the nation in a positive light, and to serve as an instrument of foreign policy even when assisting fellow Methodists in other countries. There was no doubt that some pastors and laity were forced or chose to cooperate with the Stassi. These documents are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. There are clearly more stories to tell! But along with the compromises there is evidence of a remarkable faith and self-sacrifice for the gospel of the Christ, of loyalty to church and nation, and of good people doing good things.

The value of this book is more than a window into earlier troubled decades. It provides a model for the relationship between church and culture that is different from the prevailing models, most of which were developed during periods when the churches were either officially or unofficially established parts of the dominant culture. This model of active vulnerability deserves additional time and reflection. It may be appropriate in other contexts throughout the world where churches have no access to power. It is an important alternative to the passive, non-active approach counseled by most missionaries and leaders of small churches.

Perhaps the long-term value of this book will be to raise questions about the relationship of churches to secular power. It is easy to see the issues which were starkly raised in the DDR experience. It is more difficult to see the efforts through which Free Churches in the former West Germany were molded to fit the needs of the regime, and, ironically, those files are still closed! Throughout the world, there is more activity and greater visibility on the part of Free Churches than ever before in history. The record to this point suggests that, without access to power, religions do not prosper. How will the Free Churches of the world deal with the issue of political and social power? What compromises will need to be made and what will be the criteria for making those decisions?

Weyer and the German Methodist Annual Conference are to be thanked for providing a witness to a church struggling with these issues in a high-stakes game. They are also to be thanked for providing others with

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a case study of an approach to the relationship between religion and power which provides new light on the vexed “Constantinian question.” Historians will also find the expansive time-line of the history of the German Evangelical Methodist Church contributed by Weyer (pps. 285-331) covering the years 1948-1990. A list of abbreviations (pps. 333-337) will be necessary for most who read the letters. A complete list of sources is provided (pps. 339-348) for the 126 texts published. Unfortunately, there is no index.

It is hoped that this important book can have a wide circulation and that the missiological, ecclesiological, and praxis issues raised by the experience of the Evangelical Methodist Church in the DDR will be given the attention they deserve, for they are very important issues for the church, especially Holiness and Pentecostal churches at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Charles Edwin Jones. *The Charismatic Movement: A Guide to the Study of Neo-Pentecostalism with an Emphasis on Anglo-American Sources*, 2 vols. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995.

Reviewed by William Kostlevy, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

In a certain sense this bibliographic work of Charles Edwin Jones reminds one of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Its size, scope, thoroughness, and complexity are reminiscent of that life-long work of the Swiss theologian. In effect, Jones' guide to the literature of the Charismatic Movement is a complement to his previously published two-volume *Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement* (1983) which followed his brilliant 1974 *Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement*.

Following the now familiar format of his previous guides, Jones' most recent work is divided into five parts: literature of the Pentecostal Movement, literature about the Charismatic Movement's impact on non-Charismatic groups, educational institutions, biographical material, and an index. Two of the book's most notable features are the thoroughness of its index and the extensive listing of materials documenting the Charismatic Movement's impact on a variety of church bodies. As a result, the work provides important bibliographic data for virtually all Christian bodies and becomes an important reference tool for serious students of modern Christianity. The remarkable detail of this work provides a rare contemporary glimpse into the rise of a popular religious movement. This is an important resource that demonstrates the significance of the Charismatic Movement. Current and future students of late twentieth-century Christianity will find it an indispensable object lesson and a comprehensive reference work.

R. G. Moyles. *The Salvation Army in Newfoundland: Its History and Essence* (Toronto: The Salvation Army, 1997). 231 pp.

Reviewed by Norman H. Murdock, Professor of History, University of Cincinnati.

R. G. Moyles, a Professor of English at the University of Alberta, has written an engaging history of the Salvation Army in Newfoundland. Recent local histories of the Army have provided depth and color to its formation as a religious and social agency in the nineteenth century and its development in the twentieth. While the official histories that feature the itineraries of the Army's generals induced a triumphalist story, the hardships at the battle's front tells a compelling story of sacrifice and bravery which is more revealing of how churches grow at the grassroots.

Most Salvation Army advances in the nineteenth century did not come at the initiative of headquarters. The Army's "foundress" in Newfoundland, Emma Churchill, migrated to Toronto from Portugal Cove, Newfoundland, in 1882 with her parents and in 1884 became the 11th officer commissioned in the Army's new Canadian territory. She "opened fire" on Guelph in 1885, but when she married one of her converts the Army forced her to resign her rank, but not her call. When Emma returned to her Newfoundland home with her husband Charles Dawson, they began to hold Army meetings in St. Johns and Portugal Cove. At the end of January, 1886, the Army's Toronto headquarters ordered an "official" assault, and riots greeted their invasion.

Moyles places the blame for riots on "sectarian conflict" between Anglo-Protestants and Irish-Catholics, but he concludes that "one would be unwise to insist that opposition stemmed from any large-scale Catholic-Protestant conflict." He does not see the riots as "proportionate to that of the Skeleton Army opposition in England." Besides, "opposition accelerated the Army's progress." Yet he finds that the Army's newly opened corps often used "borrowed Orange lodges," indicating a sectarian bond between the Army and Irish-baiting Orangemen (7ff). Scholars have engaged in debate on this issue of riots and Moyles' conclusion is not altogether convincing.

The Army's percentage growth was faster than any other Newfoundland church—from 2,094 soldiers in 1891, to 6,594 in 1901, to 10,141 in 1911 (59). Moyles provides graphic stories of how the Salvationists' risky heroism spread the Army to the more remote outports from St. Johns, the

administrative center. From 1900 to 1950 the Army was Newfoundland's "fastest-growing sect." In the 1960's Corner Brook Temple was the largest corps in Canada, with 1,800 soldiers (126). But a new era was commencing and the Army moved "away from a single-minded revivalism to a more complex social/religious infrastructure." Worship became "less spontaneous and informal." A "normal social evolution" aimed at maintaining the soldiers' loyalty. Ministry "by means other than its social work" came to include summer camps and radio broadcasts (129).

Earlier, Newfoundland Salvationists had expressed themselves in a torrent of charismatic emotion. Moyles cites Richard Neibuhr's analysis of emotional worship: "Where the power of abstract thought has not been highly developed, and where inhibitions on emotional expression have not been set up by a system of polite inventions, religion must and will express itself in emotional terms. Intellectual doubt is submerged in experiential religion" (41). The Army's Methodist recruits yearned for revival. The fervor of Army marches was soon "rivaled only by those of the Orange Lodge (47). Army jargon and paraphernalia and visits of Army leaders created an esprit that gained public and government recognition, especially as the Army added social programs that William Booth announced in his "Darkest England" social scheme.

In 1893 the government (Newfoundland did not join Canada until 1949) granted Army leaders the right to perform marriages. Also in the 1890s the Army began to receive government grants to join Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists in running government schools. The officer-teacher ran both a corps and a one-room school in the outposts. Moyles deals frankly with the problems of a denominational educational system, where churches compete for territorial rights in order to get a government stipend and increased church membership through control over an area. Due to poor educational quality, the Army agreed in 1969 to integrate its schools with the United Church and Anglicans. The Army gave up control over educating 8% of the population to gain an equal voice in educating 55%, an act that promoted church unity (94).

Social services evolved over time, as they did elsewhere, from itinerant rescue programs to fixed-location social reclamation centers for alcoholics and fallen women. The latter work grew into rescue homes, then maternity care for unwed mothers, and finally Grace Hospital in 1923, which became a general hospital in 1929. By 1966 Grace was the largest hospital in Newfoundland, the locus of the Army's social service reputa-

tion. But in 1995 Grace closed as a result of “changing political and economic conditions,” as Army hospitals also closed across North America and Europe.

Newfoundland exported Salvationists as missionaries to Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. India rewarded Solomon and Fannie Smith’s work with “criminal tribes” and “Sister” Eva Crann’s work at Behala orphanage in Calcutta with the Kaiser-I-Hind medal. A son of Newfoundland, Clarence D. Wiseman was elected the Army’s tenth general (1974-77). Thus a “remote, poverty-stricken and practically uncivilized” mission field sent missionaries to the world.

Moyle’s fascinating thesis is: “if one examines only official records one sees what looks like an orderly, planned progression even in the invasion of the outports. But when one looks deeper, one sees that the spread of Salvationism throughout much of Newfoundland was a spontaneous, catalytic kind of phenomenon.” The growth of small corps (over 40 were opened in 1892-1902) were “after-the-fact affairs—the Army being forced to respond to impromptu, unplanned ‘glory-meetings’ conducted by local fishermen who had been converted in the Army elsewhere.” During the Army’s first decade about a fifth of its “young, inexperienced, poorly educated, unsophisticated” converts, “bred to hardship and filled with revival fervor,” offered themselves for officership (clergy). “Living as their soldiers lived,” they made the Army “the dominant (and sometimes the only) religious denomination in many small Newfoundland outports” (21-6). Surely Moyle’s analysis provides fodder for the mills of the “church growth” strategists.

Paul Livermore, *The God of Our Salvation: Christian Theology from the Wesleyan Perspective*. Vol. 1. Indianapolis, IN: Light and Life Press, 1995. 347 pp., paperback.

Reviewed by Howard A. Snyder, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

This book by Roberts Wesleyan College Professor Paul Livermore is the first of a projected two-volume “compendium of systematic theology” intended primarily for the instruction of Free Methodist pastors and other leaders. It grows out of action taken at the 1989 Free Methodist General Conference mandating such a work. In his foreword to the book, retired Canadian Bishop Donald Bastian, who worked closely with Livermore on the project, expresses the hope that the book “will also become a basis for dialogue with other Christian bodies in the Wesleyan tradition.”

Considering its scope and purpose, this is an admirable piece of work. It is clearly organized and well written. It is solidly biblical and yet draws on a broad range of sources, with excellent and extensive use of patristic writers. It uses inclusive language when referring to people (with a few exceptions). It is well designed as a teaching tool. Each section in each chapter concludes with a summary listing the main points covered, though at times the large number of brief sections breaks up the continuity of the whole.

The overall structure of the work is traditional and the content orthodox. Livermore says the book is “designed as a teaching and resource document and focuses on building a solid theological system.” He employs a six-part structure. Only the first two parts, the task of theology and the doctrine of God, are included in volume one (hence the book’s title). Volume two, now in preparation, will apparently cover human nature and sin, ecclesiology, soteriology (including entire sanctification), and eschatology, in that order.

The structure is traditional and useful. Whether it is Wesleyan or not is another question. Livermore titles his first chapter, “The Wesleyan Perspective on Theology,” but it is not clear from his discussion what constitutes this Wesleyan perspective. Apparently it is the use of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral,” which the author discusses briefly, noting that “The Scriptures have priority.” “We designate the Scriptures as our source and the other three [tradition, reason, experience] as the resources for our theological work.” The book’s structure suggests, however, that tradition func-

tions here more as “source” than as “resource” (to use the author’s distinction). Clearly, the structure and a good deal of the book’s content are based more in the Western tradition of systematic theology than on Scripture.

This becomes clear, I think, in Livermore’s treatment of three doctrines: the Trinity, the church, and the Kingdom of God. Though the last two will be treated more fully in volume two, the overall structure and scattered references to ecclesiology and eschatology in this first volume give a sense of where the author is headed. They raise the question: is this the Wesleyan way to do theology? And is it the way most compatible with Scripture?

Take, for example, our understanding of the Kingdom of God. The sixth and last part of this two-volume work will deal with eschatology, “last things.” There the author “will explore eschatology, including the doctrines of the return of Christ, the resurrection and the judgment.” He does not state how he will deal with God’s reign, but some passages in volume one raise the issue. The book notes that “God will sovereignly bring history as we know it to an end and create a renewed world,” “the new heavens and the new earth” (p. 36). “The theme of God’s kingdom played a prominent role in Jesus’ teaching” and has Old Testament roots (pp. 205ff), says Livermore. In his discussion of Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King, he points out that “Jesus redefined kingship” (p. 251) and that as *Christus victor* Jesus will eventually crush all enemies (p. 262f).

We may presume that these themes, which occur here under Christology, will be fully elaborated in volume two. But already a question arises. If Jesus began his ministry by preaching the Kingdom of God, why should we *end* with it in our theological systematization? Why not begin with it? There are good biblical and practical reasons to begin our theological discourse with the reign, mission, and plan or “economy” (*oikonomia*) of God (as do several of the New Testament books; cf. Eph. 1, Col. 1, Heb. 1), treating the reign and mission of God (*the missio dei*) as part of the doctrine of God. Such a structuring gives a more missiological cast to all of theology and thus, one could argue, is more compatible both with Scripture and with Wesleyan motifs.

These accents are not entirely absent from the present volume. Livermore has a fine discussion of the redemption of creation and the goal of redemption in his chapter on “God, the Creator” (pp. 187ff) and of God’s redemptive purpose in history. But the missiological accent is not as central or primary as it is in the Bible itself.

The influence (even primacy?) of tradition vis-à-vis Scripture will be seen especially, it seems, in Livermore's treatment of ecclesiology. The section on the church in volume two will cover "the orders of the church, the sacraments, the means of grace and the mission of the church" (p. 29). Clearly this structure comes from systematic theology, not from Scripture, where the controlling images are the church as Body of Christ and the People of God in mission. The New Testament nowhere speaks of "the orders of the church," although this is a staple of post-Constantinian ecclesiology. Making the categories of Western systematic theology normative when we deal with Scripture skews theology away from its full force and tilts it in a more conservative and institutional, less dynamic and missional, direction. This is especially true for ecclesiology, which deals with the actual practices that shape the life of the church. Taking the primacy of Scripture in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral seriously would mean allowing the Bible to shape both the form and the content of our theology. This is what Wesley—fairly self-consciously, if not always successfully—attempted to do.

In treating of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Livermore has a brief section on the gifts of the Spirit (pp. 304f). Presumably this will be expanded in the section on the church in volume two, but the general direction of the argument can be discerned here. The author speaks of the value of the gifts, but suggests that Ephesians 4:7ff refers to "positions or offices within the church to be filled." In fact, Ephesians 4 makes no mention of "positions" or "offices." Here again, later ecclesiology is read back into the text.

In speaking of "The Spirit and the Church," the author makes the curious assertion that there are "two foundations for order within the church," Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The "Christological foundation" accents "leadership and authority" while the "pneumatological foundation" accents spiritual gifts and "free movement" rather than "institutional forms." While the author argues that there is no conflict between these two—they are somehow complementary—the distinction itself (it seems to me) is questionable. It seems to link the "institutional" side of the church with Christ and the "charismatic" side with the Spirit. It would be much better to see the church as grounded in the life of the Trinity. What seems to be at work here, consciously or unconsciously, is an attempt to find theological grounding for "orders" and institutional authority in the church.

The discussion of the Trinity is the third problem with the book's traditional post-Augustinian approach. On the one hand, the author asserts that "The doctrine of the Trinity is the central teaching of the Christian faith" and "became explicit in the New Testament." Both of these statements are questionable, or at least need clarification. Yet they properly lift up the importance of the Trinity. On the other hand, Livermore seems implicitly to make the "threeness" of God secondary to his "oneness"—typical of Western theology since Augustine. While the author says, quite rightly, that "All of God's personal relationships with His creatures are grounded in the relationships of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Godhead" (p. 127), the crucial implications of this for society and for ecclesiology are not worked out. Perhaps they will be in volume two. In light of the contemporary "rediscovery" of the doctrine of the Trinity and of biblically sensitive criticisms of the neglect of Trinitarian insights in Western Christian theology, one might have hoped for a treatment that put as much emphasis on the "threeness" as on the "oneness" of God.

The author's methodology also shapes his view of the Free Methodist doctrinal heritage. *The God of Our Salvation* says that, while the Free Methodist Church belongs to the Methodist family, it is theologically rooted in "historic Christian orthodoxy" and has "also been significantly influenced by European Protestantism, pietism, and American revivalism" (p. 29). In fact, the FMC has also been strongly influenced by the Radical Protestant or Anabaptist tradition, both through Moravianism and in other ways. But the Radical Protestant influence is unacknowledged and its insights generally ignored in this volume.

Livermore has chosen to largely by-pass distinctive Free Methodist emphases in order to stress a broadly orthodox theology. Free Methodist founder B. T. Roberts, despite his fertile mind and extensive writings, is totally ignored as a theological resource. The several references to Jesus' compassion for the poor give no hint that this was a distinctive early Free Methodist emphasis. This tendency may be due in part to the foundational nature of volume one, but it seems also to be a methodological issue.

One final concern I have with *The God of Our Salvation* is its view of sin. Though the discussion is otherwise quite biblical, sin is pictured fundamentally as "disorder." The author says, for example, "The world in which we live is disordered. Wherever there is disorder we can look to sin as its ultimate cause." This point—the pervasiveness of disorder resulting from sin—is made repeatedly in the book. Granted that *moral* disorder

and many other problems derive from sin. But should disorder be made virtually synonymous with sin? To suggest this naturally implies that righteousness is at heart “order” (and implicitly places surpassing value on “order” and “orders” in the church). But is “disorder” a moral category? Vitality and order don’t always necessarily go together. Recent discoveries in the study of chaotic systems suggest that chaos and order are complementary, not mutually opposed. In many pagan worldviews chaos is the greatest evil and order the greatest good—but this is not the biblical view. Closer adherence to the biblical teaching and images for sin is needed here. One would have thought that the author would have seen sin fundamentally in more biblical ways, such as self-centeredness, or as moral disease (John Wesley’s favorite image).

I make these criticisms fully aware that this book is intended for leadership training, not scholarly debate. Still, one can regret the passing up of an opportunity to do theology in a more authentically Wesleyan way. Such an approach would have made the book even more useful.

In sum, while the *content* of *The God of Our Salvation* is essentially biblical, the *lens* through which Scripture is seen is much less so—and this significantly nuances the content. It would be useful to compare this volume with Barry Callen’s *God As Loving Grace: The Biblically Revealed Nature and Work of God* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1996), which in both structure and content stays closer to Scripture and places more emphasis on mission.

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