

Wesleyan Theological Journal

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

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EDITOR'S NOTES

The contributors to this issue range widely in their academic specializations and subject concerns. Two share a particularly biblical focus. Don Thorsen reviews the key Protestant doctrine of “sola scriptura.” He concludes that maintaining the primacy of Scripture is crucial, although there is a more complex dynamic of relevant authorities than the way this phrase is frequently employed. Charles White looks at Romans 9 and John Calvin’s misunderstanding of it, saying, God does not “save some and damn others willy-nilly.”

Historically and theologically speaking, Eric Manchester explores the Catholic-Orthodox-Wesleyan connection in order to gain an increased apostolic and sacramental understanding of holiness and the church. Laura Felleman looks at the “Servant of God” and Winfield Bevins the doctrine of the Spirit in the work of John Wesley. Elaine Heath explores the *via negativa* in Phoebe Palmer (reclaiming her as one of the great Christian mystics), David Swartz the rise of women ministers in the nineteenth-century Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, and James Price the influence of personalism on H. Orton Wiley.

In terms of constructive Wesleyan proposals for the current church scene, Henry Rack surveys recent trends in Wesley scholarship, Heather Ackley focuses on human gender and sexuality, Steve McCormick suggests a Spirit-Christology for ecclesiology, and Thomas Phillips takes a fresh look at sanctification through the lens of contemporary films. Observes Rack: “One of the happiest developments in Methodist scholarship in recent decades has been the advent of historians who have bridged the gap between historians at home with the eighteenth century and those at home with Methodism.” Observes Phillips regarding the film *The Big Kahuna* (1999): “Finally, here is a Wesleyan critique of the church, a critique that chastises the church for replacing genuine love with manipulation, for failing to participate in the broken heartedness of God, and for reducing the gospel to a mere ‘pitch.’ ”

It is hoped that important material is always available in this *Journal*, whether one’s particular interest is biblical, theological, historical, or in the arenas of personal application or current philosophical and social relevance of Christian truth—particularly as informed by the Wesleyan/Holiness traditions.

Barry L. Callen
Anderson, Indiana

***SOLA SCRIPTURA* AND THE WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL**

by

Don Thorsen

The Protestant Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) and the Wesleyan quadrilateral are complementary rather than contradictory principles of religious authority. Usually the two are seen in opposition rather than complementary. For a variety of reasons, it is easier to contrast *sola scriptura* and the Wesleyan quadrilateral than to compare them. After all, *sola scriptura* represents one of the key principles of the Protestant Reformation, which championed Scripture in contrast to the tradition and magisterial authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Dramatic conflict arose between such reformers as Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin and the Roman Catholic Church over a number of issues, including that of religious authority. The reformers believed that Scripture represented the sole authority on which they could reliably base their beliefs, values, and practices and on which they needed to resist the magisterial authority of the church. *Sola scriptura* and debate over the proper nature of religious authority became a decisive issue of religious debate, schism, and eventually war in continental Europe.

John Wesley lived two centuries after the Protestant Reformation. The religious wars between Protestant reformers and Roman Catholics in Continental Europe had ended. However, the issue of religious authority still caused religious debate in light of the emergent Enlightenment principles of Western Europe. Wesley inherited a distinctive approach to religious authority from the Anglican tradition (Church of England). Anglican leaders promoted reason as the *via media* (“middle way”) between the

primacy of scriptural authority, reflective of Continental Protestantism, and church tradition, reflective of Roman Catholicism.¹ Wesley affirmed Scripture, tradition, and reason as religious authorities. To them he added experience as a religious authority to which he appealed in matters of Christian belief, value, and practice.

Wesley did not intend to do anything innovative in terms of theological method; he affirmed historic, biblical Christianity. However, he saw no contradiction in appealing to experience along with church tradition and critical thinking as genuine, albeit secondary religious authorities. In so doing, Wesley made a decisive contribution to Christian understanding and praxis, applying experience methodologically in his ministry as well as in his theology and writings. The dynamic interplay between Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience came to be known as the “Wesleyan quadrilateral,” although Wesley did not coin the term. Nevertheless, the quadrilateral has come to summarize Wesley’s theological contribution to Christian thought and ministry.

Although *sola scriptura* and the Wesleyan quadrilateral seem to contradict, they complement one another because both offer vital insights to the process of critically understanding and dynamically applying biblical and historic Christian beliefs, values, and practices in the world today. Many people overlook the multifaceted dimensions of *sola scriptura*. Likewise, many people overlook the primacy of scriptural authority in the quadrilateral. Together they advance complementary principles extremely important to present-day Christianity, principles that meet contemporary theological concerns for praxis, contextualization, and globalization.

Too often people, including Christians, are encouraged to think in terms of categories that encourage either/or thinking. However, either/orism—as I call it—is reductionistic, often reducing complex and dynamic realities into something so simplistic and naïve that it can become dangerous in how individuals, groups, and institutions implement them. In his book *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, Roger Olson recommends more of a both/and approach to theology.² Although he sets limits to Christian

¹For more information about the spirit of Anglicanism with regard to religious authority and theological method, see Henry R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism: A Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Scribner’s, 1965), 1-23.

²Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 11-28.

orthodoxy, Olson asserts that in Christianity apparent opposites are held creatively in tension rather than succumbing to the temptation to take the easy way out in search of only a single way of looking at an issue. More than one point of view likely needs to be considered in order to understand issues in intellectually healthy as well as spiritually healthy ways. Thus, it is best to consider *sola scriptura* and the Wesleyan quadrilateral as complementary principles of religious authority. However, just because they are complementary, it does not mean that differences remain. Those differences may become especially important in trying to represent Christianity to the world in a way that is faithful to biblical beliefs, values and practices as well as doing so in a way that is sufficiently sophisticated to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the world.

Sola Scriptura

Sola scriptura represents the Protestant Reformation emphasis upon Scripture as the only reliable religious authority—Scripture alone. Anticipated by John Wycliffe in the 14th century, the cry of *sola scriptura* became widespread among Protestant reformers during the 16th century. Because of the political and religious authority of the Roman Catholic Church, resistance to the magisterial and church historical authority of the church was a matter of life and death. Thus, Protestant reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin needed to be very precise about their rationale for defying centuries of Christianity.

Spirit of *Sola Scriptura*. Although Luther made a simple appeal to the authority of Scripture alone, it was not a simplistic appeal. On the contrary, Luther did not think we could rightly appeal to Scripture without reference to either church tradition or reason. The spirit of *sola scriptura* included a more comprehensive and dynamic method of religious reflection, formulation, and application. For example, in Luther's famous stand against the Roman Catholic Church at the Diet of Worms, he significantly appealed to more than Scripture. Although he appealed to primarily to Scripture, he also appealed to reason and to conscience. Luther said:

Since then your serene Majesty and Your Lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed. Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason . . . I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe

nor right to go against conscience. . . . May God help me.
Amen.³

Despite his affirmation of *sola scriptura*, Luther does not speak simplistically of scriptural authority. On the contrary, a more sophisticated, broadly conceived, and relevant approach to theology and ministry occurs.

Luther as well as Melancthon—Luther’s colleague at Wittenberg University and collaborator in the Protestant Reformation—used diverse religious authorities, despite their affirmation of *sola scriptura*. The Augsburg Confession provides one of the best examples. Although it reflects Luther’s theology, Melancthon was the primary author of the document. In the Augsburg Confession, the following is stated about justification:

This teaching about faith is plainly and clearly treated by Paul in many passages, especially in Eph. 2:8, 9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast.”

That no new interpretation is here introduced can be demonstrated from Augustine, who discusses this question thoroughly and teaches the same thing, namely, that we obtain grace and are justified before God through faith in Christ and not through works. His whole book, *De spiritu et littera* (*The Spirit and the Letter*), proves this.

Although this teaching is held in great contempt among untried people, yet it is a matter of experience that weak and terrified consciences find it most comforting and salutary.⁴

In the preceding paragraphs, we see Melancthon’s use of (1) Scripture, (2) tradition, namely, Augustine, and (3) experience, which is explicitly mentioned in the document. Clearly, more than Scripture is present in key Reformation documents.

Like Luther and Melancthon, Calvin affirmed *sola scriptura* with sophistication, breadth, and relevance. For example, Calvin spends a great

³Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 32: “Career of the Reformer: II,” eds. G. Forell and H. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 112–113.

⁴Text from *The Book of Concord*, ed. and tr. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), Art. IV, “Justification,” p. 30; Art. XX, “Faith and Good Works,” 42–46, quoted in *Readings in Christian Thought*, ed. Hugh T. Kerr, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 156.

deal of time talking about the relationship between Scripture and other religious authorities, especially church tradition, since he clearly distinguished between Roman Catholic traditions and those of the Reformers. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin states in Book One, Chapter VI, that “Scripture Is Needed as Guide and Teacher for Anyone Who Would Come to God the Creator.”⁵ Immediately thereafter, he talks in Chapter VII about how Scripture must be confirmed by the witness of the Holy Spirit and by how some traditions, for example, as found in Augustine, contribute positively to Christian theology.⁶ This chapter talks about the experience of the Holy Spirit as well as the benefit of church tradition, rightly discerned. Chapter VIII is entitled, “So Far as Human Reason Goes, Sufficiently Firm Proofs Are at Hand to Establish the Credibility of Scripture.”⁷ Thus, Calvin appeals to reason as well as experience and church tradition in how he goes about the task of theology. Although he might explicitly affirm *sola scriptura*, a more complex and dynamic approach occurs.

Alister McGrath speaks of the Reformers as having a matrix of religious authority, which includes multiple factors in reflection upon and in the application of Scripture, especially with regard to the church and ministry. McGrath says:

Although it is often suggested that the reformers had no place for tradition in their theological deliberations, this judgment is clearly incorrect. While the notion of tradition as an extra-scriptural source of revelation is excluded, the classic concept of tradition as a particular way of reading and interpreting Scripture is retained. Scripture, tradition and the *kerygma* are regarded as essentially coinherent, and as being transmitted, propagated and safeguarded by the community of faith. There is thus a strongly communal dimension to the magisterial reformers’ understanding of the interpretation of Scripture, which is to be interpreted and proclaimed within an ecclesiological matrix.⁸

⁵John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. in 1, tr. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20 of The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 69-73.

⁶Calvin, 74-80.

⁷Calvin, 81-92.

⁸Alister McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 130.

The Westminster Confession, the primary affirmation of Reformed theology in English, affirms *sola scriptura*. However, it does not present a simplistic understanding of the principle of religious authority. On the contrary, the Westminster Confessions allows for other dynamics that are necessary. Chapter 1, “Of the Holy Scripture,” says the following:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.⁹

In explication of *sola scriptura*, reflective of the Westminster Confession, Kenneth Samples says it “implies the authority, clarity, and sufficiency of Scripture, and uniquely gives Scripture alone the role of final arbiter in all matters of faith and morals.”¹⁰ However, as the final arbiter, it considers more than Scripture alone, literally conceived.

Myth of *Sola Scriptura*. Sometimes people misunderstand the sophistication with which the founding reformers understood and applied *sola scriptura*. Any principle used secondhand runs the risk of being used either honorifically or naively, without the benefit of knowing the context of the lengthy, painstaking passion of the originators. Consequently, it takes on “mythic” qualities, that is, *sola scriptura* becomes more than a statement of religious authority. It becomes an archetypal symbol of Protestantism as a whole, distinguishing it from Roman Catholicism and

⁹Westminster Confession, “Of the Holy Scripture,” Presbyterian Church in America, http://www.pcanet.org/general/cof_chapi-v.htm#chapi, accessed 6 May 2005, II.6.

¹⁰Kenneth R. Samples, “What Think Ye of Rome: An Evangelical Appraisal of Contemporary Catholicism,” part two, *Christian Research Journal* (Spring 1993): 32.

Orthodoxy, as well as other religions. As such, its existence becomes sacrosanct, something that is zealously affirmed regardless of critical issues related to its understanding and application. Having mythic power, *sola scriptura* becomes self-sealing no matter how it is used. Unfortunately, sometimes it is used in ways incommensurate with its originators. One could argue that this happened with *sola scriptura*. Indeed, it happened contemporaneously to Luther and Calvin.

The Anabaptist movement affirmed *sola scriptura* more radically than had Luther and Calvin, which is why—in part—it is referred to as being part of a “radical Reformation.” Reformers such as the Zwickau Prophets and Thomas Munzer were radical for various reasons, including their belief in the exclusive affirmation of scriptural authority without need for any admixture, other than the Holy Spirit. Literally, this view emphasized how individuals need no input other than their own insights, thoughts, and decisions about understanding and applying Scripture.

Keith Mathison notes that the radical reformers of the sixteenth century went beyond Luther and Calvin’s rejection of the magisterial authority of the Roman Catholic Church over the interpretation of Scripture. The radical reformers rejected all non-biblical input “in and by the Church within the hermeneutical context of the *regula fidei*,” that is, the “rule of faith,” which reflects biblical interpretation through the baptismal formulas of the ancient church, ecumenical creeds, and development of subsequent church tradition.¹¹ This restorationist approach to Scripture and scriptural interpretation (“back to the Bible!”) wants only the Bible, arguing that an individual unaided by anything or anyone other than the Holy Spirit was spiritually, theologically, and ecclesiastically self-sufficient. Although naïve in its individualism, this type of biblicism has perennially reigned among the more fundamentalist, conservative and evangelical Christians—whether they be Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox. For example, Mathison says the following about the influence of anabaptistic individualism in the United States:

In eighteenth-century America, this anabaptistic individualism combined with Enlightenment rationalism and democratic populism to create a radical version [of tradition], which has prevailed to this day. This doctrine has become the standard

¹¹Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001), 151.

evangelical position on scriptural authority. Recognizing the many errors inherent in this doctrine, many evangelicals who wrongly believe it to be the Reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura* have left evangelical Protestantism.¹²

Although the radical reformers thought that they were taking Luther and Calvin's understanding of *sola scriptura* to its logical conclusion, in fact, they reduced Luther and Calvin's principle to a simplistic and potentially dangerous understanding of religious authority and theological method. Too often in church history, Christians have taken this unsophisticated approach—a myth of the Protestant Reformation—to biblical interpretation, ignoring the complexity for which the Protestant reformers struggled and defied the Roman Catholic Church.

Roman Catholics, of course, resisted the Protestant Reformation for many reasons. Among those reasons, they noted at the Council of Trent the potential “mythic” problems of narrowly conceived religious authority, influenced by individualism. However, Roman Catholics—like the Anabaptists—did not always recognize the methodological sophistication of a Luther and a Calvin. To this day, both Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians continue to attack the principle of *sola scriptura*, arguing for the historical, social, and cultural impossibility of its individualistic approach to scriptural authority and interpretation.¹³ They consider *sola scriptura* both naïve and dangerous to church unity as well as to how Christianity may be applied in life and ministry.

The Protestant apologia for *sola scriptura* continues today mostly among conservatively oriented Christians concerned for upholding Scripture exclusively, vis-à-vis other potential religious authorities. Don Kistler, for example, edited *Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible*. In it are articles by prominent authors such as Michael Horton, John MacArthur, and R. C. Sproul. Of Scripture, Kister says:

The battle for the Bible has been raging since the beginning of time. Satan, the great enemy of souls, began his assault with a

¹²Mathison, 152.

¹³For example, see Robert Sungenis, *Not by Scripture Alone: A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of Sola Scriptura* (Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing, 1997); Joel Peters, *Scripture Alone? 21 Reasons to Reject “Sola Scriptura”* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 2001); and John Whiteford, *Sola Scriptura: An Orthodox Analysis of the Cornerstone of Reformation Theology* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1996).

question: “Hath God said?” . . . The slugfest goes on. Romanists add tradition to what is written in Scripture, and place it on an equal plane with Scripture. . . . Many Charismatics and evangelicals place their personal experience on a par with Scripture, thereby adding to God’s written revelation. . . . Scripture is complete. God has said everything necessary for us to live the holy life to which He calls us. Nothing further needs to be added to what God has already revealed in His written Word.¹⁴

These defenders of *sola scriptura* reject the kind of biblicism (and bibliolatry) that can be accused of being unsophisticated and narrow in its theological understanding. Nevertheless, they come precariously close to it. For example, Horton claims an exclusivist understanding of *sola scriptura*. He says, “Not only must we recover the official commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture, it must be the *only* voice we hear from those who assume the momentous task of being God’s spokesmen.”¹⁵

James White provides helpful perspective, historically speaking, on what the Protestant Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* does and does not affirm. This comparison and contrast of affirmations cannot, of course, be applied to everyone who affirms *sola scriptura*. There are too many factors that come into play with regard to how the principle is understood and applied. Yet, the comparison helps to distinguish between the more sophisticated understanding of *sola scriptura*, reflective of its originators, and more simplistic ways that result in potentially dangerous as well as naive Christian conclusions. White says:

What *Sola Scriptura* Is Not

1. First and foremost, *sola scriptura* is not a claim that the Bible contains all knowledge. The Bible is not a scientific textbook, a manual on governmental procedures, or a catalog of automobile engine parts. The Bible does not claim to give us every bit of knowledge that we could ever obtain.

¹⁴Don Kistler, postscript, *Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995), 277, 278.

¹⁵Michael Horton, foreword, *Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible*, xviii.

2. *Sola scriptura* is not a claim that the Bible is an exhaustive catalog of all religious knowledge. The Bible itself asserts that it is not exhaustive in detail (John 21:25). It is obvious that the Bible does not have to be exhaustive to be sufficient as our source of divine truth.
3. *Sola scriptura* is not a denial of the authority of the Church to teach God's truth.
4. *Sola scriptura* is not a denial that the Word of God has, at times, been spoken. Rather, it refers to the Scriptures as serving the Church as God's final and full revelation.
5. *Sola scriptura* does not entail the rejection of every kind or form of Church "tradition." There are some traditions that are God-honoring and useful in the Church. *Sola scriptura* simply means that a higher authority must test any tradition, no matter how ancient or venerable it might seem to us, and that authority is the Bible.
6. *Sola scriptura* is not a denial of the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and enlightening the Church.

What *Sola Scriptura* Is

1. The doctrine of *sola scriptura*, simply stated, is that the Scriptures alone are sufficient to function as the *regula fidei*, the infallible rule of faith for the Church.
2. All that one must believe to be a Christian is found in Scripture, and in no other source. This is not to say that the necessary beliefs of the faith could not be summarized in a shorter form. However, there is no necessary belief, doctrine, or dogma absolutely required of a person for entrance into the kingdom of heaven that is not found in the pages of Scripture.
3. That which is not found in the Scripture either directly or by necessary implication is not binding upon the Christian.
4. Scripture reveals those things necessary for salvation (2 Tim. 3:14-17).
5. All traditions are subject to the higher authority of Scripture (Matt. 15:1-9). There can be no understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture apart from an understanding of the true origin and

the resultant nature of Scripture. The Reformers had the highest view of the Bible, and therefore had a solid foundation on which to stand in defending the sufficiency of the Scriptures.¹⁶

It is not necessary to develop this comparison and contrast. Needless to say, White gives a more full-orbed and dynamic presentation of the principle of *sola scriptura*, reflective of the spirit of the early reformers. Despite sometimes poorly conceived and truncated uses of *sola scriptura*, most Protestant leaders understood that Christianity required more than Scripture alone, although Scripture needed to remain the primary religious authority.

Sola Scriptura to Via Media. In this spirit of *sola scriptura*, the Anglican Church affirmed the primacy of scriptural authority along with the secondary, albeit genuine authority of church tradition and reason. In the spirit of the burgeoning Enlightenment, Anglicans such as Richard Hooker advocated reason as the *via media* (“middle way”) between Scripture and church tradition. Unlike Continental Protestantism, the Church of England was not convinced that *sola scriptura* worked either in theory or in practice. In theory, Anglicans agreed with the Roman Catholic Church that reformers such as Luther and Calvin had gone to an extreme in reducing Christianity to Scripture alone. In practice, the Protestant reformers looked nothing like a “restored” first-century church. On the contrary, church tradition significantly influenced the church in Wittenberg as well as the church in Geneva. Thus, there needed to be a more comprehensive, dynamic way of dividing the truth between Scripture and tradition. Reason was considered the divine provision by which these sometimes-competing authorities reached a prudent conclusion.

Francis Paget summarizes the spirit of Anglicanism, giving the following description of Richard Hooker’s view of religious authority. He says:

Thus Hooker’s appeal in things spiritual is to a threefold fount of guidance and authority—to reason, Scripture, and tradition, all alike of god, alike emanating from Him, the one original Source of all light and power—each in certain matters bearing

¹⁶James White, *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, quoted by John Samson, “Sola Scriptura—By the Scriptures Alone,” website, <http://www.fccphx.hometown.com/SolaScriptura.html>, accessed 30 March 2005.

a special and prerogative sanction from Him, all in certain matters blending and co-operating.¹⁷

In this context, Wesley began his various ministries and theological writings. He did not inherit a narrow, wooden understanding of Scripture and scriptural authority. On the contrary, Wesley—with his Oxford University education—received sophisticated schooling in matters of Christian beliefs, values, and practices.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

The Wesleyan quadrilateral is defined as Wesley's understanding of religious authority. It affirms the primacy of scriptural authority along with the secondary, albeit genuine authority of tradition, reason and experience. Although Wesley was not a systematic theologian, his theological understanding of religious authority and theological method had a dramatic impact upon the formulation of his beliefs, values, and practices in the rise of Methodism, as well as in his influence upon all subsequent theology.¹⁸ The following discussion represents a summary of the quadrilateral drawn from other writings I have done on the subject.¹⁹

Rise of the Quadrilateral. Wesley did not coin the phrase “quadrilateral.” Instead, Albert Outler coined it during the 1960s in an attempt to summarize Wesley's contribution to the theological and ecclesiastical discussion of contemporary issues facing Christians. Outler had no idea of the life the phrase would have, nor was he entirely pleased that he had coined it, since there arose so many misunderstandings and misuses of it.²⁰ Nevertheless, the quadrilateral has become increasingly prominent in stating the way Christians articulate religious authority.

¹⁷Francis Paget, *An Introduction to the Fifth Book of Hooker's Treatise of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 284.

¹⁸Here my focus is on Wesley's understanding of religious authority rather than on theological method. I discuss his theological method in-depth in *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 96-124.

¹⁹In addition to *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, see my upcoming book chapter entitled “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in Contemporary American Theology,” *Festschrift for Lane Scott*, ed. John Park (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, forthcoming in 2006).

²⁰Outler publicly expressed regret that he had coined the term, since it has been so widely misconstrued. See Albert C. Outler, “Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (1985):16.

Let us look more at the development of the quadrilateral. Outler says the following about his coinage of the phrase:

It was intended as a metaphor for a four-element syndrome, including the four-fold guidelines of authority in Wesley's theological method. In such a quaternity Holy Scripture is clearly unique. But this in turn is illuminated by the collective Christian wisdom of other ages and cultures between the Apostolic Age and our own. It also allows for the rescue of the Gospel from obscurantism by means of the disciplines of critical reason. But always, Biblical revelation must be received in the heart by faith: this is the requirement of 'experience.' ”²¹

Although Outler coined the phrase in the context of his involvements with his denomination, the United Methodist Church, he tried to present the quadrilateral with historical respect for the way Wesley utilized Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Because Wesley was more of a churchman than a theologian, he approached issues of religious belief and practice with the church in mind more than historic and systematic theology. Thus, as Randy Maddox says, “the term was coined by Albert Outler to emphasize that Wesley relied more on ‘standards of doctrine’ in his theological approach than on theological Systems or juridical Confessions of Faith.”²² The standards of doctrine represented the practical guidelines for the Methodist movement Wesley founded.

Outler recognized that Wesley affirmed the classic Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, Scripture alone as the primary religious authority. However, Wesley also recognized that Christians used more than Scripture in how they went about making decisions about what they believed and what they practiced. Although Christians may not always be conscious of their understanding of religious authority and theological method, they usually function in ways that are identifiable. Thus, according to Outler, “The great Protestant watchwords of *Sola Fide* and *Sola Scriptura* were also fundamental in Wesley's doctrine of authority. But early and late, he interpreted *Solus* to mean ‘primarily’ rather than ‘solely’ or ‘exclusively.’ ”²³

²¹Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley,” 11.

²²Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 36.

²³Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 28.

Nature of the Quadrilateral. When talking about the nature of religious authority, including the nature of the quadrilateral, it has to be remembered that, ultimately speaking, all authority comes from God. Wesley affirmed this, yet it is easy to lose sight of this fact while arguing about the relationship between Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. However, Wesley knew that all authority comes from God and that religious authorities with which we function are somehow derivative of God's ultimate authority. Even Scripture only represents a derived or secondary religious authority. Thus, while the focus of so much of this study is on Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, we must not forget that Christians ultimately look to God alone as their source of religious authority.

With regard to the quadrilateral, Thomas Oden talks about its etymology, which in his opinion functioned since the early patristic writers of the Christian church. He says, "the term *quadrilateral* comes from the image of the four 'fortress cities' of Lombardy, suggesting that, if Christian teaching is constructed within such a fourfold fortress, the church can stand secure."²⁴ Later, according to Oden, "The document most commonly associated with the term is the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888, which stated four essentials for a reunited church from the Anglican point of view."²⁵ Outler used these sources as a backdrop for formulating the quadrilateral, rather than an abstract geometrical image. Although Wesley may not have used the phrase, its essence appears prominently throughout his writings.

Wesley often appealed to Scripture and one of the following: tradition, reason, or experience.²⁶ Occasionally, he referred to Scripture, reason, and tradition, or to Scripture, reason and experience.²⁷ Wesley's reference to all four, therefore, is implied rather than explicitly stated. Nevertheless, evidence for a fourfold view of religious authority can be

²⁴Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God, Systematic Theology: Volume 1* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 332-333.

²⁵The Lambeth Quadrilateral affirmed the following: Scripture contains "all things necessary to salvation," as the "rule and ultimate standard of faith"; the ancient ecumenical creeds (Nicene and Apostles') as the sufficient rule of faith; the two sacraments ordained by Christ himself, as the means of grace; "The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church"; see Oden, 332.

²⁶See Maddox, 36, n. 72, 73, 74.

²⁷See Maddox, 36, n. 75, 76.

found. He did not intend to be innovative in his approach to theology, yet he laid the foundation for an approach to matters of religious faith and practice that continue to be relevant today. From Wesley's perspective, Scripture was the inspired, authoritative, and trustworthy revelation of God. One was to study it inductively and critically, relative to his eighteenth-century understanding of biblical hermeneutics. However, he was not afraid to apply insights from reason and experience as well as church tradition in interpreting Scripture.

With regard to tradition, Wesley thought that Protestants undervalued history—especially church history and tradition. Yet, Wesley endeavored to investigate both his immediate ecclesiastical church history as well as ancient traditions that supplemented his religious understanding and his ministry priorities and activities. With regard to reason, “Wesley appealed to reason more than the other two elements of the trilateral hermeneutic. He was prone often to repeat ‘all reasonable people believe.’”²⁸ Although Wesley thought of reason primarily as a tool with which to think critically about Scripture and related matters, he thought that reason, logic, and critical thinking were complementary to right belief and practice. Finally, with regard to experience, Wesley thought it could not be ignored in relationship to Christian belief, and especially in relationship to Christian practice, both individually and socially, ministerially and publicly. He certainly recognized the potential abuses of experience and appeals to experience, yet Wesley thought that it undeniably influenced Christians. They should recognize the experiential dimension of Christian reflection and appropriate it properly, rather than use it naively. Although Wesley did not have a well-developed understanding of experience—relative to contemporary views of it, he thought it included more than personal experience. It also included experience of scientific, behavioral scientific, and other investigations into humanity.

Myth of the Quadrilateral. Once any phrase becomes common parlance, people set out to demythologize it. For example, Ted Campbell calls the quadrilateral a “modern Methodist myth.”²⁹ Of course, there is a

²⁸John Wesley, quoted by W. Stephen Gunter, “Conclusion,” *Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation*, ed. W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 134; cf. Maddox, 36.

²⁹Ted Campbell, “The ‘Wesleyan Quadrilateral’: The Story of a Modern Methodist Myth,” in Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 154-161.

lot to be said for this opinion. After all, Wesley did not coin the term. It was not coined till almost two hundred years after Wesley, undoubtedly with numerous alternative motives driving its coinage—motives unrelated or even unfamiliar to Wesley.

One of the more prominent opponents of the use of the quadrilateral is William Abraham. It is not because Abraham is opposed to Wesley. On the contrary, he is a great advocate of Wesley and the Methodist tradition. However, Abraham regrets the non-Wesley usages of Wesley's understanding of religious authority. In particular, he laments the minimization of scriptural authority. For example, Abraham says, "Efforts have been made to treat these four elements dialectically, granting each of the elements relative autonomy. In response, since such a dialectic relationship fosters confusion, a call for scrapping the quadrilateral has been issued, suggesting that the quadrilateral invites anti-polarization of these four elements."³⁰

In defense of the quadrilateral, Stephen Gunter says, "But the misuse of the quadrilateral should not be an excuse to dismiss it. The relationship of these four elements needs to be seen dialogically, with Scripture as the rule and authority in a way that should not be ascribed to the other components."³¹ In fact, it would be wrong to think of the four aspects of the quadrilateral in static relationships or even dialectical relationships between only two of the four aspects of it. Instead, proponents see all four aspects in dynamic interaction. The main point of contention with the quadrilateral has usually been in terms of maintaining Wesley's historic emphasis upon the primacy of scriptural authority, vis-à-vis one or more of the other aspects.

Theology in a Postmodern Context

Postmodernism represents a description of the contemporary world in which we live, at least, in the Western world. It is characterized by skepticism that finite people will ever be able to discover truth that is infinite, universal, or—for that matter—objective, since subjectivity comes

³⁰William J. Abraham, *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 69, summarized by Carl Schultz, "Biblical Hermeneutics in the Wesleyan Tradition," Houghton University Home Page, 10 February 2003 <campus.houghton.edu/personnel/gavery/Wesleyweb/biblical_hermenutics.htm>.

³¹Gunter, 131.

into play in any assessment of truth. In a sense, postmodernism considers the pursuit of absolute truth to be a myth, since so-called truths we discover are relative to the particular time and place in which they are found. As such, our knowledge of the world and, indeed, of ourselves is relative to the particular cultural context in which we live. All truth, language about truth, and actions performed on behalf of truth must humbly admit the local nature of their truth—of their self-description, of their story, of their narrative. There is no meta-narrative, so to speak, which commands absolute, infinite, universal truth which is wholly objective. Those individuals, groups, or institutions that claim to speak in an absolute way actually do violence to the narratives or stories of other individuals, groups, or institutions. Of course, the violence may occur as benign neglect as well as marginalization, oppression, persecution, or actual physical violence against others who are thought to be misguided, wrong, or heretical.

Although postmodernism may have arisen in the West, its influence is spreading to the East and throughout the world. As the world becomes more globally focused, it becomes increasingly difficult to avoid intellectual, cultural, and ethical influences from touching every part of the globe. In light of these postmodern trends, issues of contextualization and globalization become increasingly important. In order to meet the challenges of postmodernism, contextualization, and globalization, it will be important for Christians to meet them faithfully as well as critically. Although Christians do so in a variety of ways, the historic principles of *sola scriptura* and quadrilateral have their respective contributions to make to the discussion.

Contextualization. Contextualization represents studying things in their proper context. This includes the context of things studied as well as the persons studying them. Contextualization includes their religious, historical, social, ethnic, gender, cultural, political, economic, and other factors relevant to their meaning. It also includes the religious, historical, social, ethnic, gender, cultural, political, economic, and other factors characteristic of those who are studying and the context for which they are studying.

Contextualization is not a new word or concept. It has increasingly become important to all levels of understanding, inside and outside religious circles. Theologically speaking, contextualization represents the

growing concern of Christians to be sensitive to present-day life and history, as well as to Scripture in ways that are most discerning and relevant. This concern is especially important in the so-called postmodern world, which sees so much of truth as being culturally relative. Indeed, Christians have had to become more prudent about how they present their beliefs, values, and practices given the growing skepticism of people today. Modernity, reflective of Western Enlightenment values, was skeptical enough regarding Christianity. Postmodernity heightens the needs for Christians to speak humbly and not triumphantly, recognizing the contextual aspects of Scripture and of church history, as well as of their own present-day context.

For some Christians, contextualization conjures up the problem of syncretism, namely, the fusion of two or more different types of religious beliefs, values, and practices. Syncretism, or pluralism as it is sometimes known, rejects the possibility of there being one religious truth. Instead, all religions are of equal value, relatively speaking. Religions spread, not necessarily because of their truth or because of divine power, but because of their ability to speak persuasively. Their meta-narrative, so to speak, may convert other local or individual narratives. It is a value of postmodernism that no meta-narrative should prevent other narratives from being heard. Thus, the presentation of Christianity, that is, the Christian meta-narrative, must not occur in ways that neglect, marginalize, or do violence—literally or symbolically—to other narratives, that is, other stories of belief, value, and practice.³²

Contextualization represents more than the integration of religious ideas—their beliefs and values. It also represents their integration, application, and teaching. As such, contextualization is related to praxis, which considers theory and practice inextricably bound up with one another. Christian praxis thoughtfully and skillfully applies beliefs and values in ways that advocate constructive social activism and advocacy on behalf of justice, equality, and peace, as well as for ministering with empathy, forgiveness, and compassion.

In light of the growing relevance of contextualization, the quadrilateral represents an ideal principle for understanding, appreciating, and applying concerns of contextualization. The quadrilateral sees not just

³²For an extended discussion of the need for Christians to speak their meta-narrative with sensitivity as well as persuasiveness to postmodernity, see Middleton and Walsh, Grenz and Olson, Grenz and Franke, and Oden.

dependence but interdependence among Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. There always exists an interdependence or coinherence, using a trinitarian analogy, between the various religious authorities. To be sure, Scripture remains primary. However, there exists an openness and expectancy on the part of tradition, reason, and experience to understand Scripture in its context, dialectically interacting with the other religious authorities. The quadrilateral also helps to apply Scripture and other Christian beliefs and values in ways that are enriched by church tradition, critical thinking, and relevant experience.

Sola scriptura could be asked to serve as a comparable principle of contextualization. Indeed, most who advocate *sola scriptura* would argue just that. However, the principle seems too exclusive and independent of interaction with contextual factors. Although *sola scriptura* can and has been used for the sake of contextualization, the quadrilateral represents a more useful principle of contextualization, while retaining *sola scriptura*'s concern for maintaining the primacy of scriptural authority.

Globalization. Globalization has become a buzzword or catchphrase in the West for many things. Economically, it refers to the increasing economic integration and interdependence among countries. The same could be said of the increasing integration and interdependence among countries in terms of technology, communication, transportation, and politics. The same could also be said of increasing integration and interdependence among religions, although most adherents of religion might reject such a notion. Nevertheless, an increasing amount of religious integration and interdependence occurs among Christians, both in terms of intra-religious interaction and inter-religious interaction. For example, there has been a recent spate of Christian books written on the topic of globalization.³³

³³To name a few, see Peter Van Der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity (Zones of Religion)* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1995); B. Goudzwaard, Brian Fikkert, Larry Reed, Adolfo Garcia de la Sienra, and James Skillen, eds., *Globalization and the Kingdom of God* (The Kuyper Lecture Series) (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Max L. Stackhouse and Peter Paris, eds., *God and Globalization: Religion and the Powers of the Common Life* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001); Max L. Stackhouse, Don S. Browning, and Peter J. Paris, eds., *The Spirit and the Modern Authorities: God and Globalization*, Vol. 2 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001); and Charles Reed, *Development Matters, Perspectives on Globalization* (London: Church House Publishing, 2001).

However, when we speak of Christianity and the importance, if not inevitability of globalization, a variety of concerns occur. For example, there is the ongoing concern for syncretism, pluralism, and—frankly—the dilution of the Bible’s good news of Jesus Christ and the present-day work of the Holy Spirit for the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, Christians must rise to the challenge of a shrinking world, metaphorically speaking, and the need to address the varieties of needs of a global as well as a local community.

In analyzing the globalization of Christianity, it may be helpful to think of at least two additional terms. First, the internationalization of theology refers to the intent of speaking theologically in ways that may be used without linguistic or cultural barriers. Second, the localization of theology refers to teaching and applying Christian beliefs, values, and practices for a specific locale. Both need to occur if Christianity is to meet the demands of globalization, internationally as well as locally.

In the attempt to become more global, many problems occur. There is a quantitative increase in knowledge which can become mind-boggling, especially considering the interest in interacting with a growing number of nations, ethnic groups, cultures, and linguistic groups around the world. Paralleling this increase is the threat to the quality of one’s knowledge and of one’s response to it. An individual, group, institution, or country may become overwhelmed, resulting in a kind of cultural homogenization. Likewise, an individual, group, institution, or country may overwhelm—intentionally or unintentionally—others. Economically, socially and politically, this could be true of the United States in (re)colonizing the world, despite whether its adherents think it is the case. Religiously, this could also be true of Christianity—particularly Western Christianity—that remains the dominant religion in the world, despite whether its adherents think it is the case. Thus, Christians need to be humble as well as self-conscious in thinking critically about how they endeavor to act globally, internationalizing the good news of the Bible, while localizing the message in ways that are relevant and effective in meeting the diverse needs of specific locales.

How best are we to undertake the important need to being, thinking, speaking, and acting in ways that reflect globalization? This is a question that does not have a simple answer. In addition, it will not have a single answer. In fact, it may require ongoing answers, rather than a once-for-all solution to a changing and increasingly complex world. Nevertheless, the

quadrilateral provides religious authorities to which we may turn—Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—religious authorities that embody the needed integration and interdependence of biblical beliefs, values and practices for the world today. Despite the valuable emphasis *sola scriptura* places upon the divine revelation of God in Scripture, its conceptualization meets neither the theoretical nor the practical needs of contemporary Christianity and of the world, globally and locally, as well as does the quadrilateral.

Conclusion

While *sola scriptura* valuably reminds us of the need for maintaining the primacy of scriptural authority, the quadrilateral provides a far better principle of religious authority because it embodies as well as advocates a complex dynamic of relevant authorities, which best contributes to meeting the challenges of postmodernism, contextualization, and globalization. Certainly *sola scriptura* and the quadrilateral do not need to be seen as contradictory or competing principles of religious authority. On the contrary, it is best to see them as complementary, properly understanding the history and spirit of the two principles. Nevertheless, in our present-day world, the benefits of the quadrilateral become increasingly apparent. Christians would do well to utilize the quadrilateral in their ministry as well as theology in attempting to translate biblical truths in ways that are appealing, persuasive, and effective in lovingly responding to others. If Christians are to meet the complex needs of the world in a way that is faithful to historic Christianity, the quadrilateral provides the best principle of religious authority for representing God and God's kingdom in the world today.

JOHN CALVIN'S FIVE-POINT MISUNDERSTANDING OF ROMANS 9: AN INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

by

Charles Edward White

In his *Institutes*, while explaining how God graciously saves humanity, John Calvin's main goal is to assert that God saves people entirely out of his own mercy and grace, and that the elect have no basis for boasting about their own works. In asserting that God's sovereign grace alone is the reason for election, he is logically compelled to admit that God's sovereignty is also the sole basis for reprobation. Of course, Calvin finds this idea distasteful and calls the decree by which God dooms some individuals to eternal punishment "dreadful" (*horribile*).¹ He does not propose this doctrine because he likes it, but because he believes Scripture clearly teaches it. He devotes chapter twenty-one of book three of the *Institutes* to explaining the doctrine of election, asserting that God has predestined some people to salvation and others to destruction. He then defends the idea in the next two chapters. In these chapters he refers to many scripture portions, but his argument is carried primarily by Romans 9. He also discusses the idea of predestination in his commentaries, especially those on

¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.23.7, 955. In this passage Calvin refers specifically to God's decree that Adam's fall irremediably involved so many adults, together with their infant offspring, in eternal death. It seems clear, however, that Calvin has the larger idea of reprobation in mind when he uses this adjective.

Romans and Exodus; once again, Romans 9 and the passages it quotes from Exodus are central to the discussion.²

Calvin's understanding of this key chapter of Romans is at variance with that of almost every writer in the early church with the exception of the later Augustine.³ Though Calvin's view was shared by Martin Luther, it was opposed by Erasmus in his own day.⁴ Writers since the Reformation also have disputed Calvin's interpretation.⁵ In the twentieth century,

²John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, C. W. Bingham, trans. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950), and John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, Ross Mackenzie, trans., D. W. and T. F. Torrence, eds. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960).

³Origen, Apollinaris of Laodicea, John Chrysostom, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, Cyril of Alexandria, Jerome, and Ambrosiaster all believe Romans 9 does not teach absolute divine determinism, and Erasmus followed them in their interpretation. See Maurice F. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle. The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Martin Parmentier, "Greek Church Fathers on Romans 9, part 2," *Bijdragen tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 51 (1990), 10-15. The obvious exception to the wholesale rejection of divine determinism is the later Augustine. In his first exposition of this chapter Augustine explained the election of Jacob and not of Esau by saying God acted because of "the hidden merits" of Jacob, and in his second he said God chose Jacob on the basis of his foreseen faith. It is only in his final explanation that Augustine adopts the position later advocated by Calvin, that God elects for no reason outside his own will. See W. S. Babcock, "Augustine and Paul: the case of Romans IX" *Studia Patristica* 16/2 (1985), 473-479.

⁴See E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, eds., *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* [LCC] (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), and John B. Payne, "Erasmus on Romans 9:6-24" in David C. Steinmetz, ed., *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 119-135.

⁵James Arminius treats Romans 9 without direct reference to Calvin, arguing that Jacob and Esau are types for believers and non-believers respectively. See James Arminius, "Analysis to the Ninth Chapter of Romans," in *The Writings of James Arminius*, James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, trans. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 3:527-565. John Wesley argues that individual predestination contradicts dozens of other scriptures and says that the election spoken of in Romans 9 is God's choice to save those who believe and to damn those who do not. See John Wesley, "Predestination Calmly Considered," *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872, reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1979), 10:204-59. For a modern restatement of this line of argument, see Roger T. Foster and V. Paul Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1973). The outstanding

Karl Barth quoted Calvin's words, but said they were only true "mythologically."⁶ More recently, the scholarly world has largely abandoned Calvin's understanding, with three of today's most widely-respected commentators rejecting some or all of his views.⁷ Lately, intertextual analysis has given us new tools to evaluate his conclusions.⁸ When assessed by these tools, we find that Calvin's understanding of Romans 9 is marred by five different mistakes.

modern defense of Calvin's position is John Piper's *The Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992). Obviously it is not possible to respond to every point of Piper's book in one article, but this paper will cover the all the main issues he raises and argue that conclusions directly opposite from his are warranted. More recently Thomas R. Schreiner has defended the Calvinist reading of Romans 9 arguing Paul is talking about the salvation of individuals in these verses. I believe intertextual analysis, discussed below, will point out the errors in his essay. See Thomas H. Schriener, "Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election Unto Salvation? Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36/1 (March 1993), 25-40.

⁶Barth says, "When the Reformers applied the doctrine of election and rejection (predestination) to the psychological unity of this or that individual, and when they referred quantitatively to the 'elect' and the 'damned,' they were, as we can now see, speaking mythologically." He quotes Calvin in this section on pp. 349, 350, and 356. See Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., Edwyn C. Hoskyns, trans. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 340-361.

⁷As noted below Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [ICC] (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), and James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* [Word Bible Commentary] (Dallas: Word Books, 1988) differ with Calvin on important points. Douglas Moo agrees with Calvin's exegesis, but, as Gordon Fee points out in his editor's preface, this view of Romans is "not notably popular among Romans specialists these days." See Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [NIC] (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), vii.

⁸Intertextual analysis is discussed in Richard B. Hays, *Echos of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). There he gives seven tests for any proposed understanding of Paul's use of the Hebrew Bible: Availability, volume, recurrence, thematic coherence, historical plausibility, the history of interpretation, and satisfaction. As Hays himself admits, "To run explicitly through this series of criteria for each of the texts I will treat would be wearisome," but his tests will shape my handling of Paul's use of the Scripture in Romans 9. For an explanation of the tests and the quotation, see 29-32 of Hays' work. I will analyze each passage by the appropriate intertextual criteria, and then conclude by applying the suitable tests to Calvin's overall interpretation of Romans 9.

Intertextual analysis is especially germane to this passage if it does indeed partake more of midrash than of diatribe as Stegner argues. If Paul is engaging in

Calvin's five different mistakes follow his exposition of Romans 9:6-24. First, from vv. 6-13 Calvin concludes that both Ishmael and Esau are damned; second, from vv. 14-15 he finds that God's essential nature is arbitrary; third, from vv. 16-18 he reasons that God completely controlled Pharaoh and made him disobey the Lord's commands; fourth, based on vv. 19-20 he asserts that no one can hold God's saving or damning actions to an objective standard of justice; and fifth, he believes vv. 21-24 teach that God creates some people for the express purpose of damning them. None of these concepts is actually taught in Romans 9. Calvin only finds them there because of a variety of exegetical errors which he makes; he misunderstands Paul's intertextual use of the Old Testament.

Assessing Calvin's exegesis in the light of intertextual analysis discloses that Calvin misunderstood Paul's use of the Old Testament according to several tests proposed by Richard Hays. Calvin begins well, passing the first four tests of intertextual analysis. The first test is availability: for Paul and his readers Scripture was Scripture, whether cited in the Hebrew or Septuagint, so the authority of the cited texts is clear. Of course, Calvin would have no problem with this test. Second is volume: because Paul quotes these texts, there is no question, for Calvin or anyone else, which texts he is citing. Third is recurrence: in Romans and his other epistles Paul refers to the Abraham cycle, to the experience of the Exodus, and he quotes Isaiah, showing how important these scriptures are in Paul's understanding of God's plan. Once again, Calvin is like Paul, valuing these sections highly. Having begun well, it is only as Calvin comes to the latter four tests that he begins to stumble.

Verses 6-9. Is Ishmael Damned?

In Calvin's handling of the texts about Abraham's sons and in the texts about Isaac's sons, Calvin fails the test of historical plausibility. The meanings Calvin proposes for the passages cited in these verses run directly counter to the teaching about these people in the rest of the Old Testament. Primary in Calvin's misinterpretation of vv. 6-9 and 10-13 is his falling into the fallacy of equivocation, of treating the concept of election as if it referred only to the eternal destiny of an individual, and thus

a form of scripture interpretation that flourished during the first six centuries of the common era in Jewish communities, it is especially important to understand the way he handles the Old Testament. See William Richard Stegner, "Romans 9:6-29—A Midrash," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22 (1984), 37-52.

concluding that both Ishmael and Esau are damned.⁹ Calvin knows the word “election” has more than one meaning. In *The Institutes* 3.21.5 he speaks of God’s election of “the whole offspring of Abraham,” the nation of Israel.¹⁰ Here the term refers to the special treatment God gave to the Hebrew nation. Calvin lists some of those benefits of this first kind of election: God delivered them from Egypt; he protected them; he adorned them with gifts; he accorded them high honor; he was favorably inclined toward them; he provided all the good things in which they abounded; he gave them the promised land; and he offered them salvation.¹¹

After describing this first kind of election, Calvin speaks of “a second, more limited decree of election,” by which God chooses individuals to be either saved or damned: “As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction.”¹² Having once established that election can have two different meanings, Calvin treats the appearance of the concept in Romans 9 as if it clearly has the second meaning, indicating God’s choice of individuals for salvation or damnation. From Paul’s teaching that Isaac was the son of promise (Romans 9:7-9) and that God chose Jacob (Romans 9:10-13), Calvin concludes that both Ishmael and Esau are damned. He says that Ishmael and Esau are “cut off” from the “spiritual covenant” of salvation and adds that Jacob’s election implies Esau’s reprobation.¹³

Calvin’s assumption that God’s undisputed passing over of each of these elder brothers in favor of the younger means that the former were damned is belied both by Romans 9 and by the rest of Scripture. In Romans 9 Paul does not say that either Ishmael or Esau is damned. In fact, when discussing how Isaac is the son of promise, he never names Ishmael or any of Abraham’s six other sons. Paul does name Esau and even says that he is hated, but he does not explicitly say anything about his eternal state. Paul’s concern is to show that Isaac and Jacob are elected by God. He makes his point directly by discussing the promises made to

⁹Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.16.14, 1336.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 3.21.5, 927. Calvin does not really mean the whole offspring of Abraham, but only those descended from him through Jacob.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 3.21.5-7, 927-930.

¹²*Ibid.*, 3.23.7, 929, 931.

¹³*Ibid.*, 3.21.6, 929 and 3.22.4, 936.

these two men, and by implication when he neglects to mention God's promises to Abraham's or Isaac's other children. If election unequivocally means selection for individual salvation, then Calvin is right to conclude that non-election is reprobation, but, as he himself explains, election can have a different meaning. That this different meaning obtains in Romans 9 is shown by the treatment of these men in other parts of the Scripture.

Although Paul calls Isaac the seed of promise, other parts of the Bible show that Ishmael also shares in God's promises and blessing. Ishmael is mentioned at least eight times in the Old Testament and is often blessed by God. In Genesis 16:10 God promises, "I will so increase your descendants so that they will be too numerous to count." God goes on in verse 12 to state that Ishmael will be "a wild donkey of a man" and "will live in hostility toward all his brothers." These words, however, do not indicate God's disfavor with Ishmael, for he is included in the covenant with Abraham by circumcision (Genesis 17:23) and God promises to bless him: "I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers and I will make him into a great nation" (Genesis 17:20). This promise is reiterated in Genesis 21:13 and 18, and is partially fulfilled as Genesis 21:20 tells us that God was with the boy as he grew up. More of the promise comes true as Genesis 25:13 tells us that Ishmael's twelve sons become the heads of twelve tribes, and finally Isaiah 60:7 prophesies that the flocks of Ishmael's sons will serve Israel and be accepted on God's altar. Nothing in the Old Testament indicates that God punished Ishmael in this life or that he damned him for the future life. True, he is not elected to possess the land or to be the source of blessing for the whole world as is Isaac, but to be passed over for a role in *heilsgeschichte* is very different from being punished in hell forever.¹⁴

Verses 10-13. Is Esau Damned?

Like Ishmael, Esau too is not selected by God to be a channel for his blessing to the world, but nothing in Scripture indicates that he personally is reprobate as Calvin states.¹⁵ Once again Calvin fails the intertextual test of historical plausibility. The Bible is clear that God chooses Jacob to be

¹⁴Cranfield understands the passage in this way. He says that, though the roles Ishmael and Isaac play "are so sharply contrasted," both "stand within—and not without—the embrace of the divine mercy." See C. E. B. Cranfield, 472.

¹⁵*Institutes*, 3.22.4, 936.

served by Esau (Genesis 25:23), and tells how Jacob treacherously obtained both the birthright and the blessing. After recording events from the lives of both of Isaac's sons, the lasting impression Scripture gives in its treatment of Esau is how rich and significant he is. Genesis 32:6 reveals that Esau leads four hundred men and Genesis 36:7 describes the abundance of possessions he acquires. The chapter then goes on to record the names of his numerous descendants.

Esau's name is mentioned again in Malachi 1:3, and Paul quotes this passage to make his point. Unhappily, Paul's point is obscured by two problems. The first is, when Paul says "Esau," does he mean the historical individual or the nation that comes from him? The second is, when Paul says "hate," does he mean active malice or merely less love? The answer to the first question comes from the contexts of Malachi and Romans. In Malachi it is clear that the prophet is using Esau figuratively to refer to the nation of Edom and not to the historical individual who is Jacob's brother. From the context of Romans we see, however, that Paul is taking Malachi's synecdoche and applying it to the historical individual who fathered the nation to which the prophet refers.

The second and more troubling problem comes in Paul's application of the word "hate" to God's feeling for Esau. Unfortunately for readers not familiar with biblical languages, the Hebrew word Malachi uses *anf*, *sane*, and the Greek word Paul quotes from the LXX, *misevw*, *mise_*, are both often translated as "hate," implying active malice toward an individual. The words can certainly have this import, but nothing in the word's meaning or the context of Malachi requires this idea. Hebrew can use *anf* to indicate not malice, but only less love, as it does in Genesis 29:31 when Jacob loves Leah less than Rachel. Likewise the Greek word has a similar meaning. In Luke 14:26 Jesus tells his disciples to hate their parents, while the parallel passage in Matthew 10:37 reveals that they are to love them less than they do Jesus. Thus, in its context, Malachi's words do not apply at all to the historical individual named Esau. Irenaeus pointed out this fact as early as the second century when he said that the prophet's words meant that Israel would be a great, free nation while Edom would be a lesser people living in bondage.¹⁶

¹⁶Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.21.2, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 1:493. Others in modern days have made a similar point. See Cranfield, 480.

Moreover, Paul's application of Malachi's words may mean only that God's regard for Jacob was greater than his disposition toward Esau, that God chose Jacob, not Esau, to be the channel for blessing. Obviously, Calvin was familiar with the biblical idiom, but he seems to overlook this nuance when reading Romans 9. Although he knows that Malachi's words do not denote that God hated Esau as a person, still in both the *Institutes* and his *Commentary on Romans* he maintains that Paul quotes this verse to assert that Esau is damned.¹⁷ Read with the remembrance of the Lord's benefits to Esau in terms of his property and descendants, it becomes clear that Paul does not intend to claim that Esau is reprobate, but only to assert that God elects Jacob, not his elder brother, for a role in *heils-geschichte*.¹⁸ Thus, while the rest of the Scripture clearly supports Paul's teaching that neither Ishmael nor Esau is elected to bring God's blessing to the world, it does not sustain Calvin's contention that because these men are not elected, both of them are damned to eternal punishment.¹⁹

Verses 14-15. Is God Essentially Arbitrary?

Intertextual analysis not only shows that Calvin assigned meanings to Old Testament texts that are historically implausible because they con-

¹⁷*Institutes*, 3.21.7, 930, shows that Calvin knew this passage applied primarily to nations, as does his *Romans*, 202, but in both places he states that Esau is damned.

¹⁸Morris says that the stress of this passage is election for service. "God chose Israel for this role; he did not choose Edom." See Morris, 357. Dunn says that the idea of reprobation can be "drawn out [of this verse] at best (if at all) with hesitancy and many a question mark." See Dunn, 545.

¹⁹One other passage mentions Esau as a person and not as the eponymous name for Edom: Hebrews 12:16-17. There it calls him "godless" and conflates his sale of his birthright and his seeking of his stolen blessing. Some argue that this passage proves that Esau was reprobate. Laying aside the argument that it is improper to interpret Paul through Hebrews, we should note that the passage does reveal that, when Esau sold his birthright, he not only did not value it (as Genesis 25:34 comments), but he also did not value the God who stood behind that birthright. It is, however, different to adjudge that someone is godless at one point in his life, and to pronounce that he is eternally damned. Knowing the rest of the Esau story, how he realized his mistake in marrying the Hittite women (Genesis 28:6-9), and how he did not carry out his threat to kill Jacob (Genesis 33), is it impossible to hope he likewise repented of his godlessness? Moreover, in the same breath that the writer of Hebrews warns the readers not to be godless like Esau, he also tells them not to be sexually immoral. No one would argue that one episode of sexual immorality is a sure sign of reprobation; so, no one should conclude from one episode of "godlessness" that Esau is damned.

tradict the rest of the Old Testament's teaching on the subjects, it also shows that Calvin's reading of the text sometimes violates its thematic coherence. In vv. 14-15 Calvin makes the mistake on two levels: he misconstrues the meaning of Exodus 33:19 in its own context, and his interpretation of the text makes nonsense of the argument Paul is trying to make. Calvin goes wrong when he argues that Romans 9:15, which quotes Exodus 33:19, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is an assertion of God's right to save some and damn others "as it so pleases him."²⁰ Repeatedly Calvin has recourse to this text to argue that God chooses to show mercy only to a few, and "not to bestow it upon all."²¹ This assertion of God's arbitrary nature grievously misreads the text. He begins to go wrong when he misunderstands the Hebrew idiom God uses in Exodus. Next, this misreading of the idiom forces him to ignore the context in which the quoted words originally appear, disrupting its thematic coherence, and finally, ruining the coherence of Paul's argument.

In answer to his rhetorical question, "God is not unrighteous, is he?" (Romans 9:14), Paul uses his strongest negation and then cites God's words to Moses from Exodus 33:19. The Hebrew idiom God uses in this verse employs repetition for emphasis. The question is, What is being emphasized? Does God wish to assert his right to limit his mercy or does he want to underscore how widely it extends? The Hebrew idiom, technically called paronomasia or *idem per idem*, often appears with the infinitive absolute as in Gen. 2:17, which literally says "to die, you shall die" and means "you shall surely die." In this form the idiom simply implies intensification and, if used in Exodus 33, would emphasize the extent of God's mercy and compassion. Other times, however, Hebrew uses paronomasia with a relative clause, as in Ex. 4:13, where Moses tells God, "send by the hand you will send." In this case, some interpreters find a different nuance. They say that the Exodus 4 passage emphasizes,

²⁰*Institutes*, 3.22.6, 939.

²¹*Ibid.*, 3.24.16, 984. In arguing that God freely chooses to save some and not all, Calvin sometimes emphasizes God's choice and sometimes emphasizes the limited number chosen. In 2.5.17, 337, 3.22.6, 938, and 3.2.28, 942, he stresses God's choice while in 3.22.6, 939, he highlights the "small number" of those who are saved.

not so much the action of sending, but the indeterminacy of the one sent or the freedom and power of the sender.²²

Since the relative absolute is the form used in Exodus 33, some say the purpose of the idiom here is to emphasize God's right to limit his mercy.²³ It is true that the form of paronomasia God uses in Ex. 33:19 does contain an element of indeterminacy; but it is not true that the goal is to stress God's freedom to limit his mercy. Rather, by using repetition with the relative clause, God is affirming his freedom to show grace along with its limitless extent. He says that his very character is lovingkindness and that no one can or needs to constrain his mercy and compassion, because they flow from his essence. In addition, no one can determine the limit of its reach because he freely chooses to bestow it. The targumim understand this idiom in this way as do the majority of the rabbis who comment on this text.²⁴ Calvin misses the idiom and reads the words literally, understanding them to affirm that, of all the people to whom God could show grace, the Lord arbitrarily chooses some and passes by others.²⁵ Thus, to Calvin this phrase connotes a limitation of God's mercy and compassion, rather than an emphasis on them.²⁶ When seen as a paronomasia, however, the phrase "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" becomes an expression, not of circumscription, but of bounty, accenting God's power and freedom to be gracious.

²²T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. Paul Jouen, *Subsidia Biblica* 14/II (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991) vol 2, 599, para. 158o. I am indebted to Allen Emery of Hendrickson Press for calling this resource to my attention.

²³Joining Calvin in his understanding that in this passage God asserts his right to limit his mercy is Piper. See Piper, 81-83.

²⁴Cornelis Houtman, *A Historical Commentary on the Old Testament: Exodus* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 3:701-2, and Samuel ben Meir, *Rashbam's Commentary on Exodus: An Annotated Translation*, ed. and trans. Martin I. Lockshin (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 1997), 414. For a modern Jewish understanding, see Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 214, which translates the phrase "the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show."

²⁵Calvin says God uses this phrase to show his arbitrary power. See his *Commentary . . . Moses*, 381.

²⁶He says, "The relative pronoun expressly denotes that mercy will not be extended indiscriminately to all." *Romans*, 204-205.

That “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” is an idiom which intensifies rather than limits is clear from the context in which God utters this phrase. In Exodus 33, Moses feels overwhelmed by the task the Lord has assigned him. He seeks reassurance, asking God to be present with the people. This God so promises because he is pleased with Moses and knows him intimately. God uses a Hebrew idiom to express the depth of his knowledge of Moses when he says in v. 17, “I know you by name.” Moses desires a deeper, more reciprocal relationship with the Lord, so he pleads, “Now show me your glory.” Responding positively to this request, God promises that he will allow Moses to see his goodness and to fully understand his character. When God says, “I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence,” he is using the Hebrew idiom “name” to represent his whole character. He tells Moses that he will give him a deep and intimate knowledge of his personality. In this context, the phrase “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” is linked with God’s goodness and his essential character. God is saying that he freely bestows his mercy and compassion, that no one forces him to do so, that when he acts graciously he is expressing his fundamental nature.²⁷

Calvin does not understand God’s words in this way. He says that with these words “God restrains Moses’ intercession.”²⁸ This comment is puzzling in two ways. It strangely finds intercession as something that needs to be restrained, and it conflates two episodes that are separated in time. Earlier, in Exodus 32 after the incident with the golden calf, Moses intercedes with the Lord. Obviously, God is pleased with Moses’ words because he grants the request and relents his punishment. The next day Moses again intercedes for the people, and even says he does not want to live if they do (Ex 32:32). God answers that he will not be blackmailed by Moses, but will punish those who have sinned against him. Despite not granting Moses’ request, the Lord does not rebuke Moses for pleading their case. He does not forbid him to pray for the people, as he later did with Jeremiah (Jer. 7:16). This incident ends when the Lord carries out his threat and punishes the people with a plague. After the passage of some

²⁷Cranfield supports this understanding and says Calvin’s reading of the verse is a “disastrous distortion of Paul’s meaning.” See Cranfield, 483.

²⁸*Institutes*, 3.11.11, 740.

time, God again speaks to Moses and tells him it is time to get moving toward the promised land (Ex. 33). In response to this command, Moses seeks the Lord more deeply, and is rewarded with a fuller revelation of his character. This incident is the context of the phrase "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Perhaps referring to their last conversation, God declares it to remind Moses that God's quintessence is grace, that he freely bestows mercy and compassion, and that Moses has no need to try to force him to forgive his people. Nowhere in this incident does the issue of intercession arise; far less is there a rebuke for too much intercession. Apparently, Calvin's inability to see the idiom leads him into these additional mistakes in an attempt to make sense of the passage.

Understanding the phrase from Exodus as an intensifier rather than a limiter not only makes better sense of what God says to Moses in Ex. 33:19, it also makes better sense of Paul's argument when he quotes the sentence in Rom. 9:15. Calvin thinks that Paul's citation of Rom. 9:15 claims God's right to do as he pleases in saving some and damning others, but this reading of the text demolishes the intent of Paul's argument at this point. Paul quotes Ex. 33:19 in answer to the charge that God is unjust in his election of Jacob over Esau. If Calvin is right in understanding this verse to present God's sovereign power to do as he pleases, Paul's answer to the objection loses all its force. It completely misses the point. The objection is not questioning God's power, but it is raising the issue of God's justice. The point is: If God uses his power to save Jacob and damn Esau for no reason other than his own pleasure, then God must be unjust. If in this verse God is postulating his power to do whatever he likes free from the censure of anyone, in quoting it Paul has vitiated his own argument.²⁹

In response to the question, "God is not unrighteous, is he?" this reading of the text makes Paul answer, "No, God is not unrighteous! He is powerful." To claim that someone has the power to take any action is not the same as to prove that the action is just. Thus, it is no answer to the objection that the jury acted unjustly in freeing O. J. Simpson to rebut: "A jury has the power to make any decision it wants." On the other hand, when God's paronomasia is understood correctly, it gives Paul's argument real force. In answer to the question, Paul replies that God is not unright-

²⁹Calvin says that one uses this phrase "to prevent [his] reasons from being investigated, . . . to rid himself of the censure of others. . ." See the *Commentary* . . . *Moses*, 381.

eous, and then goes on to add a proof from the Scripture. Paul's argument could be expressed: "Not only is God not unjust, but he goes far beyond the demands of justice to freely lavish his mercy and compassion!"

Verses 16-18. Did God Completely Control Pharaoh When He Hardened His Heart?

Intertextual analysis shows that Calvin once again makes the mistake of historical plausibility when he explains Paul's use of the example of Pharaoh. Calvin treats God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart as if Pharaoh's character and actions in this life were completely shaped by God, and that God had preordained Pharaoh's eternal destiny in Hell. In his *Romans* commentary, Calvin states this view most clearly, first when he claims that God controlled all of Pharaoh's actions: "[Paul] affirms not only that [God] had foreseen Pharaoh's violence, and had the means at hand for restraining it, but that he had so ordained it on purpose, with the express design of providing a more notable demonstration of His power."³⁰ Then Calvin goes on to say that God alone shaped Pharaoh's character and predestined him to damnation: "God says that Pharaoh had proceeded from him, and that his character was given to him by God."³¹ In the *Institutes* he repeats this concept several times, citing Paul's use of the idea of hardening as if it were equivalent to reprobation.³² Calvin's understanding of God's dealings with Pharaoh comes from the Exodus text, but his reading of that text is marred by a lack of nuance and flattening of the details. A more careful reading of the text shows not that God is a puppet-master making Pharaoh dance to his will, but that God dynamically relates to Pharaoh, using the choices Pharaoh makes to accomplish the divine purpose.

The passages that relate God's dealings with Pharaoh occur between Exodus 4 and 14. Seventeen times the text mentions the condition of Pharaoh's heart, using five different words or phrases to describe it. Sometimes the text merely describes the condition of his heart, as in 7:13 where it says, "Pharaoh's heart became hard." Other times it specifies the agent of the hardening, as in 8:32 where it says, "Pharaoh hardened his

³⁰*Romans*, 206-207.

³¹*Ibid.*, 207. Several other times on this page and the previous one Calvin repeats this idea. He also speaks of Pharaoh as reprobate on pages 152-153 and 210.

³²*Institutes*, 3.22.11, 947, 3.24.1, 966, and 3.24.14, 981.

heart,” or in 9:12 where it attributes the action to God, saying, “The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” While a simply tallying of the number of mentions of each agent is probably not significant. There are twelve separate incidents: God is the agent five times, Pharaoh is the agent six times, once it is not stated. One time (Exodus 10:1 and 10:3) both God and Pharaoh are said to be responsible. What is significant is the timing of the actions. The first mentions of hardening are when the Lord twice promises to harden Pharaoh’s heart some time in the future. Then two times it states that Pharaoh’s heart became hard, without mentioning who did the hardening. Next come four mentions which alternate between Pharaoh hardening his own heart and the simple declaration that Pharaoh’s heart was hard. Finally, the text says God took action to harden Pharaoh’s heart. Only after the text twice specifically attributes the hardening of his heart to Pharaoh does it say that God continued the process.

Even when the Exodus text plainly states that the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, it could be argued that the author is merely following the early Hebrew practice of assigning to God actions which later texts reveal to have other, more proximate causes. Thus, Amos 3:6 asks, “When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?” referring to God as the ultimate cause and ignoring the other agents involved. The clearest example of this characteristic is the story of David counting his men, which the earlier account in 2 Samuel 24:1 attributes to God, while later revelation in 1 Chronicles 21:1 shows that the immediate cause is Satan. Thus, it could be argued that, when Exodus says “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart,” it does not mean to exclude Pharaoh’s agency, but merely to explain that God sovereignly used Pharaoh’s free choices to achieve his ultimate purpose, just as the Lord used Satan’s actions in David’s case. In this way, the shifting in Exodus between saying God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and Pharaoh hardened his own heart can be understood as sometimes emphasizing Pharaoh’s responsibility for his action and sometimes pointing out God’s power to use even sinful actions to work out his purposes.

Another possible way to understand the Exodus text is to see that both Pharaoh and the Lord were involved in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. This view notes that the Lord’s action comes only after Pharaoh initiates the process. God’s actions of making Pharaoh’s heart heavy, strong, and hard are then understood as his judgmental response to Pharaoh’s sin. Just as in Romans 1 where it reports that God responds to human sinfulness by giving the sinner over to greater sin, so here God punishes

Pharaoh by allowing him to go on to greater sin in the path he has chosen. Prudence would dictate that Pharaoh should give in to God's demands. This is the course of action Pharaoh's magicians counsel (Ex. 8:19), but Pharaoh is headstrong and refuses to listen. After being defeated by the first three plagues, Pharaoh might have done the right thing for the wrong reason: he might have yielded to the Lord out of fear and weakness. God, however, forestalls this possibility by "hardening" Pharaoh's heart, by giving him the resolve to continue to resist. The Lord gives Pharaoh the courage to do what he really wants to do instead of allowing him to surrender out of fear. Thus, the text pictures a subtle interplay of human and divine actions. It does not portray God's heavy hand controlling a passive will. Rather, it shows Pharaoh misusing God's good gifts. He uses the strength and determination supplied to him by the Lord in order to stand against God, where a lesser man would capitulate out of fearful weakness. To fail to see the background of Paul's intertextuality is to violate the criterion of historical plausibility. As long ago as the second century, Origen suggested this interpretation of the text, and his views were endorsed by Jerome almost two centuries later.³³

Either of these two ways of understanding the Exodus account makes sense in the light of the rest of Scripture. The first takes seriously the tendency of the earlier texts to ignore proximate causes and attribute all causality to God. The second sees God's actions as judgments of the kind reported in Romans 1. Sadly, Calvin does not interpret these Exodus texts according to the analogy of Scripture. He ignores the subtleties of the Exodus text and treats Pharaoh as the passive recipient of God's activity. Once again, this mistake is puzzling because, when Calvin is commenting on the Exodus text, he knows that "hardening" means that God gave Pharaoh the courage to continue in the course of action he had already chosen. Calvin repeatedly explains the concept this way, although at times he does speak of it as if it meant that God had predestined Pharaoh to damnation.³⁴ When Calvin writes in the *Institutes*, regrettably,

³³Origen, *De Principiis*, 3.1.8-11 (both Greek and Latin texts) in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:308-12. Jerome, *To Palinus*, Letter 85, section 3 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979) 6:182. More recently both Morris and Cranfield make the same point. See Morris, 361, and Cranfield, 488.

³⁴Hardening in the sense of encouraging occurs in *Exodus*, 101-102, 140-141, 156, 163-164, 167, 175, 180, 185, 205, and 240, but in the sense of reprobation occurs in 152-153, 194, and 210.

this sophisticated understanding is absent. He uniformly speaks as if God were the only one who made the choices recorded in this passage, thus offering an historically implausible meaning.

Verses 19-20. Can No One Question God about Salvation and Damnation?

Like his mistake in interpreting vv. 16-18 of Romans 9, Calvin's error in explaining vv. 19-20 comes from assigning historically implausible meanings to the biblical texts that Paul uses to make his argument. This time Calvin ignores the biblical background of Paul's language about the potter and the clay in verses 20-21. He thus misunderstands Paul's point and argues from these verses that no one can hold God's dealings with humanity to the standard of justice. Commenting on this passage, Calvin says that "it is profitless to dispute with God," that God's election of some and his damnation of others is "a mystery which our minds do not comprehend, but which we ought to adore with reverence," and that "it is a very wicked thing merely to investigate the causes of God's will. . . . When, therefore, one asks why God has so done, we must reply, because he has willed it."³⁵

To support his point that humans should not question God about their own or anyone else's salvation, Calvin relies on his own understanding of Paul's pottery imagery. He says, "[Paul] represses this arrogance of contending with God by a most appropriate metaphor. . . ."³⁶ That understanding, unfortunately, is marred by Calvin's neglect of the way the Old Testament uses this metaphor and of the way Paul himself uses it in another passage. The first reference to God as the potter and humanity as the clay occurs in Isaiah 29:16 where the prophet uses it to argue that God has complete knowledge about human plans and activities. The next appearance is Isaiah 45:9 when God says that no one should question his use of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem. Isaiah again uses this image in 64:8 when Israel appeals to God to be merciful because they are the work of his hand. The Lord employs this metaphor when he sends Jeremiah to the potter's house, as recorded in Jeremiah 18. Here Jeremiah witnesses the potter's frustration as he tries to make one kind of pot out of the lump of

³⁵*Romans*, 207, 209, and *Institutes*, 3.23.2, 949. For similar ideas see also *Romans*, 203, 210, as well as *Institutes* 3.22.11, 947, 3.23.1, 948, 3.23.2, 949, 3.23.8, 957, 3.24.17, 987.

³⁶*Romans*, 210.

clay, and then changes his plan and makes a different kind of pot. God wants Jeremiah to learn that the potter is not sovereign over the clay, shaping it according to his peremptory will, but, because different lumps of clay are suited for different kinds of pots, the potter must be responsive to the kind of clay in his hand. The theological lesson is that God is not arbitrary, but is responsive to human activities in his apportioning of blessing and judgment. The Bible's final use of ceramic imagery comes from Paul himself when, in 2 Timothy 2:20, he urges people to cleanse themselves so they can be used for noble purposes.³⁷

From these biblical uses of the pottery metaphor, we see that it has a variety of meanings, but none of them conveys the idea of arbitrary power over the souls of individuals that Calvin ascribes to it. Indeed, twice it has exactly the opposite meaning: God uses it to tell Jeremiah that he takes note of human actions in determining his response, and Paul urges people to make themselves into noble vessels. The meaning closest to Calvin's understanding is the one in Isaiah about Cyrus, but even here salvation and damnation are not in question, but *heilsgeschichte*. God holds unquestionable, not his right to save people or send them to hell, but his right to choose a heathen to accomplish his purpose on earth.³⁸

It is possible that, in using the picture of the potter and the clay, Paul is pulling this image from its biblical context and giving it the unique meaning Calvin thinks it has. Here, intertextual criteria of historical plausibility, thematic coherence, and satisfaction show that this occurrence is unlikely for three reasons. The first is God's tolerance of questioning by his creatures. If Calvin is correct that no one has the right to talk back to God about salvation, why does God encourage Abraham to do exactly that in the matter of Sodom (Genesis 18)? Think of how Moses argued God out of destroying Israel (Exodus 32). The second reason to doubt Calvin's understanding is that, both in Jeremiah's and in Paul's other use of this language, exactly the opposite idea emerges. God tells Jeremiah he is responsive and Paul tells people to make themselves clean, useful vessels.

Finally, the third and strongest reason to reject Calvin's understanding of these verses is that it is unnecessary. Here the satisfaction criterion applies. There is no need to find a new understanding for this imagery

³⁷Hays, 65-66, supports this understanding of Paul's imagery.

³⁸Dunn says the more natural use of the pottery metaphor is not to speak of the salvation or damnation of individuals, but "vessels put to differing uses within history. . . ." See Dunn, 557.

because the established meaning fits so well. Paul's language here is closest to that of Isaiah 45 where what must not be questioned is how God assigns roles in *heilsgeschichte*. Because the language is so similar, it is most satisfactory to understand that the meaning is also similar. All along, Paul has been speaking of how God uses different people in his plan to save the world. Here he uses Isaiah's imagery and Isaiah's meaning to reiterate the idea: God sovereignly assigns to each the place in salvation history and none may question that role. Calvin wrongly imports a thoroughly unbiblical meaning to Paul's metaphor and thus misunderstands his point.

Verses 21-24. Does God Create Some People Just to Damn Them?

It may seem that intertextual analysis would not help understand vv. 21-24 of Romans 9 because Paul does not explicitly cite the Old Testament in these verses. However, while Paul never explicitly quotes any Scripture, it is evident that the case of Pharaoh is still on his mind. Here the criterion of satisfaction is most useful. It shows us that Calvin misreads these four verses. Calvin has never accurately heard Paul's answer to the accusation that, because most Jews are not saved, then God's word must have failed. He continually reads Paul's answer as if Paul were arguing that God never planned to save all the Jews. According to Calvin, God elects some to salvation and others to reprobation. In the light of this understanding, Calvin asserts that verses 21-24 teach that God created some people to be saved and others to be damned. In commenting on these verses he says: "God determines the [eternal] condition of every individual according to His will," "before men are born their lot is assigned to each of them by the secret will of God," "the ruin of the ungodly is . . . ordained by His counsel and will," and "the ungodly themselves have been created for the specific purpose of perishing."³⁹ In the *Institutes* he affirms the same idea saying, "it is utterly inconsistent to transfer the preparation for destruction to anything but God's secret plan."⁴⁰

Most obvious among Calvin's mistakes is his misreading of v. 21. Here Paul says that God makes some "for noble purposes and some for

³⁹*Romans*, 203, 207, and 208. Calvin restates this idea three more times on pages 211 and 212.

⁴⁰*Institutes* 3.23.1, 948. In 3.23.11, 959, the context shows the vessels made unto dishonor are damned, and in the same point is repeated in I 3.23.12, 961, and in I 3.24.13, 979.

common use.” True, the word which Paul uses can mean dishonor, shame, or infamy, but in this context its most natural meaning, captured by the RSV and NIV, is “menial” or “common.” Calvin does not read this plain meaning out of Paul’s words, but reads his own misunderstanding into them. He treats this verse as if it said that God made some for noble purposes and others for demolition. When referring to those made for common use, Calvin employs the terms of “ruin,” “perishing,” and “destruction.”⁴² Paul is not saying that God is a potter who makes some vessels for the sole purpose of smashing them to show his power over them. Instead, his point is that God chooses some people to have a role in his noble plan to save the world and allows others to have the common lot of humanity.

In the next verse Paul explains how God can use even bad people to be part of his noble plan. Sadly, here again Calvin has imported an alien meaning into the text. Paul is continuing to talk about *heilsgeschichte* and how God sometimes defers punishing the ungodly so as to give his plans time to mature. Paul has been using the story of the Exodus to show how God can use even evil people to accomplish his good purposes. He does not explicitly say that verses 22-24 refer back to the Exodus story, but they can best be understood in that context. God could have punished Pharaoh at the beginning of his disobedience, when Pharaoh’s sin first provoked God’s wrath and doomed him to destruction, but he did not. Instead, God bore with great patience the continued sins of Pharaoh, his repeated refusals to let Israel go, so that God’s power could be shown in the various plagues, and God’s mercy to his chosen people in their miraculous deliverance. If God had killed Pharaoh after his first refusal to “let my people go,” justice would have been served, but God’s power against the gods of Egypt would not have been revealed. By letting Pharaoh live even after he deserved to die, God created the opportunity to demonstrate over and over again that he was the lord of heaven and earth.

This straightforward reading of the text makes perfect sense and fits into the context where Paul mentions Pharaoh. Chrysostom understood it this way around the year 400, so Calvin violates the history of interpreta-

⁴¹Cranfield makes this point specifically in his text and in a footnote, saying in the latter, “The potter does not make ordinary, everyday pots merely in order to destroy them.” See Cranfield, 492.

⁴²*Institutes* 3.23.1, 948.

tion criterion with his novel interpretation.⁴³ There is no need for Calvin to speculate about the “secret will of God” or to posit what God does “before men are born.” In this understanding of the text Pharaoh became an “object of wrath” not before he was born, but when he kindled God’s anger by sinning against him. He was “prepared for destruction,” not because he was “created for the specific purpose of perishing,” but because his deserved punishment was deferred. Paul is giving a historical example of how God can give an evil person an important role in his plan to save the world, not discussing what God does in eternity with the destinies of immortal souls. Calvin removes Paul’s example from the realm of history and turns it into theological conjecture.⁴⁴

Calvin’s treatment of verses 22-24 in Romans 9 is typical of his handling of the entire chapter. He reads its verses in isolation from their Old Testament backgrounds and interprets them in the light of his equivocal misunderstanding of election. Because Calvin fails to acknowledge that “not elect” does not necessarily mean “damned,” he reads the whole chapter as a defense of God’s right to save some and condemn others. This fundamental misreading of the text leads him to the further errors of neglecting the Hebrew idiom God employs, to flattening Exodus’s nuanced presentation of God’s dealings with Pharaoh, to disregarding the biblical background of Paul’s pottery language, and to dehistoricizing Paul’s proof that God uses bad people to accomplish his good purposes. In explaining Romans 9, Calvin offers readings that violate four of the seven criteria of intertextual analysis: thematic coherence, historical plausibility, the history of interpretation, and satisfaction.

If Calvin Is Wrong, How Should We Understand Romans 9?

John Piper, in his magisterial monograph on Romans 9, claims that no exegetical scheme other than Calvin’s answers the big question Paul raises: “Why are so few Jews saved?” Piper’s own analysis, which agrees with Calvin, says that Paul’s answer is that God does not will them to be saved.⁴⁵ This answer, even when it is presented, as Piper’s is, with careful

⁴³Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*, no. 16, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, Philip Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 11:468.

⁴⁴Dunn rejects reading these verses in a double-predestinarian sense. See Dunn, 559-560.

⁴⁵John Piper, *The Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 58, 73, 218.

attention to the text and awareness of opposing viewpoints, is inadequate. Piper rightfully points out that the whole chapter hangs on a correct understanding of Exodus 33:19. He believes that this crucial text is meant to emphasize God's "sovereign freedom" in limiting the distribution of his mercy.⁴⁶ For the reasons cited above, this view is unsatisfactory. True, some Jewish rabbis and Christian theologians have supported it, but their authority cannot outweigh the Hebrew idiom, the context in which God utters it, and the use Paul makes of it in his argument. Since Piper, like Calvin, has incorrectly understood the central text in Paul's argument, he is unable to see how Paul defends the righteousness of God.

Paul's justification of God, his defense of his righteousness, is not that God wills for only a few Jews to be saved. His answer comes not just in verses 1-23, with 24-33 as a transition to Israel's eschatological hope discussed in chapters 10 and 11. Instead, verse 32 answers the question. Paul says so few Jews are saved because they did not pursue righteousness and salvation by faith. Of course, Paul arrives at this conclusion only after an argument of some length. He begins by discussing the advantages of the Jews, emphasizing by the items he mentions Israel's crucial role in salvation history in verses 3-5. He then goes on to say that, just because the Jews as a people played an important role in *heilsgeschichte*, it does not mean every individual Jew is saved. This understanding comes from verses 6-9 where Paul points out that not all of Abraham's descendants are his children, nor are the natural children necessarily God's children. Paul's answer to the question of the paucity of Jewish Christians is to point out that having a role in salvation history does not guarantee a place in heaven.⁴⁷

After asserting that one may be an important figure in *heilsgeschichte* without being saved, Paul introduces the contrast between Esau and Jacob in verses 10-13, not to argue that one was saved and the other damned, but to show that God's choice of a person to play a role in saving the world says nothing about that individual's righteousness or personal merit. Nothing Jacob or Esau did earned or lost them a place in God's salvific plan. The Bible says that God loved Jacob and the nation

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁷Theodoret of Cyrus makes this point in his commentary on Romans 9. He says that Paul is arguing against the Jews that salvation is given by faith, not by the law. Paul's intention in this chapter is to "denounce the unbelief of the Jews." Cited in Parmentier, 9.

that sprang from him, meaning that he gave them the privileged role of being the vehicle of his salvation. Esau, on the other hand, was loved less in that he and his descendants had no special role to play. Does this choice of one and not the other for a place in salvation history mean that God is unjust? This is the question Paul raises and answers in verses 14-15. He cries out, "Certainly not! Instead of even being close to injustice, God by his very nature is extremely merciful and compassionate!"

Paul has just shown that playing a role in salvation history does not depend on human goodness or merit. Even less does it depend on a person's desire or effort. Verses 16-18 call us to look at Pharaoh: he did not wish to cooperate with God's plan, yet the Lord used him to proclaim God's name in all the earth. God can assign good or bad roles to people as it pleases him and no one can question God's plan. Look at the example of Cyrus. He was just as much an unbeliever as was Pharaoh, but God used him for the good plan of rebuilding Jerusalem. Just as a potter uses one part of a lump of clay for an ornamental pot and the other for a common water jar, so God assigns parts in salvation history. Some get the good roles and others get the bad, not according to their goodness or desire, but according to God's own plan. This is the message of verses 16-21.

To make this point even more clearly, in verses 22-29 Paul asserts that God sometimes restrains his judgment and keeps it from falling on sinful people. When it suits his long-range plan, God will postpone their punishment in order to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy. God allowed Pharaoh to disobey him many times, not because he was too weak to punish him, but in order to use Pharaoh's stubbornness as a foil for his greatness. God's goal in working out his plan of *heilsgeschichte* is that both Jews and Gentiles might be saved. Those who responded to God in faith obtained his righteousness, but those who pursued it by works did not receive it. No, God's word has not failed, but many Jews, despite their prominent role in *heilsgeschichte*, are not saved because they have not responded to God in faith, as Abraham did so long ago and as verses 30-33 make clear.

Intertextual analysis makes it clear that Calvin has misread Romans 9. Applying Hays's seven tests to the individual verses shows that Calvin erred in four of the seven ways by misunderstanding the Old Testament background of Paul's argument. In addition, testing the whole passage by these criteria reveals that Calvin fails the thematic coherence, the history of interpretation, and the satisfaction tests. Reading Romans 9 as an

excursus about individual election nested in a discussion of the roles of faith and the law in the process of salvation destroys the coherence of Paul's overall argument in the epistle.⁴⁸ Calvin also fails the history-of-interpretation test. With the exception of Augustine, no important author before him read the text in the way Calvin did. Finally, the most important test is that of satisfaction. Does the proposed reading make sense? Here Calvin fails most glaringly. When Calvin answers the question, "Why are so few Jews saved?" by pointing to the inscrutable election of God, his answer flies in the face of all Romans says about the truth, love, and justice of God.

Romans shows the righteousness of God not when he dispenses mercy and wrath on whomever he pleases nor, as Piper says, in "*his unswerving commitment always to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory* [emphasis original],"⁴⁹ but in his saving people by faith "from first to last" (Romans 1:17). Yes, God is sovereign, but he is not capricious. Romans 9 does not teach that God saves some and damns others willy-nilly. In the early church, Origen, Irenaeus, Chrysostom, and Jerome resisted this reading of the text. Instead of teaching divine determinism, this chapter fits in with the rest of the book, and with the rest of the Bible, to teach that God saves those who respond to his gift with faith. There is no room for human boasting, because even the faith to respond to God's grace comes from God. As John tells us, Jesus is the light that enlightens every person (John 1:9). And just as there is no room for human boasting when the gift is received, so there is no room for blaming God when the gift is rejected. Calvin need never have feared: a correct understanding of Romans 9 frees us from belief in the "dreadful" decree.

⁴⁸Dunn says that "the recognition of the coherence and climactic character of these chapters in relation to the argument of Romans as a whole strongly reinforces the now widespread objection against the older attempts to interpret chaps. 9-11 primarily as the exposition of a dogma of predestination in relation to the individual. . . ." See Dunn, 520.

⁴⁹Piper, 219.

UNCREATED GRACE AND THE CHURCH INCARNATE: A CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX- WESLEYAN EXPLORATION OF SACRAMENT AND ECCLESIOLOGY

by

Eric Manchester

Whatever their differences might be, two components most bind Christians of various confessions together: faith in Jesus Christ, and the sharing of that faith through charity and worship, in communion with others. Traditionally, the first communal act one undergoes in making his or her faith public is the sacrament of Baptism. This expression of individual faith, and participation in communal faith, is reinforced through Holy Communion, or Eucharist. However, as both a personal and communal activity, faith requires more than a merely private decision to express one's solidarity with others through communal practices. Just as much, it requires the community to recognize one as her own, as part of a holy family.¹ Accordingly, our personhood is realized both through our recognition of, and being recognized by, others, much as the Trinity itself is a triune, interpersonal recognition. As embodied (incarnate) beings, our communion in faith is not simply a matter of intellectual assent through a common belief in Christ, but a full participation in the life of the risen, incarnate Christ. Just as we are spiritually reborn "through water" in *phys-*

¹I speak of "her" when speaking of the Church to emphasize the Church's reality as the Bride of Christ, Who is our Mother, to Whom we are born "through water" in baptism, and of the Church's "consummation" with Christ, her groom, in the Eucharist.

ical baptism, our embodied being is linked, spiritually and physically, to the Church through the physical *consummation* of the Eucharist.

Not all Christian communities, however, agree as to whether one another's baptisms and practice of the Lord's Supper are efficacious or genuinely sacramental. Protestants of Anabaptist and many Evangelical communities do not acknowledge infant baptism, while the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, which generally acknowledge Protestant baptisms,² do not consider Protestant Eucharistic practice to be sacramental insofar as Protestants (with the possible exception of Anglicans) do not possess and do not accept the necessity of concrete, historical, Apostolic succession.³

Wesleyanism an Ideal Dialogue Partner

I explore here the connection between ecclesiology (in respect to historical Apostolic succession) and sacramentology in the Catholic, Orthodox, and Wesleyan traditions, particularly in respect to the manner in which these traditions conceptualize the relationship between nature and grace. In doing this, I will demonstrate how the Catholic view that any Trinitarian baptism (whether performed by one in Apostolic succession or not) is fully sacramental, combined with the Orthodox insistence that all grace is uncreated, sheds light on how there is room for both these traditions to recognize a genuine efficacy for many Protestant sacramental practices, even if they may fall short of a *full* sacramentality (in the view of the Catholics and Orthodox).

²The Roman Catholic Church generally accepts any Trinitarian baptism where the Persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are understood as truly equal and divine (as most Protestants accept). The Orthodox are less agreed among themselves about the status of baptism and other sacraments performed outside the Orthodox communion. Commonly, re-baptism is practiced among the "Old (Julian) Calendar" groups, while the "New (Gregorian) Calendar" groups avoid this practice.

³This teaching of Apostolic succession refers to the view that all priests are ordained by bishops, who received appointment through the laying on of hands by other bishops (normally, their Patriarch), who in turn received ordination through the laying on of hands in a historic chain extending back to one of the Apostles. Biblical allusions to this concept are found in the story of Simon the Magician in Acts, and are arguably implied, for instance, in the decision of the Apostles to replace Judas with Matthias, as well as in Christ's words to the Apostles that whatsoever are "bound and loosed on Earth" are "bound and loosed in Heaven." Wesley appears to vacillate on the question of the necessity of historical succession.

The main argument here will be that if, as the Orthodox hold, grace is uncreated, it can never be *lost*, even though we may in our fallen state cease to be properly *aware* of its continued presence in the world. In this case, any practice which helps facilitate an awareness of divine presence is sacramentally efficacious to some extent. While this allows for a greater appreciation for Protestant sacramental practices than may generally be recognized by those traditions which insist upon Apostolic succession, it also reveals the manner in which Wesleyanism is particularly well suited to be included in this exploration of sacrament and ecclesiology. In my discussion of Wesley, Rob Staples' work on sacramentology will be given special attention.⁴

In light of these comparisons between Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants (especially Wesleyan), and from the Catholic perspective, how can baptisms (as well as marriage) apart from Apostolic succession be fully sacramental, even though most other sacraments require such succession to be most properly efficacious? After summarizing the Catholic, Orthodox, and Wesleyan understanding of sacrament and ecclesiology, I will conclude by briefly examining the manner in which the position I develop here is consistent with the ecumenical teachings of Vatican II. In doing this, the manner in which Protestant sacraments may be regarded by Catholicism and Orthodoxy as bestowing grace will also provide insights into how the ecclesiological office of the papacy, as the main point of contention between these two ancient traditions (as well as, to a large extent, between Catholics and Protestants) can be re-interpreted in a way that exemplifies, rather than obscures, the shared faith and sacramental reality of each community.

Wesleyanism in particular is an ideal partner in this dialogue. First, Wesley, unlike many Protestants, finds common ground with these traditions in recognizing infant baptism and in emphasizing the importance of frequent communion. Secondly, unlike other Protestant traditions such as Lutheranism and Reformed Calvinism which preach infant baptism and hold to a high view of Eucharist, Wesley resists the teaching of total depravity, and accepts an account of postlapsarian nature which more closely resembles Catholic and Orthodox understandings of grace and the Fall. Perhaps not coincidentally, he also retains a greater resemblance to Catholicism and Orthodoxy in his emphasis on the relationship of works

⁴*Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1991).

and salvation (while remaining Protestant in his view that works do not lead to justification *per se*).

While I ultimately defend the importance of Apostolic succession in a way that runs counter to the Wesleyan orientation of many readers here, it is my hope that my exploration of these topics will highlight what is sound in each tradition to form a basis for greater dialogue and, perhaps eventually, a conceptual foundation for moving toward greater shared sacramental practice and ecclesiological unity. As an Eastern rite Catholic⁵ who has maintained strong familial, educational, and scholarly ties to Wesleyans, I am encouraged by the fact that my discussion here is but a small piece in an ever-growing affinity many Wesleyans feel toward their Catholic and Orthodox brethren.⁶

Grace and Catholic Sacrament and Ecclesiology

Though strong cases have been made against characterizing the Catholic view of “created grace” as referring to grace which itself is created,⁷ a common and somewhat oversimplified understanding of grace in the Roman Catholic soteriology runs something like this. In the original order of creation, created “nature” in itself is regarded as something which is *naturally* inclined toward a process of teleologically-ordered maturation, followed by an inevitable degeneration of material compos-

⁵For those not be familiar with these comparatively small communities (which collectively represent roughly 2% of Catholics, or 20 million people, worldwide), “Eastern rite” Catholics refer to members of the Orthodox and other (e.g., Coptic, Armenian, etc.) traditions who have re-entered, through their respective bishops or patriarchs, into full sacramental relations with the Roman Catholic Church, while retaining their distinctive liturgical, canonical, and theological traditions, as well as their own ecclesial hierarchy.

⁶Witness, for example, the collections of essays published by St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary Press entitled *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed. by S. T. Kimbrough (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), along with the involvement of Wesleyans in the Evangelicals and Eastern Orthodox in Dialogue, the publication of articles by Randy Maddox, Steve McCormick, and others identifying commonalities between Wesley and Eastern authors, and presentations offered in recent years at the Wesleyan Theological Society on topics covering the social teachings of John Paul II, Mariology, and deification and theosis.

⁷A very impressive treatment of this issue is the subject of A. N. Williams’ highly recommended *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

ites into their disparate elements.⁸ Accordingly, death is the “natural” outcome of all living things. However, God in His mercy, through a special act of grace, endowed rational material agents (e.g., human beings) with the ability to overcome the effects of this natural process,⁹ and enjoy the possibility of an immortal existence directed at the supernatural attainment of a Beatific Vision of God’s very essence.¹⁰ Because such a vision is clearly beyond any created natural capability, it could only be had by divine assistance which raises the human intellect above its own natural capacities and allows it to contemplate uncreated divine nature, albeit even then in a way that is not identical to the manner in which God understands Himself.¹¹ Upon “falling” into sin, however, human beings were “deprived” of this special immortalizing grace (construed either as a divine punishment¹² or as something which was rendered fundamentally inaccessible to a creature who was no longer in proper relationship to God).¹³ Hence, the inevitable result of sin was that human beings must return to their “natural” condition, moved toward corruption and decay.

It should be noted that this understanding of death as “natural” and the attribution of the original immortality of Adam and Eve to a supernatural grace is not clearly embraced by either Orthodoxy or by Wesley. At least some Eastern authors interpret the Eastern Fathers as teaching that in

⁸This view is largely borrowed from Aristotle, who discusses alteration, change, coming-to-be, and passing-away throughout Book I of *Generation and Corruption*, with Book 2 giving details about bodily matter as a composite of the four basic elements (earth, fire, water, air). Book 1 of his *Metaphysics* touches on these subjects as well, e.g., chapters 6 and 8.

⁹E.g., St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 97, article 1.

¹⁰This is discussed in various Thomistic texts, but perhaps the most extensive treatment is found in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book I, chaps. 37-57.

¹¹E.g. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book I, chaps. 56-57.

¹²It may be possible to reconcile this concept of “punishment” with that of “natural consequence.” Aquinas, for example, in *ST I,Q.95,a.1*, cites St. Augustine’s *City of God*, Book 13, chapter 13, where the latter states that upon sinning, Adam and Eve “felt the impulse of their disobedience in their own flesh, *as though it were a punishment for their disobedience*” (emphases mine). In the Eastern tradition, certain sources in the collected writings known as the *Philokalia* also speak of Adam and Eve “accruing a pleasure-pain *debt*” from the passions as a result of sin. Keeping these parallel images in mind may also help shed light on St. Anselm, who offers one of the most influential conceptions of substitutionary atonement and sin as a “debt” requiring “payment.”

¹³*Summa Theologica*, I,Q.97,a.1.

creation, humans and perhaps other creatures were *naturally* immortal, with sin damaging the soul in such a way that it came to actually undermine the natural order which was oriented toward ongoing incorruption.¹⁴ Wesley, in *On the Fall of Man*, describes the order of creation and the effects of the Fall in a way that seems sympathetic with this view, though it is possible to interpret his account as consistent with Aquinas and others.¹⁵ This may be significant in that the Catholic understanding lends itself to a view of the Church as that which triumphs over nature and death, moving us beyond the world into the Kingdom of Heaven, whereas the Eastern emphasis is more suggestive of the Church as that which overcomes sub-natural death and restores the natural world to its original glory in *theosis*. Similarly, whereas the Western tradition tends to view “natural theology” as a more scientific enterprise whereby God’s existence is inferred as a necessary “hypothesis” for explaining natural effects, the East thinks more in terms of God’s energetic presence continuing to be *felt* or encountered *intuitively* in nature, though only imperfectly. Such a view may lend itself more readily to acknowledging a genuine efficacy to Protestant sacraments, though the Catholic teaching on baptism (and marriage),¹⁶ even apart from Apostolic succession, also leaves room for such an acknowledgement.

In any case, on the Catholic view of the Fall, the only way one can be restored to the possibility of immortality (at least in its beatific form)¹⁷ is through regaining access to this special “saving” grace. Thus, some “avenue” for reacquiring this grace is needed, and it must, of course, be initiated by God. Accordingly, God Himself becomes a human being and offers His crucified flesh and blood as “payment” for our debt of sin, while also offering His own resurrected flesh and blood as a means for restoring

¹⁴See, for example, Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation, and Early Man: The Orthodox Christian Vision* (St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood [Press], 2000), 350-351.

¹⁵*On the Fall of Man*,” sec. II, par. 1-6.

¹⁶*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994 edition, secs. 1271 (on baptism) and 1640 (on marriage). It is interesting to note that in Catholic canon law, while two baptized Protestants are considered to be sacramentally married, a Catholic who marries a baptized Protestant without dispensation from church authorities is considered to have an illicit marriage which is not sacramental.

¹⁷According to Aquinas, the soul is incorruptible, and therefore will always remain in existence by its very nature (e.g., *ST*, I, Q.75, a.6). The immortality of the body in original creation, however, required special grace.

us to life eternal. Here, however, is where a strict incarnational view must be maintained. Since we are embodied creatures, we must be saved bodily.¹⁸ Hence, we must participate bodily in this saving grace which is supernaturally conveyed bodily through Christ Himself as the reconciliation of God and created rational nature—that is, Christ serves as the “meeting point” of God and creation. This, in turn, requires that a fully Eucharistic view of communion, as opposed to a merely memorialistic one, since we are to be saved both in body and spirit through the resurrection.

Moreover, ecclesologically, the Eucharistic participation in the actual flesh and blood of Christ means that the Church itself becomes the embodiment of Christ on Earth. Put differently, the incarnation of Christ becomes manifest through the Church itself, who is the bride to whom Christ gives His body in an act of perfect *consummation*. The reality of this incarnational gift, however, must itself be conveyed through a personal, embodied vessel. The bread and wine do not simply become “magically” transformed to flesh and blood in the chalice, apart from the work of human hands, but are transformed through the hands-on cooperation of the priest, just as baptism, anointment, ordination, and other sacraments themselves involve the placing of hands.¹⁹ The priest, then, is *in persona Christi*. At the same time, the priest can no more be “magically” transformed into this role apart from concrete, tactile connection than the bread and wine of the chalice can be transformed apart from such connection. Accordingly, the priest acquires the “gift” of ordination through the laying on of hands through a line of bishops whose lineage originated in the person of an Apostle, who, in turn, received this transformation through his personal encounter with Christ. Even more wondrously, He initiated them into this giving prior to His death in the Last Supper.

In a nutshell, the understanding of sacramental grace as created (in particular, the Eucharist) relies upon an incarnational understanding of the priesthood, which in turn itself requires an adherence to concrete Apostolic succession. Catholicism, it should be noted, recognizes any Church, whether in union with the Bishop of Rome or not, to have “valid” sacraments if it possesses a lineage tracing back to the Apostles through the

¹⁸Some authors have noted that, just as humans came unto death through eating, they are restored to life by eating from Christ, the Tree of Life.

¹⁹In the Roman rite, confession is the exception, as it does not involve the placing of hands. The Eastern rite, at least in the Byzantine tradition, involves a tactile element.

laying on of hands. Thus, Orthodox, Copts (and those in union with them), and Chaldean/Assyrians (and those in union with them) have a genuine, full priestly sacramental ministry.²⁰ However, the exercise of this sacramental ministry is technically considered “illicit” for groups outside of canonical union with Rome, though such language is virtually never used in these cases anymore. In fact, the Roman Church has issued numerous statements which, for all practical purposes, recognize the full legitimacy of the sacramental ministry by these communities.²¹

Taken to its logical extreme, this would seem to require that salvation could only occur through the physical participation in the sacraments, bestowed by those who possessed physical lineage (via the laying on of hands) to the Apostles who received the body and blood of Christ from the hands of Christ Himself. The straightforward simplicity of this interpretation, though, has never been supported by the fullness of Catholic teaching, which complicates the issue by acknowledging that one is born into the Church through Trinitarian baptism, whether conducted by a priest in Apostolic succession or not. In fact, in extraordinary circumstances, one may even be born into the Church apart from water baptism through martyrdom and “baptism by desire,”²² though the latter is allowed as a possibility only in the case of inaccessibility or invincible ignorance. This raises a question. If baptism itself does not strictly require Apostolic succession, why is such succession needed in the case of certain other sacraments, and especially the Eucharist?

My answer to this essentially points to what I take to be a potential thread for linking Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant sacramentology and ecclesiology. While I would not argue that the sacramental benefits are

²⁰This includes direct off-shoot groups of the Roman Catholic Church such as Old Catholics (those who rejected Vatican I) and the various groups who purportedly fell into schism after Vatican II (e.g., various Tridentine communities not approved by Rome). The case is historically more complicated with Anglicans; today, the Anglican church in general is not considered by Roman Catholicism to have valid succession, due in part to their Eucharistic theology (one in succession must “intend to do what Christ ordained the Apostles to do”), as well as the ordination of women, and possibly difficulties verifying the Apostolic line (a charge Wesley believes applies to all groups, including Catholicism, that claims Apostolic lineage).

²¹See, for example, the 1993 *Balamand Statement* as well as the Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Orientale Lumen*.

²²*Catechism*, paragraphs 1257-1261.

necessarily attained equally within all these traditions, I would claim that real grace is present in all of them, and all possess elements, albeit in varying degrees, which are useful for bringing believers to the fullness of Christlike existence.

Orthodoxy on Uncreated Grace and Sacrament

In contrast to the Latin distinction between “nature” and “grace” (or “natural” and “supernatural”) in the order of creation, the Eastern Christian traditions (especially Orthodox), emphasize instead a fundamental distinction between God’s divine “essence” and His divine “energies.” Allusions to this distinction pervade the teachings of various Fathers of the Eastern traditions, but notable examples include the Cappadocian Fathers, Pseudo-Dionysius, and in the Scholastic period, St. Gregory Palamas.²³ On this view, God’s activity or “energy” “flows” necessarily from God, though His essence as its source remains inaccessible and incomprehensible to all but the Three Persons of the Trinity. Accordingly, creation itself must occur through these divine energies, which themselves are uncreated, so that creation must always remain immersed and surrounded by God’s energetic presence.

In this case, our “Fall” into sin is not so much conceived as a falling away from, or “loss,” of this grace itself (since God, in His omnipresence, cannot help but remain present to His creation), but as more of our falling away from an *awareness* of God’s energetic presence. Hence, while the Latin and often Protestant traditions tend to speak of sin in terms of “debt,” the Eastern imagery often favors the language of an intellectual “darkness.”²⁴ It is important to stress here that “intellectual” does not refer to abstract reason as such, but rather to a failure to “know” God in the more intimate biblical sense where “knowing” is compared to a com-

²³Though this concept is found in many writers and works, a good extensive discussion of it can be found in St. Gregory Palamas’ *Topics of Natural and Theological Science*, secs. 67-150, found in *Philokalia*, vol. 4, trans. by G. E. H. Palmer, Phillip Sherrard, and Kallistos War (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 377-417. For the divine energies/essence distinction, see especially secs. 92-101 and 128-131.

²⁴Wesley himself favors this imagery, for example, in *The Way to the Kingdom*, sec. II, par.1, and in *The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption*, sec. I throughout. In the Orthodox tradition, there are many sources, primary and secondary, which employ this imagery. For a readable and concise treatment, see Metropolitan Hierotheos’ *Orthodox Spirituality* (trans. Williams), 1994.

plete psycho-physical union, such as in marital sexual union. Consequently, inasmuch as God is necessarily always energetically present to all things at all times, salvation does not entail so much ontologically restoring us to grace, but rather to restoring our awareness of God's grace, which even in our sinful condition continues to surround us. Surely this appeals much to Wesleyan emphases on "prevenient grace." At the same time, because the body and spirit are to be understood as a "psychosomatic" unity, this loss of awareness results in physical deterioration and death, which is often thought of (perhaps imprecisely) as a "punishment" in the Western Christian tradition.

Ecclesiologically speaking, given the view that grace may be forgotten but never "lost," the sacraments likewise do not restore grace, but rather our awareness of it. Baptism is taken to be especially important for overcoming the darkness of the soul.²⁵ Specifically, tradition, through preserving the memory of those who have uniquely modeled Christ for us, as well as through the sacraments and the entire order of worship, is designed to bring us to an awareness of creation itself as a sacrament, which carries over beyond the four walls of the church building. The goal is to experience the cosmos itself liturgically. The church is a sanctuary from the world only because, ultimately, there must be a place where the awareness of Christ's presence is carefully nurtured *via* a concrete connection to the Apostles to whom Christ was first most intimately revealed, so that the entire world through the church may come to evidence Christ's glory.

While the general Orthodox insistence upon full ecclesial communion (and the Catholic insistence upon Apostolic succession)²⁶ as a prerequisite for Eucharistic participation may strike one as exclusivistic, in fact this is a misunderstanding. As Scripture notes, it is not the church which has gates, but Hell—and Hell's gates will not "prevail" by keeping the

²⁵For a good example of how baptism is linked to "illumination," "improved perception," "intelligence," and so on, see Palamas' *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia*, sec. 60, in the same volume of the *Philokalia* cited above (317).

²⁶This issue has led to many controversies within the Orthodox ecclesial community. The so-called Balamand Statement of 1993 (officially, the Joint International Statement Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, VIIth Plenary session), signed by the Roman Catholic and various Eastern Orthodox hierarchs (most notably the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Patriarch of Antioch, and the Patriarch of Moscow), acknowledges the authentic Apostolic succession of each of these groups, as well as the sacraments of each church.

church from ultimately transforming all of creation. For the church to serve as the locus from which divine energy pours forth, as well as for her to serve as a symbol of Him Whom She re-presents through her declaration and consummation of faith, it is essential that those who express *communion* with her actually possess the fullness of this faith which She re-presents.

Ironically, then, an “open table” may actually cater to a more “magical” view of the Eucharist, inasmuch as the sacraments do not profit us except insofar as we have faith. One is always invited to embrace the fullness of the faith, which itself is signified by a decision to enter into a concrete, ecclesial relationship with all those who are alive, as well as those who have reposed in the Lord, through a *confirmation* by the successors of the Apostles to whom the testimony of the Holy Spirit has been tangibly entrusted. On this view, we realize that Christ’s presence is evident anywhere where Christlikeness is found, though when we recognize it, it should always point us back to the church where the fullness of this awareness is to be found. To speak frankly, while participating in Eucharist apart from concrete Apostolic succession may be roughly akin to living in sexless marriage (genuine love can occur, but nevertheless falls short of full expression), it is much worse to imply the declaration of a the full sharing of this faith without ecclesial communion, which is akin to consummating a sexual relationship prior to entering into the covenant of marriage.

Hopefully, the above explanation elucidates why a particular institutional structure is fundamental to the restoration of the awareness of grace, if grace is present everywhere. As Rob Staples notes, Wesley himself struggled with finding the balance between the necessity of ecclesiological foundations and the experience of individual faith, characterizing this struggle as a tension between “structure” and “spirit.”²⁷ Indeed, to the extent that even a purely “symbolic” and “memorialistic” view of the sacraments (which I take to be a more minimal sacramentology than that preached by Wesley) provides one with a greater appreciation of Christ, it would seem that these practices achieve an end remarkably similar to that pursued through Orthodoxy’s use of the sacraments. On the other hand, Orthodoxy certainly does not want to reduce the sacraments to “mental tokens” which are designed to help us “conjure up” thoughts of Christ, as

²⁷See title chap. 1 in Staples.

though Christ was experienced in our mind alone, and was not seeking union with us through His very body and blood.

Certainly, the Orthodox insist that physical participation in the sacraments is a proper, and perhaps even necessary, means for attaining sufficient awareness of God's energetic presence in all things; that is to say, the sacraments are integral to "see the world" as Christ sees it. In fact, salvation entails more than an improved awareness of the divine energies. This is true, for in the Eucharist we participate in the very essence of God (as it is the body, soul, and divinity of Christ), even though Patristic teaching makes it clear that we never come to understand ("see") the divine essence. For us, this participation always remains a mystery, so that God is comprehensible only to Himself. With this, we can say with Pseudo-Dionysius that we encounter a "knowing above unknowing" since we know God intimately in this act (as a husband knows a wife in consummation), but we lack intellectual comprehension.²⁸ It is in this union "beyond knowledge" that we can say, with Scripture, that Christ provides us with a peace that "surpasseth all understanding."

As the above discussion indicates, the Orthodox insist upon concrete Apostolic succession and sacraments just as much as Catholicism does. At the same time, they are not inclined to provide speculative systematic theological answers, being content to believe that these views of the sacraments must be correct since the church from the earliest times has presumably held these views. This makes it difficult to discern in what way the sacraments, along with the condition of Apostolic succession, are fundamental to this process of renewed awareness.

Wesleyan Reflections on Sacrament and Apostolic Succession

It may not be entirely inaccurate to characterize Protestant views according to two main categories: those that still regard the sacraments as actual conveyors of grace, and those which regard these practices as being *entirely* symbolic, intended only as means of helping to remind us of the grace that has already been offered through Christ Himself. Very loosely,

²⁸Such language is apparently not referring to the sacraments in Pseudo-Dionysius, but applying this description to the discussion here is helpful nonetheless, especially in light of the explicitly theological understanding of hesychastic prayer found in people like St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas, and Cyril of Jerusalem's description of "becoming Christs" (no apostrophe!) through communion.

I would include the Lutheran, perhaps the more traditional Calvinist Reformed, Anglican, and more traditional Methodist (and perhaps some of their respective denominational off-shoots) in one camp, and the Baptists, Pentecostals, and more generically “Evangelical” communities in the other. In Holiness/Wesleyan circles there seems to be no clear consensus on whether to view these practices in the first or second way, though for the most part the theologically-trained among them lean toward the former camp and the typical layperson toward the latter.

In any case, what perhaps most distinguishes the sacramentology of the non-Anglican sacramentally-minded Protestants from the Catholics, Orthodox, and traditional Anglicans is the manner in which concrete Apostolic succession is believed to be needed for the sacraments to be made present. The evidence suggests that Wesley himself vacillated on this subject, and at the very least, believed that priestly ordination through a bishop presumed to be in concrete succession was the ideal practice.²⁹ In addition, Wesley accepts the Anglican view that baptized infants are in fact genuinely initiated into the faith,³⁰ though for adults it is faith in Christ which does this, with baptism only being a symbol of this inward work.³¹

Wesley’s view of Eucharistic communion is also difficult to determine precisely. While he clearly rejects Catholic notions of “transubstantiation,” he nevertheless proclaims it a “duty” of the believer to participate “constantly” in communion, even suggesting that the failure to do so may result in the loss of one’s very soul.³² In “The Means of Grace,” he quotes 1 Cor. 10:6 and asks, “Is not the breaking of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward sign, the visible means, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, that were purchased by the body of

²⁹See, for example, Lowell Noble, “John Wesley’s View of the Sacraments: A Study in the Historical Development of Doctrine,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 6, no.1. Spring 1971. For an investigation of the question of whether or not Wesley and/or his followers received laying on of hands through the Metropolitan (i.e., Archbishop) of Crete Erasmus, see “Was Wesley Ordained Bishop by Erasmus?” in *The Methodist Quarterly Review*, 1878, available on the Wesley center website at www.nnu.edu.

³⁰For a nice overview of Wesley on this subject, see Staples, chap. 6.

³¹See Wesley’s sermon *The New Birth*, esp. sec. 4.

³²See *The Duty of Constant Communion*, sec. 9.

Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us?," adding: "Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of the bread, and drink of that cup" (III.12). Rob Staples suggests that Wesley's Eucharistic teaching is best understood as maintaining that Christ is spiritually, though not physically present in the bread and wine.³³ It seems that, to some extent, this parallels his distinction between "structure" and "spirit."

It is difficult to say whether Wesley's understanding of the human condition favors more the simplified Catholic view that lost "supernatural" grace is gradually restored through communion, or the implied Orthodox belief that, through sacramental practice, we become aware of a grace which is already there. Practically speaking, the distinction may be irrelevant: whether one is dead in sin due to a real loss of grace, or due "simply" to a lack of awareness of still-present grace, one's salvation is at stake if he or she is not brought back into proper relation with God, through Christ, one way or the other. Even so, the question remains as to what extent, if at all, this relationship can be repaired apart from a sacramentology tied to an ecclesial tradition of concrete Apostolic succession.

Faith, Energies, Sacraments, and Succession: A Foundation for Christian Dialogue

Up to this point, a couple of questions have emerged in respect to the Orthodox and Catholic views toward Protestant sacraments. Regarding the Orthodox perspective, one may ask why the sacraments should be connected to Apostolic succession if God's divine energies remain present even after the Fall. For the Catholic, the question may be why Apostolic succession is necessary for some sacraments to be realized, but not necessarily for others. The question also arises as to why those traditions Catholicism regards as having valid succession suffer from loss of communion with the Bishop of Rome if such succession still provides them with authentic Eucharist, confession, and other sacraments. Here I will demonstrate how the Orthodox notion that all grace is uncreated, and therefore necessarily present, can recognize a sacramental grace of sorts for Protestants. Following this, I examine how the ecumenical ministry of the papacy can be regarded as a safeguard of Orthodox sacramentology, thereby showing its connection to Protestant sacramentology as well.

The Orthodox are less inclined to quantify the sacraments, instead regarding the life lived according to liturgy, tradition, and charity as

³³Staples, chap.7, esp. sec.5, 221-222.

bringing us to the fullness of Christlike awareness. Thus, insofar as Protestant sacraments facilitate an awareness of divine presence which starts us on the path to a full reparation of our relationship with God, they rightfully can be regarded to possess a sacramental reality of some kind. In fact, since God is always present everywhere, even everyday events can play a sacramental role in bringing people to a greater Christlikeness. Appropriately, Catholicism explicitly recognizes the efficacy of “sacramentals” which confer a degree of grace in facilitating receptiveness to full-fledged sacraments as such.³⁴ However, to the extent that the church experiences these sacraments within a framework of faith in, and intentional effort to imitate, Christ, communal actions within the context of Christian worship more properly facilitate this awareness, and are thereby rightfully regarded as being more explicitly sacramental in nature. Consequently, it is appropriate for Catholicism, and perhaps Orthodoxy, to recognize the full sacramental reality of Protestant baptism.

To the Protestant, such as Wesley, who regards the faith leading to baptism (at least for adults) as being the true moment of justification, rather than the baptism itself, Catholicism and Orthodox alike recognize this to the extent that the martyrdom of catechumens is accepted as an entrance into the faith, and to the extent that Catholics (and perhaps Orthodox) recognize a “baptism through desire.”³⁵ However, whereas the Protestant, and to a degree the Catholic, tradition tends to think of “justification” juridically, it is best understood on the Catholic and Orthodox view as being, not the point where one is *declared* “just,” but where one is “justified” in the sense of “being made straight in the path” (e.g. Proverbs 3:5-6) in an act of “turning back to God” (repentance) which starts us on the journey to complete Christlike, whereby we become truly “just” and “righteous.” Insofar as the goal is to become Christlike (where salvation as a healing or *salve* is completed), the historical revelation of the Spirit of Christ as manifested in the physical reality of the Church is fundamental to this process.

One may surmise that Christ entrusted his Church to the Apostles as a safeguard for this process. Certainly, good work may be done in the name of Christ apart from their succession, as the Apostles themselves witnessed from those whom they did not know, but who were casting out

³⁴*Catechism*, secs.1668-1679.

³⁵*Catechism*, secs.1258-1260 and 1281.

demons in Christ's name. Nevertheless, the Apostles are personally directed to "go and baptize" in His name, "making believers of all men." Moreover, we see them early on directing the Church in matters of the faith in Acts at the meeting of Jerusalem, and it is also in Acts that the notion of the Apostolic ministry being appropriated by the laying on of hands is introduced in the story of Simon the Magician. As for the Eucharist, images of this are found in Christ's distribution of bread and wine to the Apostles at the Last Supper, who also come to recognize Him after the resurrection only upon breaking bread. Moreover, the Bread of Life discourse in John 6 is prefaced by the Eucharistic imagery in the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, whereby *twelve* baskets remain, corresponding, one may guess, to each "tribe" of the "new Israel" under the care of each Apostle.

Because Wesley does not explicitly count ordination as a sacrament—though his own apparent vacillation on this topic may raise questions about this, it stands to reason that the sacrament of Eucharist for him need not be bound to concrete Apostolic succession. Indeed, his notion that Christ is *spiritually* present in the Eucharist seems to downplay the full incarnational aspect of the sacramental process. This distinction between a physical and spiritual presence of Christ, however, could well suggest an inadequate soteriology and, consequently, a diminished ecclesiology and sacramentology. For the Orthodox especially, the Eucharist is the means *par excellence* by which we become "deified," or "Christified" (to use the imagery of Cyril of Jerusalem)³⁶ in spirit *and* in body. It could be that Wesley falls into the Western tendency, advanced by St. Anselm and others, to consider Christ's death as efficacious primarily in respect to his paying the penalty for our sins, rather than as the means of overcoming death in order that we may participate in His resurrection.³⁷

In short, while one may not agree with the commitments that are made in philosophical notions of "substance" in the language of "transub-

³⁶St. Cyril says that in the Eucharist, "we become Christs." See *Mystagogy*, iii.8, referenced in chap. VII of the Introduction on Cyril in *Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers*, v.7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, Inc., 1994), xl.

³⁷I should qualify my remarks concerning Anselm by acknowledging insights Philip Meadows, 2004 President of the WTS, offered in a private conversation which show how this Father's comments in *Why God Became a Man* might be reconciled more readily than is typically acknowledged with the Eastern emphasis on "healing" rather than "juridical punishment."

stantiation,” it is important for maintaining the incarnate unity of Christ, especially insofar as this is essential to our own Christlike transformation, to avoid dichotomizing Christ’s spiritual reality and his physical reality. It is for this reason that concrete Apostolic succession is important in preserving the incarnate reality of the church, whereby the Holy Spirit is presented by Christ to His Apostles, who then pass it on to their successors as they prepare to offer Christ’s actual body and blood to the Church, which itself is incarnately bound to His bride through this magnificent consummation. Even so, it is true that this most holy gift of Christ to His bride is only efficacious if one comes before Him in good faith, so that, as Protestants correctly understand, faith is always an essential aspect of the process of salvation, though not the only element. Once again, this necessary condition of faith also shows why full ecclesial communion with those in concrete Apostolic succession is an appropriate requirement, precisely because this consummation declares a full relationship with the church in all of its liturgical, hagiographical, and doctrinal heritage.

While much has been said by now about the distinction between baptism and Eucharist in respect to the necessity of Apostolic succession (according to Catholicism and Orthodoxy), it is remarkable to consider that the sacrament of marriage, to which the Christ’s Eucharistic relationship to the church is compared, is also recognized for all baptized persons, even apart from Apostolic succession. Ironically, the “consummate” sacrament requiring succession is compared to the human relationship which itself is sacramental, even apart from this succession. At first, one may find this to be an inconsistency in Catholic teaching. However, it is possible to unveil a coherent account of these facts. If we avoid thinking of Christ’s relationship to the church as being modeled after the “literal” marriage of husband and wife, and instead think of human marriage as being modeled after Christ’s relationship to the Church, we can understand this. Simply put, just as baptism can occur apart from succession because it marks a genuine beginning which is intended to properly lead to the fullest consummation (which therefore requires the most extensive and visible historical signs of the Church), earthly marriage between baptized persons constitutes a work of charity and love which is also most suitable for moving one toward this full awareness. Consequently, as Christian couples grow in love, they should also experience an increased hunger for the Eucharist. In fact, logically it appears that this relationship is potentially the *most* suitable for engendering this hunger, since Christ

compares this relationship to the consummation of his relationship to the Church.

Given the above reflections on baptism, marriage, and Eucharist, I propose that one indeed enters into the church incarnate through physical baptism, while growing in faith in the marital love between two persons who have both experienced this first step of faith and healing in baptism. At the same time, because the church presents the fullness of Christ to the world, embodied in all of her tradition of moral teaching, doctrine, charity, commemorations, and liturgical thanksgiving, She Herself is a Eucharistic reality, re-presenting Christ both as a sign/symbol, *and* as the actual incarnate reality of the Christ signified. The church “signifies” Christ by marking, for all the world to see, the location whereby Christ is most made manifest. At the same time, since God is energetically present everywhere, Christ is not “confined” to the church.” Instead, the church serves as the foundation from which the awareness of God beams outward toward the rest of the world, illuminating it and welcoming it to Herself as the center (the womb) of this life-giving sanctification.

These concepts are consistent with the teaching on ecumenism articulated at Vatican II. Section 3, chapter 1 of the *Decree on Ecumenism*. For example, it asserts that even as “[T]he ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles [to full union],” adding that “even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ’s body,(21) and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church (22).” Right after this, the same decree exclaims:

Moreover, some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and visible elements too. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, belong by right to the one Church of Christ. The brethren divided from us also use many liturgical actions of the Christian religion. These most certainly can truly engender a life of grace in ways that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community. These liturgical actions must be regarded as capable of giving access to the community of salvation (23).

At the same time, the assertion that the fullest means for attaining Christ-likeness are preserved by Apostolic succession, especially through communion with the Bishop of Rome, is evidenced in the next statement:

Nevertheless, our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those who through Him were born again into one body, and with Him quickened to newness of life—that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is only through Christ’s Catholic Church, which is “the all-embracing means of salvation,” that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the Apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. This people of God, though still in its members liable to sin, is ever growing in Christ during its pilgrimage on earth, and is guided by God’s gentle wisdom, according to His hidden designs, until it shall happily arrive at the fullness of eternal glory in the heavenly Jerusalem (24).

Just as baptism constitutes a visible sign of the first conscious encounter with Christ in the sanctifying journey toward Christlikeness, and confirmation, confession, and so on affirm and sustain one in this encounter, it seems fitting that the consummate act of Eucharist should be marked by the most unified and visible sign. This is accomplished through the presence of the bishop; as Ignatius of Antioch writes, “‘ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and may all speak the same thing concerning the same thing,’ and that, being subject to the bishop and the presbytery, ye may in all respects be sanctified,” adding that “we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself.”³⁸ It would be misleading to take this to mean that bishops by themselves, however, establish doctrine. Rather, they pronounce what the faithful of the Church have believed since the time of the Apostles, and then become a visible beacon of this belief, while sustaining the faithful through the Eucharist. In this way, we can say that, just as Christ is the Word which expresses the Father through the

³⁸*Epistle to the Ephesians*, chaps. 2 and 6.

Spirit, the bishop expresses the truth of the Spirit speaking through the faithful. Similarly, just as Christ offers Himself to the Father through the Spirit in his death and resurrection, the bishop secures the Eucharist offering of Christ to the Church, through the Spirit.

It is with this imagery in mind, then, that in closing we can touch on the question of the papacy. Sacramentally speaking, the Pope performs/possesses no sacramental ministry that is not also possessed by all other bishops in succession. In this way, Christ is not only really present apart from visible succession in baptism, but he is most visibly present in Eucharist even for those who are separated from full communion with the Bishop of Rome. Nevertheless, those who stand as the visible sign and audible voice for the tradition of the faithful do not always speak with one completely common voice. This is true not only of the communities in Apostolic succession, but perhaps even more so among other baptized Christians whose acclaimed full proclamation of the name of Christ is declared under literally thousands of denominations.

To be fair, wherever genuine Christ-like love is practiced, sacramental reality is evidenced. For a *universal* (“catholic”) declaration to be given, however, which can weave together the strands of truth from these diverse and valuable voices, the church must at times speak with a single voice. When each separate voice speaks the same truth, it does not matter whether many voices speak in unison, or one speaks on behalf of all of them; in this way, the Pope does not create doctrine, but declares what the faithful believe. Nevertheless, when a unity of voice is absent, or discordant voices arise, at some point it is important for the church, as an incarnate reality—as the re-presentation of the Body of Christ—to speak with the individual voice of Christ. However one may feel about the very few allegedly “infallible” papal declarations, one can at least grant that a single, incarnate body is not well understood when it seems to be saying diverse and even contrary things all at the same time. In fact, there may even be truth to the concern shared by Wesley and many Protestants of his time that, when Popes speak not as the voice of the Body of Christ for the salvation of the church but as a personal voice coaxing and commanding for the sake of private political gain, they in certain respects serve as an instrument of *antichrist*.³⁹

What Vatican I revealed, not long after Wesley’s lifetime (convening in 1870), is that, just as Christ is holy because His human will conformed consistently to the divine will of God, the voice of the divine manifested

through the Pope cannot err. At the same time, inasmuch as the Pope as a human being is, like everyone else, called to pursue salvation with “fear and trembling” (perhaps even more than others!), when he speaks with his human voice alone, manifesting a personal will at odds with the will of God, he can and has erred.

The key question, then, is how we are to tell the human voice from the divine one. And here we have only the voice of Christ Himself in Scripture to guide us: the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the church. While the necessity of certain pronouncements made *ex cathedra* may not be apparent to all (such as the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary), presumably few would find such teachings to be clearly counter to the Gospel of Christ. As odd as it may sound, it would be inspiring (“live giving”) to consider that, while the voices of all the baptized, and perhaps even those merely desiring baptism, speak for Christ when they speak the truth, they would speak most authoritatively when they speak as a single Body, incarnately unified through the body and blood of Christ and all those signs of faith leading up to this consummation, whose love and truth is then expressed in a single voice, in accord with the will of God. It would not surprise me if the Holy Spirit uses the dedication, inquisitiveness, and authentic desire for the fullness of Christ, often exemplified by Wesleyans, to provide a voice, however small, which itself declares an increased understanding of the Apostolic and sacramental dimensions of their historical proclamation for holiness.

JOHN WESLEY AND THE “SERVANT OF GOD”

by

Laura Bartels Felleman

A letter written to Charles Wesley by his brother John has sparked a variety of scholarly speculations. In the letter dated June 27, 1766, John describes his faith experience to his brother. His less than glowing assessment of his own religiosity has led some to conclude that the letter was written out of a feeling of stress or depression. Alternatively, the letter has also been cited as an example of a man who has accepted the littleness of his faith.¹ While conjectures about Wesley's interior life raise various intrigues, the context of the document for this article lies elsewhere. An intertextual analysis of the letter is important because of its similarities to and differences from other statements John made concerning servant-like and child-like Christian faith. The letter contains several terms and phrases found in other Wesleyan publications; a comparison of these texts reveals the ways John's characterization of the degrees of faith changed over time.

The letter conveys a tone of intimacy. There is no reason for the two brothers to be estranged, John reasoned; such emotional distance was “a

¹Albert Outler, *John Wesley*, A Library of Protestant Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 80, 81, note. 1; Donald M. Joy, “Toward Christian Holiness: John Wesley's Faith Pilgrimage,” in *Moral Development Foundations*, ed. Donald M. Joy (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 222; Richard P. Heitzenrater *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2d ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 188; Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 2d ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 547.

mere device of Satan.”² As if that settled the matter and the two were confidants once again, John next confessed to Charles his estimation of the quality of his own faith:

In one of my last I was saying I do not feel the wrath of God abiding on me; nor can I believe it does. And yet (this is the mystery) [I do not love God. I never did.] Therefore [I never] *believed* in the Christian sense of the word. Therefore [I am only an] honest heathen, a proselyte of the Temple, one of the [fearers of God]. And yet to be so employed of God! And so hedged in that I can neither get forward nor backward! Surely there never was such an instance before, from the beginning of the world! If I [ever have had] *that faith*, it would not be so strange. But [I never had any] other *elegchos* of the eternal or invisible world than [I have] now; and that is [none at all], unless such as fairly shines from reason’s glimmering ray. [I have no] *direct* witness, I do not say that [I am a child of God], but of anything invisible or eternal.³

This description of the state of his soul only becomes intelligible in light of Wesley’s understanding of the limits of reasoning in matters of faith, his statements concerning the degrees of saving faith, and his definition of faith as a spiritual sense of the invisible, eternal, and spiritual worlds.

“Reason’s Glimmering Ray”

While he reassured his brother through the letter that he did feel he was saved and not under condemnation, John Wesley could not go so far as to describe his faith as fully Christian. By his own definition, the full sense of the word “faith” included an inward perception or direct witness of one’s love for God. Because he lacked that witness, he determined that he must only be “an honest heathen.” Wesley used a phrase from Acts 10:22 as a label for himself and his faith status, “fearers of God”; in the biblical text this phrase is used to describe the Gentile Cornelius as one who fears God.

In addition to only fearing but not loving God, Wesley also confessed his failure to sense any evidence of the invisible and eternal worlds. This equation of faith with evidence is also found in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* written by Wesley in 1743:

²Letter to Charles Wesley (27 June, 1766), *Letters* 5:15.

³*Letters* 5:16, and Rack, 546.

Now faith (supposing the Scripture to be of God) is *pragmaton elegchos ou blepomenon* the demonstrative evidence of things unseen, the supernatural evidence of things invisible, not perceivable by eyes of flesh, or by any of our natural senses or faculties.⁴

This same understanding of faith is present in Wesley's letter to his brother written twenty-three years after the *Appeal*. Clearly, John's definition of faith as a supernatural sense of unseen things, which he based on Hebrews 11:1 (faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen), remained the same from 1743 to 1766.

John confided to his brother that he never had the kind of faith as defined in Hebrews 11:1. At the time, he wrote in the letter that he had never had a sense of the invisible or eternal worlds. What sense he did have of them came only from "reason's glimmering ray." This phrase echoes one found in a poem published by John and Charles in 1740. The poem is entitled "The Life of Faith: Exemplified in the Eleventh Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews" and it appeared in the Methodist publication *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. In stanzas five and six of the poem is a comparison between faith and reason:

Stanza 5: The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimmering ray,
With strong, commanding evidence
Their heavenly origin display.

Stanza 6: Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly,
The Invisible appears in sight
And God is seen by mortal eye.⁵

Just like in the *Appeal*, we find in this poem the conviction that there is an invisible world that can only be perceived by faith. According to the poem, the natural senses are not capable of discerning this realm of God and our reasoning ability is considered to be of little use in matters concerning the Divine. The poem and the *Appeal* both conclude that faith

⁴*An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Works 11: 46, par. 6.

⁵John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems, 1740: a collection of hymns by John and Charles Wesley*, vol. 1 (London: Printed by W. Strahan; reprint, Ryen, Holland: Sheppey Publications, 1994), 19 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

is the only thing that can give us evidence of God and the things of God.⁶

Stanzas 5 and 6 of "The Life of Faith" appeared in John's *Advice to the People Called Methodists* which was written in 1745, five years after the publication of the poem. The stanzas are quoted in a section on the Methodist definition of faith. Faith, as outlined in the *Advice*, is "a supernatural evidence (or conviction) of things not seen" out of which flows Christian love.⁷ This faith and love are wrought through the "inspiration or influence of the Holy Ghost."⁸

This definition of faith from the *Advice* is consistent with the one given two years earlier in the *Appeal* and twenty-one years later in the letter to Charles. Judging by John's admission to his brother, this published advice to the Methodists was not based on his own religious experience. He was convinced that a Christian should have a faith that inspired love for God and gave one evidence of the invisible and eternal, but he himself did not possess this "direct witness."⁹ Nevertheless, he wrote to his brother, "And yet I dare not preach otherwise than I do, either concerning faith, or love, or justification, or perfection."¹⁰

"The Christian Sense of the Word"

This determination to continue to hold out to others a standard of faith which he himself had not attained is reminiscent of the advice Wesley received from the Moravian leader Peter Böhler in 1738. In his *Journal* Wesley recorded a meeting with Böhler where the latter encouraged Wesley to continue to preach even though he had not experienced "that faith whereby alone we are saved."¹¹ When Böhler convinced Wesley of his lack of faith, the first thought Wesley had was to "leave off preaching." He asked for Böhler's advice and was told, "Preach faith *till* you have it, and then, *because* you have it, you *will* preach faith."¹²

If Wesley's letter to his brother is any indication, then it would appear that Wesley had been following Böhler's advice for twenty-eight

⁶*Works* 11:57, par. 35.

⁷*Advice to the People Called Methodists*, *Works* (Jackson), 8:352.

⁸*Works* (Jackson), 8:352.

⁹*Letters*, 516.

¹⁰*Letters*, 5:16.

¹¹*Journal* for 5 March, 1738, *Works*, 18: 228.

¹²*Works*, 18:228.

years without experiencing faith as a love for God or as a sense of the invisible and eternal worlds for himself. Even though mention of the evidence of unseen things and the direct witness of God's love is found in multiple publications, the 1766 letter suggests that John was not writing out of personal experience.

A sermon written twenty-two years after the letter to his brother suggests that Wesley later modified his equation of Christian faith with a clear sense of the invisible and eternal worlds and a love for God. Sermon 106, "On Faith," offers more nuances to the understanding of the degrees of faith:

But what is faith? It is a divine "evidence, and conviction of things not seen"; of things which are not seen now, whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature. Particularly, it is a divine evidence and conviction of God and of the things of God.¹³

There is no difference here between this characterization of faith written in 1788 and the ones given in the *Poems*, the *Advice* and the *Appeal*. Wesley's definition of faith as an evidence of things not seen remained consistent from 1740 to 1788. True Christian faith, according to Sermon 106, is not based on intellectual assent to doctrines; faith is a religious experience, not a rational exercise. An inward, personal conviction is necessary for salvation, although Wesley did admit in this sermon that there were different degrees of conviction. The "infant" degree of saving faith is modeled after Cornelius in the Book of Acts:

But what is the faith which is properly saving? Which brings eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God and of the things of God as even in its infant state enables everyone that possesses it to "fear God and work righteousness."¹⁴

This description of the "infant state" of saving faith, "fear God and work righteousness," is based on Acts 10:35 (where Peter acknowledges that Cornelius is saved), and it is reminiscent of the letter Wesley wrote his brother in 1766 in which he called himself "an honest heathen." Twenty-two years after the letter, Wesley labeled a person who feared God and worked righteousness "a servant of God" (p. 497, par. I.10). This was not

¹³Sermon 106, "On Faith," *Works* 3:492, par.§1.

¹⁴*Works* 3:497, par. I.10.

the highest level of faith in his opinion, but it was sufficient for salvation. In the sermon written in 1788, Wesley admitted that the Methodists had not always considered this infant state to be a saving faith:

Indeed nearly fifty years ago, when the preachers commonly called Methodists began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand that even one "who feared God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." In consequence of this they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?" And upon their answering "No," immediately replied, "Then you are a child of the devil." No; that does not follow. It might have been said (and it is all that can be said with propriety), "Hitherto you are only a servant; you are not a child of God. You have already great reason to praise God that he has called you to his honourable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto him: 'and you shall see greater things than these.'"¹⁵

In this paragraph, Wesley seems to be looking back to a time fifty years ago (1738) when the Methodist teachings regarding the doctrine of "salvation by faith" did not recognize the degrees of saving faith from infant to child. This lack of distinction between different degrees of faith can be seen in the Charles Wesley sermon "Awake Thou that Sleepest." This sermon echoes the phrases used in the John Wesley passage quoted above in which John described early Methodist teachings. In John's recollection, the Methodist preachers told people they were children of the devil if they did not know their sins were forgiven. In his 1740 sermon, Charles wrote: "If he doth not now bear witness with thy spirit that thou are a child of God, O that he might convince thee, thou poor unawakened sinner, by his demonstration and power, that thou art a child of the devil!"¹⁶

John had continued to publish Charles' sermon in his work *Sermons On Several Occasions*; therefore, it is highly likely that he would have remembered Charles' sermon, even after the passing of so many years. This, then, seems to have become John's characterization of early

¹⁵*Works* 3:497, par. I.11.

¹⁶Sermon 3, "Awake, Thou That Sleepest," *Works* 1:146, par. I.12.

Methodist teachings on the doctrine of salvation by faith—the Methodist preachers tried to convince people that if they did not know through the witness of the Holy Spirit that their sins were forgiven then they were children of the devil and not children of God.

Wesley complained that the early Methodist preachers “were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God.” I suggest this may be a critique of the doctrine of salvation by faith as taught by Peter Böhler in 1738. I base this conclusion in part on Wesley’s *Journal* entry dated Sunday, March 5, 1738, where Böhler convinced Wesley he did not have saving faith. The entry reads:

I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy; and with him Peter Böhler. By whom (in the hand of the great God) I was on Sunday the 5th clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of “that faith whereby alone we are saved.”¹⁷

As was explained above, Böhler went on to reassure Wesley that, even though he did not have this faith, he should continue to preach sermons about it. Looking back on that time fifty years later, Wesley found fault with the understanding of faith that Böhler had taught him and his brother.

In 1740 Wesley summarized the two distinct aspects of saving faith which Böhler emphasized when they first met. According to Wesley’s recollection, in 1738 Böhler taught that Christian faith was accompanied by spiritual fruits, “dominion over sin and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness.”¹⁸ The implication of this teaching, as interpreted by Wesley in this early period, was that these fruits were evidence of the authenticity of one’s faith. If one did not feel forgiven, at peace with God, and freed from the power of sin, then one was not saved. Wesley’s immediate reaction to Böhler’s teachings was very personal, “If then there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once.”¹⁹

In their April meeting, Wesley was convinced of unbelief, but he resisted the second component of Böhler’s definition of saving faith. This teaching concerned the instantaneous nature of the experience. Wesley searched the Scriptures and to his surprise found verses which supported Böhler’s position.²⁰ At a meeting the next day, Böhler brought along three

¹⁷Journal for 5 March, 1738, *Works* 18:228.

¹⁸Journal for 24 May, 1738, *Works* 18:247, par. 11.

¹⁹*Works* 18:248, par. 11.

²⁰Journal for 22 April, 1738, *Works* 18:234.

persons who testified to the immediacy of their conversion experiences. The stories of these witnesses convinced Wesley that he did not have saving faith.²¹ As he stated in his Journal, "Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief!'"²²

This instance in 1738, however, turned out to be a momentary pause in the dispute and not its end. Wesley would later go back and edit his earlier Journal entries. In 1774 he added the phrase "with the full, Christian salvation" to the description of Böhler's definition of faith.²³ In 1775 he added the footnote "There is no *Christian* faith without it" to modify Böhler's position on the necessity of the two fruits of faith.²⁴ In light of other examples in Wesley's writings, where he differentiates between justification and "full salvation" or "proper Christian salvation,"²⁵ I conclude that these editorial alterations point to Wesley's distinction between the faith of a *servant* and the faith of a *child*. The faith of a child of God was the full, Christian faith, whereas the faith of a servant did not reflect the full promises of God as long as the person feared rather than loved God. Therefore, "Full" or "Proper" Christian faith refers to the promises of assurance and Christian Perfection. The servant of God has experienced justification, but this degree of faith does not include the full promise of sanctification.

By the time he wrote the 1788 sermon on faith, Wesley's definition of faith had become very different from what he remembered of Böhler's definition. At this stage of his life Wesley characterized the faith of the servant as an infant state of saving faith. Those who feared God and had a faith that worked by love were not children of the devil, but were in fact justified.

Wesley's new appreciation for the faith of a servant does not mean that this was the highest level of faith. Sermon 106 goes on to encourage those who have the faith of a servant to continue to grow in grace until

²¹*Works* 18:248, par. 11.

²²*Works* 18:234.

²³*Works* 18:228, note 48.

²⁴*Works* 18:248, note e.

²⁵"Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems," *Works* (Jackson) 14:326; 1747 letter to Charles Wesley, *Works* 26:254, 255; 1755 letter to Richard Tompson, *Works* 26:575; Journal for 21 May 1761, *Works* 21:325; Sermon 43, "Scriptural Way of Salvation," *Works* 2:160, par. I.9 and 167, pars. III. 12, 13; and Sermon 85, "On Working Out Own Salvation," *Works* 3:204, par. II.1.

they receive the faith of a child. The difference between the infant state and the mature state seems to be that those with the faith of a child of God sense the witness of the Spirit:

This then it is that (if St. Paul was taught of God, and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost) properly constitutes the difference between a servant of God and a child of God. "He that believeth," as a child of God, "hath the witness in himself." This the servant hath not.²⁶

Those with the faith of a child of God sense the inward witness of the Spirit and feel God's love in their hearts, whereas the servants of God fear but do not love God (p. 489, par. I.12, and p. 500, par. II.4).

"The Eternal and Invisible World"

Another sermon, Sermon 117 "On the Discoveries of Faith" written two months after Sermons 106, gives more detail regarding the different degrees of faith in comparison to Sermon 106. This sermon also has more to say about the invisible, eternal, and spiritual worlds. Sermon 117 begins with the definition of faith from Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the evidence of things not seen." The first paragraph then quotes the Aristotelian maxim, "There is nothing in the understanding which was not first perceived by some of the senses."²⁷ The argument then goes on to explain that the physical senses cannot give one knowledge of the invisible world (p. 30, par. §3). Luckily, God has given us faith which fills in for the "defect of sense" and is an "'evidence of things not seen', of the *invisible world*; of all those invisible things which are revealed in the oracles of God" (p. 30, par. §4).

This argument bears a close resemblance to the definition of faith in the *Earnest Appeal*. In the *Earnest Appeal* Wesley called faith a spiritual sense of the invisible things of God. By faith the believer senses God, hears the voice of God, feels God's love, and sees God in Christ.²⁸ Sermon 117 expands upon this description of what things can be perceived by faith. In the invisible world Wesley included such unseen things as the human soul, holy and evil angels, the existence of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.²⁹ In his description of the eternal world Wesley stated that by

²⁶*Works* 3:498, par. I.12.

²⁷Sermon 117, "On the Discoveries of Faith," *Works* 4:29, par. §1.

²⁸*Works* 11:46, 47, par. §7.

²⁹*Works* 4:30-32, pars. §5-7.

faith we perceive "the souls of the righteous, immediately received by the holy angels," "the souls of unholy men, seized the moment they depart from the quivering lips by those ministers of vengeance, the evil angels," the coming of the Lord, and the execution of the Last Judgment (pp. 32-34, pars. §8-12). Even those with the faith of a servant, according to Wesley, sense these invisible and eternal worlds (p. 35, par. §13).

Sermon 117 then went on to describe the sense of the "spiritual world" and the difference between the faith of a servant and the faith of a child of God. The spiritual world is "the kingdom of God within." An individual is prepared to receive this inward presence of God by the Holy Spirit who convinces the person of sin. This conviction leads to a fear of God which, as in Sermon 106, suggests that the individual is a servant of God. Only when this fear is transformed into love and a sense that one's sins are forgiven can the person be called a child of God (pp. 35, 36, par. §14). Therefore, the term "spiritual world" appears to refer to the various dimensions of the working of the Holy Spirit which are perceived by an individual and produce impressions ranging from a feeling of dread to one of assurance.

The difference between the servant of God and the child of God in this sermon seems to be that, on one hand, the perception of the invisible, eternal and spiritual worlds fills the servant with the fear of God. On the other hand, the children of God are filled with love and assurance when they sense the unseen things of God. This is the first sermon to integrate Wesley's teachings on faith as a spiritual sense with his teaching on degrees of faith, although the argument cannot be called a complete harmonization of his middle and later teachings on faith. In his works *The Scripture Way of Salvation* and *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, Kenneth Collins points out the inconsistent ways John Wesley described the faith of a servant. Collins then attempts to resolve these discrepancies by showing the development in Wesley's thinking over the years 1738 to 1791.³⁰

Wesley, in Collins' opinion, described a servant of God in two different ways. During the early years of his ministry Wesley identified a servant of God as someone who feared God and therefore was not justified. The servant of God, in the broad sense of the term, only referred to someone who was under convincing grace and in the process of salvation but

³⁰Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 136-144.

not saved. Collins contrasts Wesley's "broad sense" of a servant of God with a later position which Collins calls the "narrow sense" of the term. The narrow sense refers to a person who *was* in a state of justification even though they only feared God and did not feel assurance.³¹ This "servant of God in the narrow sense" was an exception to the rule, according to Collins, because Wesley's standard for real Christianity necessitated a feeling of assurance.³²

Collins' interpretation of Wesley is based on the assumption that, when Wesley described the servant of God as being in a "state of acceptance," this was not the equivalent of calling the servant justified.³³ This assumption, however, is inconsistent with the linkage of "acceptance" with "justification" in three of Wesley's sermons. First, in the sermon "Circumcision of the Heart" (1733), a "true follower of Christ" is equated with "one who is in a state of acceptance with God."³⁴ Thirty-two years later, in the sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," Wesley wrote, "Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins, and (what is necessarily implied therein) our acceptance with God."³⁵ Finally, in 1770 on the occasion of George Whitefield's death, Wesley celebrated his friend's "grand doctrines," including the doctrine of justification by faith. Wesley identified Christ as the meritorious cause of "our pardon and acceptance with God, of our full and free justification."³⁶

In all three sermons, "acceptance" is synonymous with "justification," leaving open the possibility that, when the servant is called one who "actually is at that very moment in a state of acceptance" in the sermon "On Faith," Wesley meant by this that the servant was in a state of justification. Collins' assumption that the servant of God is only in a state of acceptance and is not justified cannot be reconciled with Wesley's later

³¹Collins, 1997, 141, and Collins, *John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 297, note 18, where Collins explains why he has reversed the terminology he used in 1997. This article follows his 2003 use of the terms "broad" and "narrow."

³²Collins, 1997, 136.

³³Collins, 1997, 104, 138. For a previous rebuttal to this conclusion, see Randy L. Maddox, "Continuing the Conversation," *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (1992):237. Maddox argues that the mature Wesley revised his earlier position and came to accept that conversion could be a gradual process in some cases.

³⁴Sermon 17, "The Circumcision of the Heart," *Works* 1:402, par. §3.

³⁵*Works* 2:157, par. I.3.

³⁶Sermon 53, "On the Death of George Whitefield," *Works* 2:342, par. III.3.

statements. Another problem with Collins' attempt to reconcile Wesley's middle and later characterizations of the servant of God is his focus on the feeling of assurance. While in an earlier period Wesley had granted few exceptions to the rule that the Holy Spirit always witnessed to regenerated Christians the assurance of their pardon, the "Discoveries of Faith" sermon (1788) shows that Wesley's opinion did change. In order to catch this shift in teaching, however, one must focus on Wesley's definition of saving faith and not on his treatment of assurance.

If faith is defined as "an evidence of things unseen," then even the servant who has a sense of the invisible and eternal worlds and a partial sense of the spiritual world has a degree of faith. The servant's perception of things invisible, eternal, and spiritual leads to a fear of God which "implies a species of faith," according to Wesley, "being 'an evidence of things not seen'—nor indeed possible to be seen or known, till God reveals them unto us."³⁷ The feeling of fear is evidence that the servant does have a supernatural sense of God and the things of God. As we have seen in numerous publications, this "evidence of things unseen" is synonymous with Wesley's understanding of faith. The servant's sense of unseen things is only an infant stage in saving faith, but this faithful perception is evidence that the servant is justified.

This conclusion in Wesley's Sermon 117 is very different from one of his earlier sermons. In the sermon "Spirit of Bondage and Spirit of Adoption" (1746), this partial sense of the things of God was not enough to qualify as "evangelical" and the servant of God was not considered to be "under grace."³⁸ In "Discoveries of Faith," however, the servant is called "accepted with [God]" and is encouraged to press on in faith in order to attain the full privilege of faith—assurance and love of God.³⁹ These two characterizations of the servant of God cannot be reconciled by calling the former an unjustified servant of God in the broad sense and the later a justified servant of God in the narrow sense. The suggestion that a servant of God is justified in only a few exceptional cases is not found in Wesley's 1788 sermons on faith. Rather, the faith of a servant is presented as a sense of the invisible, eternal and even spiritual worlds and this faith is proof that the servant is justified and accepted by God.

³⁷*Works* 4:35, par. §12.

³⁸*Works* 1:263, par. III.8.

³⁹*Works* 4:35, par. §13.

Besides his failure to harmonize his “Spirit of Bondage” sermon with his “Discoveries of Faith” sermon, Wesley left other matters unresolved in his description of faith as a spiritual sense. For example, Wesley did not explain if there are varying degrees of regeneration, an argument which might explain the servant’s ability to sense the invisible and eternal worlds, but with limited perception of the spiritual world. John’s letter to his brother is also difficult to reconcile with his later sermons. Many questions are raised when this 1766 expression of faith is compared to the 1788 sermons. For example, if those with the faith of a servant can sense the invisible and eternal worlds, how are we to understand Wesley’s confession to his brother that he has never had that faith experience? Even though he called himself “an honest heathen” and alluded to the faith of Cornelius in the Book of Acts, can John’s faith be called the faith of a servant if he neither feared nor loved God?⁴⁰

Conclusion

While we may only know what Wesley’s faith experience was not rather than what it was, we can follow how his teachings on faith changed by tracing the evidence he left behind in texts. His characterization of faith in the writings published during his lifetime show signs of both consistency and revision. The 1740 “Life of Faith” poem was an elaboration on Hebrews 11:1. The equation of faith with spiritual senses in the 1743 *Earnest Appeal* was also based on Hebrews 11:1. Wesley’s sermons on faith from 1788 repeat the definition of faith as an evidence of things not seen.

In spite of this consistency, there is evidence of amendment in Wesley’s understanding of the degrees of faith. When the sermons on faith are read in conjunction with the editorial changes in his 1738 Journal, Wesley’s changing attitude is revealed. In the 1774 and 1775 Journal revisions, Wesley distinguished Böhler’s teachings on faith as references to the full promise assurance and Christian perfection. In the 1788 sermons, faith is associated with a sense of the invisible, eternal, and spiritual which qualifies as saving faith in its infant state and is identified with the faith of a servant of God.

This attempt to summarize the early and middle Wesley’s statements on faith and the 1788 statements only covers his public teaching. We can-

⁴⁰*Letters* 5:16. Wesley wrote: “I have no more fear than love.”

not discover from the written record Wesley's own experience of faith throughout his life. The 1766 letter to Charles gives evidence that at the time he wrote it he felt neither fear nor love for God, but nevertheless discerned God's acceptance. This, in my opinion, does not lessen Wesley's credibility as a theologian for the eighteenth-century Methodist revival nor does it suggest that he was deceiving his followers. He never claimed to have had the faith of a child of God. On the contrary, after being convinced by Peter Böhler that he did not have faith, he confessed as much to his listeners the next time he taught about faith.⁴¹

Not only did he not claim an experience he had not had, Wesley also did not absolutize the type of faith he had experienced and judge all Methodist converts by this standard. He allowed for the possibility of an encounter with God and the things of God that was different from the one to which he could point. He also encouraged Charles to pursue his own unique calling and build upon his gifts for ministry, even if that message was different than the one to which he felt called. As he stated in the conclusion to his letter:

O insist everywhere on *full* redemption, receivable by *faith alone*; consequently, to be looked for *now*. You are made, as it were, for this very thing. Just here you are in your element. In connexion I beat you, but in strong, pointed *sentences* you beat me. Go on, in your *own way*, [in] what God has peculiarly called you to. Press the *instantaneous* blessing. Then I shall have more time for my peculiar calling, enforcing the *gradual* work.⁴²

John could affirm the strengths Charles brought to the Methodist movement because he could endorse his brother's instantaneous experience of faith even if he would not claim to have such a faith. There was room in the movement for teachings on both the instantaneous and the gradual work of faith; John did not insist that his preachers only teach the version of faith to which he could personally attest.

To see that Wesley repeated the teachings of Peter Böhler regarding the instantaneous blessing of faith, even though Wesley felt neither fear nor love for God, does not discredit him in my opinion. Rather, I see him convinced by Böhler, won over to his interpretation of the doctrine of jus-

⁴¹See *Works* 18:234, 235.

⁴²Outler, 82.

tification by faith, and accepting this as Christian truth. Out of concern for others, he then taught this doctrine, suggesting that he wanted to make other Christians aware of the possibility of experiencing inward evidence of the love of God, even if he did not. As he wrote in the letter to Charles, “I want all the world to come to [‘what I do not know myself’].”⁴³

Such actions seem pastoral in nature as we look back on Methodism from the vantage point of today. Wesley’s revision of his teaching regarding the faith of a servant has also been labeled a pastoral action.⁴⁴ Wesley changed his mind about the status of those with the faith of a servant, a faith experience closely resembling his own, and finally came to teach that even one who feared God was accepted and justified by faith.⁴⁵

⁴³Outler, 82.

⁴⁴Maddox, 236.

⁴⁵See *Works* 18:235, note a. Wesley’s editorial revision in which he stated he had the faith of a servant in 1738.

THE *VIA NEGATIVA* IN THE LIFE AND WRITING OF PHOEBE PALMER

by

Elaine A. Heath

For many years Phoebe Palmer has been cast in a negative light for the allegedly distorting trajectory of her “Altar Theology.” She goes in directions, her detractors say, that Wesley never would have gone. However, Palmer’s detractors have failed to read her in light of her fundamental mysticism, or in light of the long history of Christian mysticism and its vital place within Christian theology and spirituality. A new reading of Palmer that takes into account her fundamental mysticism could have a significant impact on Wesleyan spirituality and theology, and on Wesleyan approaches to the theory and practice of evangelism.

The following exploration of Palmer’s *via negativa* spirituality proposes a new reading of Palmer. In doing so I build upon the foundational assertion of Mark McIntosh and others that the *via negativa* is concerned with a de-emphasis or relativization of experience rather than an emphasis on experiences of darkness, nothingness, or emptiness. Experientialism is by definition kataphatic. While experiences of negation, darkness, loss, or self-emptying are part of the *via negativa*, the primary focal point for apophatic mysticism is God rather than personal experiences of God. Experience, emotion, and affectivity are all part of incarnational faith, thus it is to be expected that a genuine Christian faith journey will include religious emotion and experience.

Apophatic spirituality cannot stand alone and remain healthy or “normal” in the sense of being an accurate expression of truly Christian faith, since Christianity is incarnational. Christian apophatic spirituality

does not eliminate experience and emotion, rather it relativizes the place of experience and emotion. Thus, the following discussion takes into account Palmer's descriptions of her personal experiences of negation and darkness, but the overall trajectory, both in this discussion and in Palmer's writing, is her general de-emphasis on affective experience in order to embrace the Holy.

At least three aspects of apophatic mysticism can be found in Palmer's autobiographic records. These are: the struggle to accept internal "darkness" and "nothingness" in order to enter the way of holiness or oneness with God; the ongoing experience of "passive" surrender to God leading to progressively advanced spiritual development, and dark nights of the soul as a purgative initiation into deeper levels of union with God. As we shall see, Palmer's apophatic mysticism was at the core of the pivotal events in her spiritual journey, becoming the fountainhead for her most significant contributions to Wesleyan theology.

Naked Faith in the Naked Promise

The first indicator of Palmer's apophatic mysticism came in her early years as she struggled for assurance of sanctification. Having grown up in a devout Methodist household, Palmer was exposed to Methodist revivalism from infancy and made a genuine faith commitment at age four.¹ This revivalism was aimed at "lukewarm Christians" and stressed the need for a "second work of grace," through which the believer is sanctified for a life of holiness. Following the model of John Wesley's Aldersgate experience, Methodist revivalists preached that the second work of grace was affectively marked by an "inner witness of the Spirit," testifying within oneself that sanctification had taken place.²

Influenced by such preaching, Palmer struggled mightily through her teen years to experience an inner conversion marked by a changed "feeling," yet the feelings would not come. Like many who make authentic faith commitments as young children, Palmer could not remember *not* walking with God. Yet the sense of a divine call to deeper holiness persisted.³ Palmer describes finally reaching a crisis point in which she felt she either had to experience the "second work" or lose her salvation:

¹*The Way of Holiness*, 49.

²There is a parallel to later forms of Pentecostalism that insist upon the manifestation of speaking in tongues as proof of baptism of the Holy Spirit.

³*The Way of Holiness*, 49-53.

Others may act upon the principle that it is optional with themselves whether they will remain in a state of justification, or go on to a state of entire sanctification, but, with me, the command was absolute, "Go on to perfection"—"be ye holy;" and, if I had not obeyed, how could I have been in a state of condemnation and in a state of justification at the same time?⁴

For Palmer "entire sanctification" meant utterly giving over to God everything she was, everything she had, all her relationships, dreams, hopes, and especially her will. It meant putting herself on the altar of Jesus⁵ to be a living sacrifice, an "eternal surrender of life, reputation, and friends dearer than life."⁶ The life of surrender was, for Palmer, "the way of holiness."⁷

The crux of Palmer's struggle was her inability to experience sanctified "feelings," strive as she might. In other words, her lack of kataphatic experience produced great anxiety in the young seeker of holiness. No amount of good works, prayer, anxiety or thought could produce the desired affective awareness that she was one with God, given over to live in one accord with God's will. Again and again as she wrestled with absence of feeling, she felt Satan tempting her with the accusation that she was presumptuous for even thinking she could be holy.⁸

I propose that in this struggle Palmer was experiencing the affective "nothingness" that is part of apophatic mysticism. She felt intense and unrelenting desire (*erōs*) for oneness with the God who seemed to have become affectively absent. I further suggest that Palmer was, in the schema of Francis Nemeck and Marie Coombs, passing through one of seven "criti-

⁴*Full Salvation*, 26.

⁵Recall that Palmer's concept of Jesus as the altar that consecrates the gift is the foundation of her "altar theology," her most notable contribution to the development of Wesleyan theology. It is based upon her interpretation of Hebrews 13:10.

⁶*Full Salvation*, 27.

⁷Amanda Portersfield proposes an incipient female eroticism in Palmer's language about "laying" oneself on the altar in order to surrender passively to God. Portersfield's suggestion is interesting, especially in light of the spiritual eroticism of other female mystics such as Teresa of Avila. Amanda Portersfield, "Phoebe Palmer," *Women in New World's Conference Papers* (Madison, NJ: United Methodist Church Archives, General Commission on Archives and History, 1980), 11.

⁸*Way of Holiness*, 82.

cal thresholds” along the way to the mature spiritual development of a contemplative.⁹ A “critical threshold” is a major spiritual change marked by three qualities, explain Nemeck and Coombs. Critical thresholds are radical, irreversible, and successive. The contemplative is radically changed, never goes back to the way he or she “used to be,” and the thresholds are progressive over the course of the contemplative’s lifetime.¹⁰

The threshold which Palmer seems to have been experiencing at this point is described by Nemeck and Coombs as that of “personal conversion,” a subset of a larger category they name “emergence”:

Personal conversion is a special modality of emergence. It is a singular moment in our lives. Emergence and personal conversion go together like two sides of the same coin. “Emergence” denotes not only a threshold but also an élan which endures for the rest of our lives. “Personal conversion,” on the other hand, designates a unique instant of breakthrough and definitive stabilization in the process of emergence. From that moment on, we realize that we are possessed by Christ and that we wholeheartedly desire to surrender ourselves to him in love, hope and faith.¹¹

The definitive breakthrough came for Palmer on July 26, 1837, the “Day of Days” when she made her irrevocable “altar covenant” with God.¹² Palmer’s breakthrough came as a result of her realization that holiness was promised to her by God’s Word and that promise was true *regardless of her emotions*. Palmer came to view her previous demand for an emotional “proof” of sanctification as being like the sinful demand of the Pharisees for Jesus to produce ever more “signs and wonders” before they would believe his words. At the same time, Palmer was seized with a

⁹Francis Kelly Nemeck and Marie Theresa Coombs, *The Spiritual Journey* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 48. Nemeck and Coombs have written extensively on the spirituality and apophatic mysticism of St. John of the Cross, including in this book. According to the authors, there are seven major thresholds in the development of most contemplatives (33-38). Personal conversion is the fourth threshold. While the authors use the designation of one who enters the “blessed night” as a “contemplative” rather than a “mystic,” their term “contemplative” means approximately the same thing that is meant by the term “mystic” in this study.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 33-34.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 48.

¹²Oden, 114.

deepened conviction that she had to relinquish what she felt to be an excessive attachment to her husband and children.

As Nemeck and Coombs note, thresholds are often precipitated by personal trauma such as serious illness, major personal failure or loss of a relationship through disruption or death, an observation that is true of Palmer.¹³ Grief over the deaths of three of her children, particularly Eliza who died exactly one year before her mother's experience of sanctification, led Palmer to conclude she had loved her family idolatrously.¹⁴ She felt a divine imperative to detach from her family in the Ignatian sense described by Egan as "a removal of disordered loves and attachments."¹⁵ So it was that, as she relinquished both the demand for affective proof of sanctification and her "idolatrous" attachment to family, Palmer finally entered into sanctification—the state of simple, undivided rest in God—for which she had longed.¹⁶

Palmer experienced the necessary detachment of the *via negativa*: the letting go of people, created things, religious feelings, and her own will in order to embrace the God who is wholly other. She entered into quietness of soul by means of the *via negativa*, rather than through kataphatic experiences of having her heart "strangely warmed" as John Wesley did, or some other affective experience. Thus Palmer entered into apophatic mystical passivity in precisely the sense described by von Hügel: a quietness of soul brought about by the activity of bringing all of one's faculties into harmony with God, who is Pure Act.

As is true of all the great mystics of the church, Palmer's experience of passivity became the fountainhead for a lifetime of service to the

¹³Nemeck and Coombs, *The Spiritual Journey*, 35.

¹⁴*Full Salvation*, 145-146; *The Way of Holiness*, 151-152.

¹⁵Egan, "Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticism," 415.

¹⁶Oden, 114-122. The naming of Phoebe's sanctification experience as a "mystical" experience will no doubt cause consternation among some readers whose definitions of mysticism have not taken into account Wesleyan sanctificationist teaching, as well as among Wesleyan readers for whom "mysticism" means "Quietism" or New Age spirituality. Again, this is a matter of "notions and names and fluid facts." It is my conviction that the fluid fact of "entire sanctification," as taught by Phoebe Palmer, is essentially a mystical experience of "one-ing" of the soul with God. The second work of grace is both a threshold event and an ongoing process that includes apophatic passivity. This understanding of sanctification as mysticism, including passivity, is quite consistent with the definitions offered by von Hügel, Underhill, and others.

church and world.¹⁷ Palmer's apophatic mystical experience, which she named the "Day of Days," was the ultimate source of authority for her unprecedented move into public ministry that involved preaching, teaching, writing, humanitarian work, and international travel.¹⁸

Mystical Passivity: Quiet or Quietism?

The experience of mystical passivity is part of the *via negativa* in that it has to do with divinely initiated movements of the soul toward a greater reception of grace and a diminished reliance upon self. Both passivity and darkness are purgative of the soul's fallen tendency toward self-absorption. The experience, aptly named the "dark night of the soul" by St. John of the Cross, is one which usually leads souls into experiences of passivity, for the lesson that is learned in the night is that one's efforts to be holy on one's own strength are ultimately doomed.

Holy simplicity, the prayer of quiet, the deep rest of cessation from feverish striving, these gifts are imparted by God to souls who meekly surrender to God and *receive*. Union with God is the result of grace alone. Yet, as von Hügel argues at length, the state of the soul at rest that is called "passivity" is in fact quite active. Quiet, in other words, is not Quietism.

The biggest distinction that must be made in defining authentic, orthodox experiences of "mystical passivity" is the one between "quiet" and "Quietism."¹⁹ This distinction is of particular importance in evaluating the apophatic experiences of Palmer and her own understanding of them. Palmer was adamantly opposed to Quietism, which she thought of as mysticism.

What, then, is "quiet" as opposed to Quietism? Throughout the history of Christian spirituality there have been two currents, to borrow von Hügel's image, in regard to mystical passivity.²⁰ One of the currents

¹⁷Recall that within an hour of having assurance of her sanctification, Phoebe Palmer describes having a visionary experience that was her call to ministry. *The Way of Holiness*, 34.

¹⁸For mystical vision as a source of authority in Phoebe Palmer, see Kate P. Crawford Galea, "Anchored Behind the Veil: Mystical Vision as a Possible Source of Authority in the Ministry of Phoebe Palmer," *Methodist History* 31:4 (July 1993), 236-247.

¹⁹Quietism has been regarded within Christendom almost exclusively as a heterodox phenomenon.

²⁰Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*. Vol.2, 2d ed. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1923), 131.

emphasizes the soul's simplicity as an increased quietude involving cessation of effort of the self toward God so as to more openly receive grace. This quietude is experienced most notably in prayer. "Its decisive terms are Passivity, Fixedness, Oneness," writes von Hügel.²¹ The other current understands the reception of grace as a collaborative effort between the soul and God, such that it requires the constant "action" of cooperating with the latent, Spirit-borne impulses toward holiness that arise from within the soul. "Its characteristic terms are "Action" (as distinguished from "Activity"), Growth, Harmony."²² The two currents belong together and serve to balance each other. Yet von Hügel stresses the underlying reality that human response and activity are always required in true mystical passivity. In other words, both currents involve Action.

Borrowing from Aquinas' (Aristotelian) concept of God as Pure Act, Von Hügel explains that, when the soul experiences passivity in prayer, that is, it seems to have "lost itself in God" or ceased to be distinct from God during moments of mystical union or at advanced stages of prayer, the impression is only an appearance. The same is true of passivity in terms of an hour-by-hour lived experience of resting in God while going about one's work, as in Brother Lawrence's experience of the "practice of the Presence of God." In actuality, the:

. . . impression of rest springs most certainly from an unusually large amount of actualized energy, an energy which is now penetrating and finding expression by every pore and fiber of the soul. The whole moral and spiritual creature expands and rests, yes; but this very rest is produced by Action "unperceived because so fleet," so near, so all fulfilling; or rather by a tissue of single acts, mental, emotional, volitional, so finely interwoven, so exceptionally stimulative and expressive of the soul's deepest aspirations, that these acts are not perceived as so many single acts, indeed that their very collective presence is apt to remain unnoticed by the soul itself.²³

A variety of descriptions of passivity have been offered by the mystics. These descriptions vary according to the temperament of the individual mystic. St. Teresa of Avila speaks for the more passionate types when she describes the Orison of Quiet as a kind of:

²¹Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³Ibid., 132.

“ . . . sleep of the powers of the soul” in which the soul does not know what to do—for it knows not whether to speak or be silent, whether it should laugh or weep. It is a glorious folly, a heavenly madness, wherein true wisdom is acquired; and to the soul a kind of fruition most full of delight.²⁴

Teresa goes on to describe the utter captivation of the soul by God’s love at such times, which makes it difficult to be distracted from God or to rouse oneself to activity. Passivity in prayer, then, becomes the enchanted gaze of the lover upon the Beloved.

It is clear from Teresa’s description that this kind of passivity cannot be associated with an Eastern form of detachment from all passion, selfhood, etc. On the contrary, Teresa’s passivity is the enraptured, passionate absorption of the soul with God, a condition nuanced with a kind of spiritual eroticism. Such prayer is a form of “passivity” that seamlessly leads into true contemplation, which subsequently bears the fruit of holy activity in the world. The result of true mystical passivity is an increase of strength and spiritual energy, an increase of love for God and neighbor so that the individual is increasingly alive to God in the community and world as the process of passivity progresses. Authentic mystical passivity is a de-selfing process, yet paradoxically brings about a deepening of authentic self-actualization. For this reason, “healthy” passivity in some degree is a normal part of Christian sanctification.²⁵ For the mystic, however, this kind of transformation takes place to a radical degree.

In von Hügel’s estimation the real culprit that distorts “quiet” into Quietism is any tendency to extreme dualism, particularly between body and soul.²⁶ Such dualism inevitably leads to a devaluation of bodily experience, creatureliness, the historic and institutional elements of faith and community, vocal prayer and devotional practices. Dualism between soul and body devolves into a focus on the soul transcending the body, a self-abnegation that depreciates incarnationality. Dualism leads to the pursuit

²⁴Quoted in Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: Meridian, 1955), 326. Originally found in “*De Quatuor Gradibus Violentae Charitatis*” (Migne: Patrologia Latina, vol. cxcvi. col. 1215 b).

²⁵Sanctification is meant here in the broad sense of the life-long process of “growth in grace.”

²⁶*Ibid.*, 135.

of a solitary journey of the soul to the great, impassable and unknowable Other, in short, a Plotinian “flight of the alone to the Alone.”²⁷

Quietism tends to pursue passivity as an end, rather than a means. Furthermore, argues von Hügel, such an impulse invariably becomes pre-occupied with speculative theology concerning the intra-Trinitarian nature of God, apart from the God of creation.²⁸ Thus it becomes a direct contradiction to the fact of the Incarnation of God and of God’s self-revelation exclusively within the economy of salvation. For this reason, Quietism was rejected as heresy in the seventeenth century,²⁹ because in von Hügel’s words:

God’s action does not keep outside of, nor does it replace, man’s action; but it is—Our Lord Himself has told us—that of yeast working in meal, which manifests its hidden power in proportion to the mass of meal which it penetrates and transforms.³⁰

With this preliminary understanding of mystical passivity (quiet) and its distinction from Quietism, then, let us turn to the “Mother” of the Holiness Movement to explore the theologically formative influence of her experiences of mystical passivity.

²⁷Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, 1981), 51.

²⁸An exercise in futility which has, nonetheless, dominated western Trinitarian theology from the time of Augustine, according to Catherine Mowry LaCugna. The only way humanity has ever known God is through God’s self-revelation in the *oikonomia*. The notion of knowing God in *se* apart from creation is a philosophical myth. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 1-8.

²⁹Quietism was so named by Cardinal Caraccioli, Archbishop of Naples, in his June 30, 1682, letter to Pope Innocent XI (Odescalchi) in which he described the phenomenon of Quietism as it appeared in his Diocese. Quietist offenders had forsaken the rosary, genuflection, making the sign of the Cross, the Eucharist, and other devotional practices. Spanish priest Miguel de Molinos was put on trial for two years, imprisoned and tortured for disseminating Quietist teaching from 1685-1687. Others accused of Quietism included Archbishop François Fénelon (d. 1715) and his friend, Madame Jeanne-Marie Guyon (d. 1717), whose spirituality greatly influenced Fénelon. “Fénelon, François”; “Guyon, Madame Jeanne Marie”; and “Quietism” in *HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 525, 597, 1075-1076.

³⁰von Hügel, 136.

Moments of Mystical Union

Numerous descriptions of mystical prayer are found in Phoebe Palmer's writings, including classic descriptions of ecstatic passivity such as we have considered in Teresa of Avila. One such experience of oceanic love, so common to Catholic saints and mystics, generated within Palmer an intense desire to lead other disciples of Jesus to entire sanctification:

She felt in experimental verity that it was not in vain she had believed; her very existence seemed lost and swallowed up in God; she plunged, as it were, into an immeasurable ocean of love, light and power, and realized that she was encompassed with the favor of the Almighty as a shield.³¹

On another occasion Palmer described her profound desire to lie passively in the hands of God, with her will lost in God's will:

In reference to my future course, I wish to lie passive in the hands of the Lord, as an instrument to perform His pleasure in all things. My will is lost in the will of God. I would not—dare not choose for myself, though the choice were given. God is my all in all. I walk by faith, and am enabled to endure as *seeing* the Invisible, and my enjoyment consists in a calm, quiet resting on the promises of the gospel, assured that it is my Father's good pleasure to give me the kingdom. I feel at rest in the blessed persuasion, that if I, as a worker together with him, make use of the means ordained for my advancement thitherward, the point will be gained. *I know that the Holy Spirit has been given, the Comforter has come!* and has taken His abiding residence in my heart—inciting me ceaselessly to every good word and work, and giving me a longing desire for the spiritual benefit of those around me.³²

Within this passage alone we find numerous elements of mystical passivity at its “best” in terms of von Hügel's description of healthy mystical passivity. Palmer describes her will being lost in the will of God, yet there is a distinct, even ennobled sense of self. She has lost neither her personality nor her freedom of choice. Palmer's experience of God's goodness and rest is not an end in itself, but becomes the means of spurring her on to share God's love with others.

³¹*The Way of Holiness*, 31.

³²Palmer, *The Way of Holiness*, 89.

Note also the manner in which Palmer's apophaticism remained grounded in Scripture, tradition, and the church. In referring to the necessity of using "the means ordained for her advancement," Palmer acknowledged the importance of attending to the Wesleyan "means of grace": prayer, Bible reading, corporate worship, and the Eucharist. Unitive experiences of passivity thus led Palmer to a deeper rootedness in Scripture, the sacraments, the church, and a more effective ministry in the world. Her apophatic mysticism, in fact, was the fountainhead of her power as an evangelist.

One final example, also drawn from the "Day of Days," links Palmer's mysticism to that of Teresa of Avila and numerous other mystics who experienced divine betrothal as a complete surrender of the self to God. As Nemeck and Coombs comment regarding the already described "critical threshold" experience of conversion, it usually leads to the next stage of "divine espousal."³³

I felt that the Spirit was leading into a solemn, most sacred, and inviolable compact between God and the soul that came forth from Him, by which, in the sight of God, angels and men, I was to be united in eternal oneness with the Lord my Redeemer, requiring unquestioning allegiance on my part, and infinite love and everlasting salvation, guidance and protection, on the part of Him who had loved and redeemed me, so that from henceforth He might say to me, "I will betroth thee unto Me forever."³⁴

In the ensuing interaction with God, Palmer surrendered herself unconditionally to mystical union on God's terms, acknowledging the probability that union would involve seasons of walking by sheer faith, trusting in the "naked word of God" in the perceived absence of spiritual passion or emotion. And that indeed is what she went on to experience.³⁵

Mystical Passivity and the Practice of the Presence of God

As an ambassador of God to thousands of seekers of holiness, Palmer preached a "shorter, simple way," one not dependent upon emo-

³³Nemeck and Coombs, 48.

³⁴Oden, 118.

³⁵The many seasons in which Phoebe had to rely on "the naked Word of God alone" were for her, I believe, a part of the dark night of the soul, which she intermittently experienced for the rest of her life.

tions or other signs, but entirely upon the trustworthiness of God's word and the efficacy of Christ's atonement. According to Palmer, once a believer "lays it all on the altar" of Jesus, his or her one primary task is to trustingly abide there, moment by moment. Like Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, Palmer understood holiness to be the practice of abiding in the presence of God and yielding to the authority of God's word at all times. To borrow the language of von Hügel, Palmer saw this yieldedness not as the fearful surrender of slaves avoiding punishment, nor the self-seeking surrender of mercenaries who work for a reward, but a "pure" surrender of children to their Father, born of pure love.³⁶ Moreover, Palmer's understanding of "abiding in God" is thoroughly Trinitarian and Christocentric. She dwells in the Trinity and the Trinity dwells in her, empowering her to become increasingly holy as she is given increasing revelation of "the doctrine of Christ."³⁷

Among the most troubling and misunderstood aspects of apophatic mysticism is the phenomenon that has come to be called the "dark night of the soul." John Wesley, after a protracted struggle to understand and accept the dark night during his early attraction to Christian mysticism, finally jettisoned the attempt because he could not simultaneously "feel assurance" and embrace what he understood to be the interminable "unknowing" of the night.³⁸ Wesley's disjuncture from Christian mysticism lasted for several decades primarily because of his repugnance toward the dark night. Thus, the significance of the dark night in Palmer's life and thought is all the more ironic in the development of Wesleyan theology. Palmer brought to Wesleyan theology and spirituality the apophatic dimension of authentic Christian spirituality that had been underdeveloped by John Wesley.

³⁶von Hügel, 166; Oden, 187-190; *The Way of Holiness*, 20.

³⁷*The Way of Holiness*, 136-137.

³⁸Tuttle, 106-107. Whether Wesley's understanding of the "unknowing" was correct according to the mystics' understanding is unclear. It could be argued that Wesley was seeking to accept negative or dark experiences as being definitive of mystical spirituality and finally gave up, exhausted. If that is the case, according to McIntosh and Turner's position, Wesley missed the point, for the point of apophatic mysticism is a relativization of experience in general, rather than an emphasis on negative or dark experiences. McIntosh and Turner do not reject religious experience and emotion, but they do suggest that apophatic spirituality relativizes affectivity. In this way God is not confined to certain religious experiences or feelings persons undergo, though God can and does work through human experience and emotion.

The dark night of the soul is often explained as part of the threefold process of Christian spiritual transformation, historically described as purgation, illumination, and union.³⁹ This threefold conceptual framework has origins in Scripture, in the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection as found in Ephesians 4:11-24. In that passage Paul exhorts believers to die to the old self and "put on Christ," putting away all that is of the old life and its ego-driven concerns.

Patristic theologians beginning with Origen (185-254), and culminating in Evagrius Ponticus (346-399), laid the groundwork for the articulation of the three ways. Pseudo-Dionysius (ca. 500) labeled the three stages as purgation, illumination and union.⁴⁰ The concept of a threefold path for spiritual advancement received further, somewhat more lyrical explication at the hands of the mystics Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and Catherine of Siena (1347-1380). By the time of the Quietist controversy in the seventeenth century, "the three ways" had become so foundational to Roman Catholic spirituality that Miguel de Molinos, one of the proponents of Quietism, was pronounced a heretic partly because of his rejection of the three ways as a norm for spiritual advancement.⁴¹

Whether the three stages are successive phases or simultaneous and repeated forms of spiritual growth that characterize the spiritual journey remains controversial. St. Teresa of Avila among others believed the three ways to be successive stages. St. Bonaventure, on the other hand, saw a cyclical pattern in the three ways, which repeats itself again and again in the life of the believer. Some commentators argue the three ways are coexistent.⁴² As Thomas McGonigle highlights, the three ways are not to be understood as a rigid formula for spiritual development. They are, rather, self-recorded descriptions of the path which many mystics and saints walked on their own journeys toward oneness with the Divine.⁴³

³⁹Note, however, that Sahadat among others sees in other mystical traditions a similar threefold path of the renunciation of ego in the process of spiritual transformation, including various forms of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. John Sahadat, "Interreligious Study of Mysticism and a Sense of Universality," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 22:2 (Spring, 1985), 292-301.

⁴⁰Thomas D. McGonigle, "Three Ways," *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 963-965.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 963.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 964.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 965.

The precise experience of purgation, illumination or union varies with each individual. So does the mysterious de-selfing of the dark night.

According to Evelyn Underhill, the dark night is a season of loss of equilibrium as the soul transitions from the Illuminative Way to the Unitive Way.⁴⁴ This season is marked by “utter blankness and stagnation, so far as mystical activity is concerned. . . . It is of the essence of its miseries that the once-possessioned power of orison or contemplation now seems wholly lost.”⁴⁵ As Underhill explains, the dark night is a time of profound suffering, which takes a different form in each person according to personality, faith tradition, and life experiences. The sorrow of the night may be felt primarily in the emotions, the intellect, in moral rectitude or the sense of holiness, and in the sense of companionship with God.⁴⁶ For all forms there is a sense of spiritual stagnation, reversal or even death. The former affective experiences of God seem to be gone, or but a dim and painful memory. The soul finds no pleasure or joy in spiritual reading, prayer or any other spiritually nourishing pursuits that formerly gave satisfaction.

Many who have traversed the night record experiences of temptation to immorality, to cast their faith away, to doubt God’s existence and undergo other temptations that are experienced not only as genuine temptation but also as deep grief to the soul. The very presence of “vulgar” temptations is a shocking affront to the souls who previously seemed to have advanced far beyond the realm of base temptations.⁴⁷ This exposure to multiple layers of loss, the feeling of God’s absence, coarse temptation and other manifestations of the night collectively cause a negation and removal of reliance upon self. Carefully constructed ego-driven ascetical spirituality is particularly stripped of its self-reliance, causing the believer to have to trust in the sheer grace of God. Thus, Underhill reports, the various forms of the dark night lead to the same result:

The function of this episode of the Mystic Way is to cure the soul of the innate tendency to seek and rest in spiritual joys; to confuse Reality with the joy given by the contemplation of Reality. It is the completion of that ordering of disordered loves, that transvaluation of values, which the Way of Purga-

⁴⁴Underhill, *Mysticism*, 381.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 389-393.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 389-395.

tion began. The ascending self must leave these childish satisfactions, make its love absolutely disinterested, strong, and courageous, abolish all taint of spiritual gluttony. A total abandonment of the individualistic standpoint, of that trivial and egotistic quest of personal Light, is the supreme condition of man's participation in Reality.⁴⁸

In addition to John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila who are often studied as exemplars of the dark night, Underhill points to Madame Guyon as an "unparalleled study" for the phenomenon of the dark night. The oft-maligned seventeenth-century French mystic, though considered far from exemplary of Christian mysticism by many Catholic commentators,⁴⁹ kept detailed records of her own experiences of the night and did not attempt to control the state of her soul. Guyon saw herself as "God's weathercock," and wrote accordingly.⁵⁰ Her record of the night is copious and uncensored.

In the development of Wesleyan holiness spirituality, Guyon plays a special role. Her descriptions of the dark night, though not considered paradigmatic of Christian mysticism by many Catholic commentators, probably had more influence on Wesleyan holiness thought than did the writings of John of the Cross or Teresa of Avila. Recall that Wesley, who early in his career rejected Madame Guyon along with the other mystics, in the last years of his life praised her as one whose holiness would be hard to match over the course of many centuries.⁵¹ Note again that Guyon is one of the eight mystics whose writing made it into Wesley's *Christian Library*.⁵² The peculiar sufferings of the French woman in her dark night

⁴⁸Ibid., 395.

⁴⁹For example the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 227-228, labels Guyon a Quietist.

⁵⁰Underhill, *Mysticism*, 384.

⁵¹Orcibal, 94.

⁵²In addition to Wesley's *Christian Library*, several versions of Guyon's autobiography were printed by different holiness publishers at the time of Palmer's ministry, including one by Thomas Upham and another by the Salvation Army. William and Catherine Booth, who founded the Salvation Army, were disciples of Palmer and their ministry was in no small part born out of Palmer's holiness teaching. One abridgement of Guyon's story published by the Salvation Army in 1885 describes Guyon as an exemplary holiness Christian, one who was "saved," "sanctified," and who "witnessed" to the monks about "sanctification."

and her response to them, left a permanent mark in the heart of Wesley and many of his followers.

While some commentators argue that the dark night is simply an archaic way of explaining clinical depression, Denys Turner offers a persuasive argument against such a conclusion, drawing from John of the Cross who himself makes distinctions between “melancholia” and the dark night. According to Turner, the dark night is actually a “dialectical critique of experientialist tendencies.”⁵³ Although both phenomena may have similar symptoms, depression is a biochemical condition, among other things, and upon its cure the sufferer resumes his or her previous state of being.⁵⁴ The dark night, however, is caused by a “superabundance of light,” and upon the conclusion of a dark night the one who suffered has been transformed into greater holiness and freedom by the experience.⁵⁵ Turner’s crisp distinction between the dark night and clinical depression skirts the reality of Underhill’s observation that often the dark night is precipitated by experiences of loss. That is, sometimes depression is situational; it is not always induced by a chemical imbalance per se. Sometimes depression is a part of the dark night, as well, as is noted by Underhill and others. Turner is correct, however, in observing that the dark night is not simply another name for clinical depression. The two conditions may be related, but they are not the same thing.

The dark night of the soul is described in this document through citations of Guyon’s autobiography, but the editorial emphasis is placed upon sanctification and full salvation as the result of Guyon’s embracing the night in trusting surrender to God’s providence. While this abridgement was written by followers of Palmer after her death, thus it was not a direct endorsement of Guyon by Palmer, the concepts in it were linked with her theology. The authors use Palmer’s language, in other words, to describe the experiences of Guyon. George R., *Madame Jeanne de la Mothe Guyon: Educated in the Convents, Saved at the Foot of the Cross* (New York: The Salvation Army, 1885). Typical of such publications at the time, the last name of the editor/annotator is not given.

⁵³Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1995), 227.

⁵⁴This is Turner’s perspective. Depression is a complex phenomenon which involves body, mind and spirit. It can be situationally introduced such as in the case of grief, yet become a long-term physical, emotional and spiritual problem when serotonin levels are depleted. Spiritually the sufferer may experience the situational cause and physical effects of the depression as a form of spiritual abandonment.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 235.

John of the Cross divides the dark night into four progressive states: active night of the senses, active night of the spirit, passive night of the senses, and passive night of the spirit.⁵⁶ The cumulative effect of these four states is the deconstruction of self-centeredness in the mystic and the exposure and removal of subtle idolatry in the mystic in terms of associating God with created things or viewing God as one more “thing.” The dark night brings about the necessary detachment from created things so that the mystic may love all things in God rather than in and of themselves.

The “darkness” of the night is not because of God’s absence, though it often feels like God is absent. Rather, the darkness is due to the soul’s coming into contact with God’s brilliance to such a degree that spiritual vision itself is blinded, at least temporarily. As Turner explains, beginning with Pseudo Dionysius (for whom he prefers the older appellation, Denys the Areopagite), apophatic mysticism in Christian traditions is a Greek-Hebrew blend of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” and the Old Testament account of Moses on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law.⁵⁷ In Plato’s allegory the philosopher gains philosophical enlightenment by leaving the dark cave and going into the broad light of day. At first the daylight is painful and blinding. In time the philosopher’s eyes adjust to the superabundance of light, allowing him to comprehend reality as never before. He returns to the cave to share with others the beauty of the real world over against the supposed reality of the cave-dwellers’ shadow world. Turner explains that Pseudo Dionysius re-interpreted Plato’s allegory as a narrative that describes the superabundance of light that is initially experienced as a “bright darkness” in Christian spiritual enlightenment. The paradigm for the painfully blinding brilliance of God is found first in the Old Testament in Moses’ encounter with Yahweh on Mt. Sinai.⁵⁸ In the New Testament the brilliant darkness of God overwhelms Saul on the road to Damascus when he encounters the risen Lord.

According to Turner, the active night of the spirit is a time in which ascetical practices are used by the mystic as a means to draw closer to God and become more holy. The last phase of the dark night, however, the passive night of the spirit, is a God-initiated period of time in which

⁵⁶St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, ed. E. Allison Peers. http://www.ccel.org/j/john_cross/dark_night/dark_night.html.

⁵⁷Turner, 13-18.

⁵⁸Exodus 33-34.

the mystic's self-driven asceticism undergoes deconstruction. The individual realizes that no matter how much he or she does to purify the self, in the final analysis only God can bring about such purity. There is a certain "paralysis of agency" that is characteristic of this season of purgative dryness, argues Turner, that is also marked by the individual's pain at not being able to serve God through the former asceticism. This pain is one of the features that distinguish the dark night from clinical depression. Although the individual who is experiencing the night cannot tell what God is doing or how God is doing it, for the whole encounter is fraught with "unknowing," the grace and excess of light which are causing the darkness are experienced as deprivation. The pain is a pain of deprivation and loss. For many people the felt experience is one of God-forsakenness, or that God and all former experiences of God are no longer "real."

A very small list of those who have recorded dark night experiences include Henry Suso, Johann Tauler, Rulman Merswin, Angela of Foligno, Madame Guyon, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, George Fox, Thomas R. Kelly, and Phoebe Palmer. While Palmer did not label her experiences a "dark night of the soul," the descriptions of her experiences parallel those of other mystics who suffered the peculiar "trials and crosses" of the night. Palmer details numerous episodes in her life in which she suffered precisely the kinds of sufferings described by other mystics in the dark night. The following are but two examples. The first comes from *The Way of Holiness* and is a general description of these repeated sufferings:

These trials, though they sometimes arose from outward causes, were generally inward and the struggle they caused is indescribable; in the midst of which she was often called to lean so entirely, "with *naked* promise," that nature was sometimes tempted in its shrinkings to say, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but still holding with an unyielding grasp upon the promise, "I will never leave nor forsake thee." And believing that the Saviour was treading "the wine press *alone*, and of the people there was none with him," when he gave utterance to this expression, she was checked ere she had given words to the thought, and instead of indulging in those words, which none but He who "wept that man might smile," need use, she said in the language of faith, "My God, thou hast not forsaken me."⁵⁹

⁵⁹Palmer, *The Way of Holiness*, 66.

The next excerpt is from the call vision Palmer recorded shortly before her death, the defining vision she had not felt free to write about prior to that time even though it occurred thirty-four years earlier. The title she gave to this document was "Refining Processes." Note in particular the crushing awe and profound humiliation Palmer describes as she encounters the living God, the temptations to think God had forsaken her, the negation of ego and the stripping away of reliance upon previous spiritual experiences:

The peculiar experience of which I am about to speak occurred August 1840, was preceded by humiliations of soul that I can scarcely attempt to describe. I am sure I know what David meant when he exclaimed "I am a worm and no man." I knew and *felt* that I was shielded by the atonement, and therefore there was no condemnation, but the *Word of the Lord* was intensified, in a manner that human language cannot portray. For days and nights in succession it penetrated my soul, as if it would part it asunder. . . . My naked soul seemed to be tending as in the more immediate presence of the All-seeing, to whom all things are naked and open. Such piercing views of my utter nothingness, and the intense spirituality of the *Word of God*, seemingly would have crushed me, but I pleaded that my spirit might not fail before Him. In a sense beyond any former experiences I could say "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes."

Previous to this deep realization of the sharpness of the two-edged sword, my experience had generally been joyous. Though I had not been without oft repeated conflicts, conquest had so quickly succeeded each conflict that the joy of victory was ever in my heart, and on my lips. For many days in succession all sensible, joyous experiences were withheld, and I was shut up to the exercise of "naked faith in a naked promise." The cruel tempter said that the Lord whom I loved supremely had forsaken me, that I had surely in some unknown way offended. But I kept hold of the promise, "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to you." And as God in answer to special and importunate prayer did not reveal anything, I still held strongly the shield of faith, saying sooner will I die than doubt. Often amid this great trial of my faith did the providences of God seem to contradict the

promises. Yet, knowing that the ways of God are all perfect, I knew that in the end he would bring order out of apparent confusion.⁶⁰

On her “Day of Days” in July 1837, when Palmer made her Altar Covenant, one of the eight temptations with which she struggled was the fear that she might never receive spiritual consolations or “manifestations” for the rest of her life. In other words, she had to decide to walk by faith even if it meant remaining in a permanent state of unknowing or the dark night:

Still the enemy withstood me with the suggestion, “Suppose you should be called to live a long life, till you are three score or a hundred years old, and never have any of those manifestations that others enjoy—never have anything but the naked Word of God upon which to rely; and should die, and come up before your Judge, without ever having had anything but the naked Word to assure your faith?”⁶¹

Palmer refuted the temptation by stating that she was indeed willing to spend the rest of her life in a state of apophatic trust, walking by faith instead of sight, citing the story of Abraham’s call: “by *faith* he journeyed, not knowing whither he went.”⁶² Even after making this commitment, Palmer reports that the adversary taunted her, for no “manifestation,” emotional or otherwise, happened after she made the Altar Covenant. Palmer simply writes that she was “shut up to faith—*naked faith in a naked promise*.”⁶³

The Theological Impact of Apophatic Mysticism

Palmer’s apophatic mysticism was foundational to her self-understanding, her sense of call to ministry, the kinds of sacrifices she would be willing to make in order to answer that call, and, not least, the content of her theology. There are at least four ways in which apophatic mysticism helped to shape her theology. Each of these elements must be grasped in order to properly understand her sanctification theology, yet each of them

⁶⁰Palmer, “Refining Processes,” quoted and published in its original and unedited form for the first time in Oden, 322.

⁶¹Wheatley, 41.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., 42.

has been distorted by later interpreters of her teaching, particularly in the concepts of works righteousness and instantaneous, sinless perfection.

1. No Self-Energized Effort. First and foremost, Palmer experientially came to understand that sanctification cannot come about through good works, devotional exercises, emotional “enthusiasm” or any other self-energized effort. Like justification, sanctification is the gift of God, given by grace. Even the desire to become holy is a gift of grace, Palmer argued. In a letter of spiritual direction to a woman who guiltily confessed she did not desire holiness, Palmer counseled: “But you cannot work a willingness in yourself. It is only Christ that can work in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; but how can He do it until you yield yourself wholly up to him?”⁶⁴ The solution was for the woman to ask Christ to make her heart willing. By offering up herself as she was, including her unwilling heart, she could open herself to receive the transforming grace of Christ.

To another “worldling” Palmer offered comfort, saying there was no need to fear surrendering all to Jesus, since he would “bear her, cross and all, if she would only resolve in his strength to take it up.”⁶⁵ Works of righteousness are the after-effect of being surrendered to Christ, and can only take place because of grace resident within the soul of the believer.⁶⁶ Although holiness of lifestyle should be expected of those who have been sanctified, it is clearly an outcome and not the cause of sanctification.

Despite the clarity of these teachings in Palmer’s writings, some later interpreters who missed the apophatic element of Palmer’s thought have presented her in an entirely different light. For example Theodore Hovet proposes that Palmer’s altar theology is, in essence, a self-centered and self-motivated program for personal transformation:

Significantly, however, she saw the spiritual experience [of sanctification] as the result of the actions she herself had taken to overcome spiritual darkness rather than as a miraculous gift of a compassionate God. She was convinced that by ignoring the “opinions and experience of professors” in the church on the nature of spiritual rebirth and instead taking “the blessed word more closely to the companionship of [her] heart” she

⁶⁴*Full Salvation*, 51-52.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 52.

had discovered a “practical” way by which the individual “alone and unaided,” as one of her followers put it, could spiritually transform herself.⁶⁷

Hovet goes on to claim that Palmer’s altar phraseology was a “pragmatic modification” of the classical mystical way of purgation, and goes so far as to say that “the altar phraseology described a process of self-creation.” It is a self-creation, Hovet declares, that Palmer believes is done by human effort “without a baptism of the spirit.”⁶⁸ According to Hovet, then, Palmer teaches a works righteousness or behavior-oriented form of holiness that is generated not just within oneself but *by* oneself. One wonders how Hovet misses Palmer’s repeated and most basic assertion that “the altar sanctifies the gift” and “Christ is the altar.” While Hovet’s claim seems unlikely in light of Palmer’s own words, works righteousness came to be associated with Palmer in several Holiness denominations that were founded by Palmer’s disciples. Palmer’s experience of grace in the midst of apophatic surrender was lost in such interpretations.

2. Instantaneous and Process. The second influence of Palmer’s mystical experience is seen in her understanding of sanctification as both an instantaneous work—a promise to be believed—and a process to be lived. According to Palmer, there is no “fixity” to sanctification, and she seems ambiguous about a removal of the root of original sin, as currently taught by the Church of the Nazarene, the largest of the Holiness denominations that grew out of Palmer’s teaching.⁶⁹ Using the example of a child learning to read, Palmer explains that souls entering into the way of holiness are like children who have mastered the alphabet. It is true that they can “read,” but their ability to read and the depth with which they read will be a life-long process of growth, one which is never finished. In the

⁶⁷Theodore Hovet, “Phoebe Palmer’s ‘Altar Phraseology’ and the Spiritual Dimension of Woman’s Sphere,” *Journal of Religion* 63 (July 1983): 265. One wonders what Hovet does with Palmer’s repeated emphasis on the necessity of the “full baptism of the Holy Ghost,” which is sanctification. Palmer, *Promise of the Father* (Salem, OH: Schmull Publishers, n.d., originally published by Walter C. Palmer, 1859, 252, 257-258). Also see Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness*, 126-128, for a discussion of Palmer’s use of Pentecostal language to describe sanctification.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 268-269.

⁶⁹Harold E. Raser, “Church of the Nazarene”; M. D. Strege, “Sanctification,” in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, 274-75; 1045-46.

same way, sanctified believers are to continuously “go on to perfection” (or “completion”), never ceasing to grow more holy in this lifetime. It is possible for believers to choose to stop going on to holiness and to choose to abandon faith, for the capacity for sin ever remains in the believer in this lifetime.

If the possibility of sin could be removed at the moment of sanctification, there would be no need for concern about Satan, Palmer argues. Yet the Bible clearly teaches *saints* to be alert, mindful of Satan’s schemes: “How deceived is he who imagines that he has attained a higher state, where the life of nature is so extinct that Satan can find no ground to work upon—a state of boasted exemption from his attacks!”⁷⁰ Indeed, the idea of sinless perfection is one of the “refined mysticisms” Palmer attacks in the later thought of Thomas Upham.⁷¹

According to Palmer, no believer is ever beyond the pale of temptation. Temptation always taps into an inner weakness, requiring the believer to cast self upon God’s mercy at all times, both for discernment to recognize Satan’s wiles and for the strength to resist.⁷² The key to progressive growth in holiness is not a one-time experience of surrender. The key is a moment-by-moment placing of the self on the altar of Jesus, or in Brother Lawrence’s words, the practice of the presence of God:

It is only by an entire and continual reliance on Christ that a state of entire sanctification can be retained. The sacrifices under the old dispensation were sanctified by the altar upon which they were laid. Had the offerer resumed the sacrifice, to the degree he resumed it, to that degree it would have ceased to be sanctified; for it was the *altar* that sanctified the gift.⁷³

Although Palmer claimed to have walked continuously in the presence of God for more than eighteen years, thus remaining on the altar of Christ, she attributed each moment of her consecration to the sheer grace of God.⁷⁴

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 148-149.

⁷¹Darius Salter, “Mysticism in American Wesleyanism: Thomas Upham,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring, 1985): 102.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 152-155.

⁷³Excerpted in Oden, 200. Originally found in *Entire Devotion to God*, section XVI.

⁷⁴*Full Salvation*, 175.

3. The Empowerment of Heart Purity. The third major element of Palmer's sanctification theology that grew directly from her apophatic mysticism is her emphasis on heart-purity as empowerment for ministry. Reminiscent of Kierkegaard's phrase, "purity of heart is to will one thing," Palmer sees purity of heart as the one-ing of the believer's will with God's will, and she understands that God's will above all else is to reach lost souls.⁷⁵ The inevitable outcome of sanctification is the unleashing of the power of God in one's life to do the "impossible," particularly in the realm of fruitful ministry.⁷⁶

In her own life Palmer experienced the call to ministry and the power to answer that call as a result of her experience of mystical surrender. Though she could not know immediately just how much that call would require of her, from the beginning she had a sense that her experience of "resting in the Word of God" was preparing her to be a channel of God's redeeming love for thousands. Her evangelistic ministry was the direct outcome of her apophatic mysticism. "We know that Christ has purchased for us all the grace we need, but we do not properly appreciate the fact that our privileges are high responsibilities—solemn duties," writes Palmer concerning the graced experience of heart purity.⁷⁷ The experience of Spirit baptism is de-emphasized in terms of personal ecstasy, union and so on, so as to focus on the evangelistic fruit that will result, which is to make God known to thousands.

Thus, heart purity, with its apophatic purgation and subsequent unification of the believer's will with God's will, is neither a privatized spiritual experience nor is it concerned chiefly with acts of individual piety. Rather, heart purity is the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a gift of power given to the church so that God's will might be done, meaning that souls might be brought to Christ.

4. Difference Between Faith and Feeling. The fourth major influence of Palmer's apophatic mysticism on her theology is her emphasis on the difference between faith and feeling. "Remember," Palmer admonishes, "the just shall live by faith," not ecstasies. Holiness is the mark, that state of the soul in which all the powers of soul and body are

⁷⁵This is actually the title of one of Kierkegaard's books. Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, translated by Douglas V. Steere (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938).

⁷⁶Oden, 264; *Full Salvation*, 55.

⁷⁷*Full Salvation*, 75.

consciously given up to God.”⁷⁸ Faith is neither emotion nor asceticism. Rather, faith is “naked trust in the naked Word of God.” One act of faith “can raise the dead to life, and can do more for us than twenty years of groans and tears without it,”⁷⁹ writes a woman who knows first-hand what it means to experience both mystical ecstasy and the dark night of the soul. While emotions are not the definitive proof of having received sanctification, emotions are not to be despised. Palmer describes many personal experiences of passionate, enraptured worship and moments of kataphatic mystical union. But her focus is always on the God whose word is true, not on the emotions she feels.

Conclusion

What so many Wesleyan commentators have missed about Palmer’s altar theology is precisely this: her fundamental apophatic mysticism, arising from her own journey as a mystic. Rather than “distorting” John Wesley’s hallowed theology of sanctification, Palmer provided a much-needed corrective with her experience and articulation of a distinctly Wesleyan apophatic spirituality. Wesleyan theology is long overdue for a new reading of Palmer’s sanctification theology. The ramifications of the new reading are far-reaching both in the academy and the church. What, for example, could a new reading of her theology do to enliven the theory and practice of evangelism within the United Methodist Church?

Palmer should be reclaimed as a Wesleyan mystic whose contributions and spiritual stature are equal to any of the other great Christian mystics such as Catherine of Siena. Recognition of the fact that Palmer’s apophatic mysticism holds many parallels to that of some of the great Catholic saints and mystics can help to build bridges between Catholic and Wesleyan Christians, who in Palmer may discover a more common understanding of what it means to have life in the Spirit.

⁷⁸Oden, 197.

⁷⁹*Full Salvation*, 106.

WOMAN, THOU ART ALMOST LOOSED!

by

David R. Swartz

In this article I analyze the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church (MBC), a denomination that began involving women in ministry about three decades after 1853, the year the first woman was ordained in any church in the United States. MBC connections to the holiness movement were significant, and their common emphasis on experience and revivalism led to significant pastoral roles for women. The MBC “ordained” women, it appears, primarily on pragmatic grounds.

Setting the Scene

For many years, Mae Shupe was pastor of a Michigan congregation in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church—a circumstance that now seems anomalous as historians look back at a theologically conservative church heavily influenced by and positioned within North American Protestant fundamentalism. In 1933 she penned a striking challenge to evangelical patriarchy:

It really is only a square deal, is it not, that a woman who can do just as good work as a man, and they can, should have the same rights and privileges. And the right to be ordained belongs to the woman who has earned it by meeting the requirements in the way of study and service. . . . The church needs women’s ministry. It needs real women, strong intelligent women, consecrated women, who are willing to use their every talent and attainment to the glory of God.¹

¹Mae Shupe, unpublished paper (1933), Missionary Church Archives.

But there was a catch clearly evident in Shupe's strong statement. Neither Shupe, who preferred to be called Reverend Mae, nor any of the other 500 women ministers who served from 1883 to the mid-1960s, was ordained in the same sense as men were. She was first licensed, then "approved" or "dedicated" as a "ministering sister" in a separate two-step process parallel to male licensure and ordination. Shupe was not permitted to officiate at weddings or work long-term as senior pastor of her church. Public ministry—even spiritual leadership—did not mean full equality. Still, Shupe and the other women leaders in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church enjoyed significantly more ministry latitude than most women in evangelical churches.

Not being ordained in the same way as men did not keep MBC women from engaging in an expansive range of church responsibilities. They wrote testimonies and articles in their denominational paper, organized and preached at camp meetings, founded churches in inner cities, taught as faculty members in denominational colleges, served as senior pastors, and baptized new believers. In the year 1901 alone, a mission in Owen Sound, Ontario, led by women, recorded 280 meetings, 774 visits to saloons, 57 cottage prayer meetings, seventeen children's meetings, and eleven open-air meetings.² Their feats were chronicled prominently in the *Gospel Banner*, the publication of the MBC, usually through bi-monthly mission updates and occasionally in multi-page spreads with photographs and accompanying stories. One of every eight churches in the MBC denomination was founded by a woman preacher.³

Most traditional Mennonites in the late 1800s banned women from speaking during a church service and enforced segregated seating during church services. Men and women in many Mennonite congregations ritually entered and exited the church building through separate doors. Teaching, preaching, and testifying were out of bounds to women. In fact, many Mennonite leaders opposed the innovation of Sunday school partly because women were sometimes allowed to teach. Female leadership was limited to organizing women's sewing circles to support mission work.⁴

²Eileen Lageer, *Merging Streams* (Elkhart, Ind.: Bethel Publishing, 1979), 75.

³Everek Richard Storms, *History of the United Missionary Church* (Elkhart, Ind.: Bethel Publishing, 1958), 251.

⁴Theron Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988), 227, 300.

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church was founded in 1883 by the merging of the Swankites and the Evangelical United Mennonites, both of which had roots in Mennonite patriarchy and neither of which included women in public ministry. But that quickly changed. The number of licensed women ministers in the MBC was five by 1890, nineteen by 1895, 94 by 1900, and 220 by 1910.⁵ For a denomination with only 37 churches in 1883 and 133 in 1908 and a church membership of 2,076 in 1883 and 6,351 in 1908, the number of women in public ministry was remarkable.⁶

The statistics on licensed women in the MBC by the advent of the twentieth century point, then, to a tremendous departure during the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s from the denomination's Mennonite roots. This raises the question of how early leaders of the MBC acquired their progressive views. Given the denomination's Mennonite patriarchal heritage, how did the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church (a predecessor to what is today the Missionary Church) so quickly and almost completely embrace female participation and leadership in its ecclesiology? I suggest that the answer to this question begins to form when three aspects of MBC ecclesiastical life are considered: The MBC included women in ministry so early in its history and with such ease because of: (1) the denomination's strong affinity with holiness groups (despite not joining them); (2) the denomination's sympathy with nineteenth-century societal reform efforts; and (3) the ability of the denominational leadership to compromise between two competing inclinations among its constituents.

Studies of Women in Evangelicalism

Studies of women in American religious life, particularly within evangelicalism, have proliferated in recent years. What scholars have uncovered has surprised many who view contemporary evangelicalism as uniformly hostile to women in church leadership. Catherine Brekus reinserted into religious history the stories of more than one hundred female preachers from 1740-1845 forgotten by modern-day historians.⁷ Janette Hassey uncovered thousands of female preachers in revivalist, proto-fun-

⁵Jason C. Garnaat, "In Memory of Her," *Reflections* (Missionary Church Historical Society, Fall 1995).

⁶Storms, *History of the United Missionary Church*, 63.

⁷Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

damentalist circles—some even at Moody Bible Institute—in the nineteenth century.⁸ Nancy Hardesty argued that the nineteenth-century American woman's rights movement had its roots in evangelical revivalism. Donald Dayton noted the existence of an "evangelical social gospel" in the nineteenth century among holiness groups. Charles Finney stressed an egalitarianism in Wesleyan and holiness circles that led to abolitionism and an evangelical feminism.⁹ And Margaret Bendroth traced the decline of women in public ministry in fundamentalism far into the twentieth century—a decline that assumes women had a role in the first place. Even this increasing hostility was tempered by the fundamentalism's dependence on women to bolster institutional growth.¹⁰

Although each scholar notes that the ministry of women rarely entailed the benefit of ordination, none offers a comprehensive theory about why certain denominations encouraged women to preach and pastor. Max Weber, in his 1933 theory of women in non-privileged classes, spoke to the issue of denominational differences regarding women in leadership. He proposed that "the religion of the disprivileged classes . . . is characterized by a tendency to allot equality to women."¹¹ However provocative, the theory is broad and undeveloped.

Robert Anderson's *Vision of the Disinherited* develops the idea of social position and its effect on faith experience more fully than Weber, though Anderson ignores any links between social position and the inclusion of women in public church ministry. He does point out that pentecostals "placed a higher premium upon ecstasy, and thereby directed less of their energies into the development of those characteristics more useful for rising into the middle class."¹² Anderson further distinguishes between holiness (to which MBC had significant ties) and pentecostal social aspirations and religious ecstasy. The split between the two movements was occasioned by holiness efforts to limit religious ecstasy and pentecostal

⁸Janette Hassey, *No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Ministry around the Turn of the Century* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1986).

⁹Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

¹⁰Margaret Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹¹Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 104.

¹²Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 152.

instincts to embrace it. This divide generally permitted holiness advocates to aspire toward a middle-class social position. For pentecostals religious ecstasy became “a surrogate for success in the social struggle.”¹³ If, in fact, pentecostals were more socially disprivileged than those in the holiness movement, we might expect, in light of Weber’s thesis, a greater degree of female ministry from pentecostals than holiness-affiliated groups like MBC.

Emphasis on emotion-driven spiritual experience and revival led to greater participation by women. Melvin Dieter sees this phenomenon as prevailing in the nineteenth-century holiness movement. He writes, “It was the theology of the movement and the essential nature of the place of public testimony in the holiness experience which gave many an otherwise timid woman the authority and the power to speak out ‘as the Holy Spirit led her.’”¹⁴ For Dieter, the particular theological and ecclesiastical leanings of the holiness movement directly led to female preaching (though not full equality).

Grant Wacker brings a broader paradigm to his understanding of the role of women in the ecclesiastical life of faith communities. In *Heaven Below*, his survey of early pentecostalism in America, Wacker aligns the pentecostal impulse to return to original things, to be guided purely by the Holy Spirit with a pragmatic drive to do what works, to “work within the social and cultural expectations of the age.”¹⁵ The competing impulses of this primitivist-pragmatist construction, claims Wacker, are simultaneously contradictory and powerfully effective in building a dynamic religious community and in releasing women to preach the gospel.

Margaret Bendroth observes a similar pragmatist bent in early fundamentalism, much like Wacker sees in early pentecostalism. The democratizing winds of revivalism blew strongly through early fundamentalism as evangelists used pragmatic methods instead of relying on traditional customs to save souls. She writes, “In the heat of revival fervor, nineteenth-century evangelists cared little for social conventions or ecclesiastical rules against women preachers: all stood equal at the foot of the

¹³Anderson, *Vision*, 152.

¹⁴Melvin Easterday Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980), 42.

¹⁵Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 12-13.

Cross.”¹⁶ The willingness to do what worked (and their observation that women running church services and saving souls did work), led holiness, proto-fundamentalist groups (with which the MBC had connections) to, at the very least, grudgingly accept women as preachers.

Mark Chaves attempts a more specialized sociological study of women within American Christian churches. He charts formal denominational policy regarding women’s ordination, incisively pointing out that the nineteenth-century women’s movement and interdenominational networks drove groups toward the ordination of women. Specifically, “the more a denomination was connected to denominations that already ordained women, the higher the probability that it would begin to ordain women itself in a given year.” Chaves cites internal pressures such as the centralization of authority and the presence or absence of an autonomous women’s mission society that lead to inclusion or exclusion of women in leadership.¹⁷

Chaves fails, however, to consider those denominations that did not adopt a pro-female ordination policy. The MBC, for instance, never “ordained” long-time pastor Mae Shupe. The denomination recognized their women preachers in a “separate, but nearly equal” policy, allowing them expansive but slightly limited public roles. That hardly matters given the phenomenon Chaves calls “loose coupling,” the idea that rules about ordination do not reflect or shape the practice of women in ministry and leadership as much as we might expect. Still, Chaves’ identification of certain external and internal pressures are at times germane to denominations—especially those in the late nineteenth century like the MBC that involve women in roles of spiritual leadership. The case of the MBC additionally suggests that, by ignoring denominations which used female preachers but did not ordain them at all or in the same way as men, perhaps Chaves leaves out an important part of the story. The numbers of female ministers performing authentic pastoral tasks in the MBC and other non-ordaining holiness groups dwarf the numbers of women granted full equality by denominations.

Holiness Ties of the MBC

The initial wave of women ministers in the MBC clearly resembles the revivalist sensibilities of the holiness movement. First, the social and

¹⁶Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*, 14.

¹⁷Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 61, 140.

theological nature of holiness groups and MBC contributed toward an anti-traditionalism that worked to encourage female participation. Second, the revivalist-influenced emphasis on experience—in the form of free-flowing, emotional camp meetings—lent itself to the rise of women in the MBC. A third MBC resemblance to holiness orientation was the adoption of a theology of perfection. Finally, the pro-woman rationale of the founding leaders and the women ministers themselves mirror the staunch biblicism of Methodism, a denomination heavily influenced by holiness ideals. Specifically, arguments grounded in biblicism from Methodists were echoed (and often literally copied from publications like *Guide to Holiness*) by MBC advocates. I will explore briefly four of these holiness ideals.

1. Protest Against Traditionalism. Melvin Dieter suggests that the anti-traditional nature of the holiness movement made possible the rise of female participation in leadership. Specifically, holiness groups—and other emerging traditions like the Quakers, Unitarians, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and Christian Scientists—were in protest against the hierarchies of the traditional church.¹⁸ R. V. Pierard notes that an increasing number of holiness evangelists preaching John Wesley's teaching of entire sanctification and Christian perfection circulated throughout the United States in the mid-1800s. These evangelists were not commissioned by their denominations (usually Methodist), yet launched camp meetings, independent presses, and nondenominational associations.¹⁹ The upstart nature of the nascent American holiness movement encouraged the development of practices contrary to their ecclesiastical roots. One of these innovative practices was the participation of women in religious leadership.

The MBC emerged out of a hierarchical tradition staunchly opposed to women in leadership. The story of Mennonite women through the turn of the century is one of maintaining traditional roles. In keeping with the gender sensibilities of broader American society, women were relegated to the home, where they cooked food, laundered clothes, bore and nurtured children, and created a comfortable abode for her husband and chil-

¹⁸Melvin Easterday Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980), 44. Dieter discusses wings of Methodism that challenged the opposition to women leadership.

¹⁹Donald W. Dayton, *The American Holiness Movement* (Wilmore, Kentucky: B. L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1971).

dren. They rarely worked outside their own homes, except perhaps to help another woman in a different home or to help her husband with field work. Women seldom, if ever, represented their families in business affairs. As Sharon Klingelsmith aptly puts it, "Mennonites have been a quiet people and the women among them have been an even quieter group."²⁰ This quietness was grounded in keeping men and women in separate spheres: women in the home and men outside it. This is not to say that women had no influence; it was simply channeled through their husbands and children by way of the home.

In the religious sphere, women were similarly quiet. Through the late 1800s, women and men sat apart in church to keep from being distracted by—and from distracting—the other sex. Women rarely, if ever, spoke during a church meeting. When they did speak, it was only to teach other women or young children during the Sunday schools that were flourishing by the 1890s.²¹ Interestingly, church authorities were more relaxed about the print media. But even there men predominated. John F. Funk, a Moody associate who began a new Mennonite church journal called *Herald of Truth* in 1864, published five articles by women in that first year. Those articles comprised 1% of the paper's volume. That modest figure rose to 3.8% by 1884 and to 11.6% by 1904.²² Rarely, however, did women write editorials, conference reports, or articles of theological import.²³

Mennonites based their subordination of women on certain passages in scripture. They took literally Paul's injunctions in 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. As Jim Juhnke asserts, "Mennonites read male priority in the Old Testament story of creation and in New Testament injunctions for women to be subordinate and silent in the church."²⁴ Based on theological assumptions, restriction of women in the ecclesiastical workings of Mennonite churches and conferences was nearly complete.

²⁰Sharon Klingelsmith, "Women in the Mennonite Church, 1900-1930," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 54 (July 1980), 163.

²¹*Ibid.*, 164.

²²These figures do not reflect anonymous articles and obituaries possibly written by women.

²³Theron Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1988), 311.

²⁴James C. Juhnke, "The Role of Women in the Mennonite Transition from Traditionalism to Denominationalism," *Mennonite Life* 41 (September 1986), 17.

Certain pressures, however, threatened male hegemony in the mid-1800s. The Great Awakenings of the nineteenth century featured a handful of elements hostile to the Mennonite ethos of formalism. Specifically, holiness and revivalism, with their accompanying chaotic tendencies, worried Mennonite leaders. Many younger Mennonites were attracted by revivalists outside their ranks who preached a more vibrant, missions-oriented spirituality.

Beulah Stauffer Hostetler notes that “many of the young people, normally not baptized until in their twenties, were attending revival meetings held by other denominations and subsequently joining those churches.”²⁵ In Upper Milford, Pennsylvania, William Gehman in 1853 began holding prayer meetings in which a new spiritual awakening was nurtured by Sunday afternoon and evening services of prayer and “religious exercises.”²⁶ These exercises were characterized by Methodist-style conversions, protracted meetings, and the mourner’s bench. Such innovations were allowed at the Mennonite congregation in Upper Milford, but only after resistance. Gehman and his followers at Upper Milford formed the Evangelical Mennonites in 1853, merged with a group called the United Mennonites in 1879, and finally merged with the “Swankites” to form the MBC in 1883.

Mennonite communities in Ontario and Indiana experienced similar insurgencies as Methodists and revivalists spread in geography and influence. Usually, encounters between Mennonites and revivalists occurred by way of regional and national holiness associations, Free Methodists, United Brethren, and other evangelical groups.²⁷ One such group was the Evangelical Association, the German counterpart to the Methodist movement, which held meetings in far-flung places such as Ontario and Indiana.²⁸ This denomination aggressively proselytized Mennonites, whom they considered lacking in spiritual depth. Evangelical Association leaders noted that Mennonites “endeavored to lead a quiet, virtuous, peace-

²⁵Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, *A Community Paradigm: American Mennonites and Protestant Movements* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1987), 167.

²⁶Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, *Open Doors: The History of the General Conference Mennonite Church* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1975), 34.

²⁷Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974), 60.

²⁸William Ward Dean, “John F. Funk and the Mennonite Awakening,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa (June, 1965): 260.

able life. But, as regards the spiritual life that comes from God, the new birth and the renewal of heart by the Holy Ghost, they were generally ignorant . . . dead and cold.”²⁹ In 1869 the Evangelical Association converted over Solomon Eby of Berlin, Ontario, who soon began holding protracted meetings himself.³⁰ Eby was excommunicated from the Mennonite church several years later for his revivalist views and practices.

The most dramatic transformation—and the one with the most staying power—occurred near Elkhart, Indiana. The crisis was precipitated when Daniel Brenneman and John Krupp visited Solomon Eby’s revival in Ontario. When they returned to Indiana, Krupp immediately began holding meetings near Elkhart in which women testified. More cautious than Krupp, Brenneman made a second trip to Canada to investigate. Upon his return, he discovered that Krupp had been excommunicated because “he favored protracted meetings and even allowed women to testify.”³¹ Instead of shunning Krupp, Brenneman decided to work with him.

For Brenneman, things boiled over when John F. Funk, a co-laborer with Brenneman in innovative evangelism and perhaps the strongest Mennonite leader in the region, visited one of the Krupp-Brenneman revival meetings. The emotionalism and techniques employed were too much even for the otherwise-progressive Funk. He described the meeting in his diary on March 15, 1874: “The meetings held were such prayer meetings in which much ado was made, loud crying and weeping—howling that could be heard a long distance—half a mile. Sitting or lying on the floor and making a great confusion. S. Sherk said, there comes the Lord! Catch Him quick—folly, when the Lord comes he will come in judgment.”³² Funk’s primary concerns upon observing this meeting were its potential for impure theology and for disunity in the denomination.³³

The revival meetings continued, and Funk began to preach against them in church services. During one of the meetings, called to resolve the conflict between Brenneman and the majority of the preachers, Brenneman was seen to be “weeping bitter tears,” defending his revivalist tech-

²⁹R. Yeakel, *History of the Evangelical Association* (Cleveland, Ohio: Mat-till & Lamb, 1902), 409.

³⁰C. Henry Smith, *Mennonites of America* (Goshen, Ind.: published by the author, 1909), 312.

³¹Storms, *History of the United Missionary Church*, 43.

³²Diary, March 15, 1874. Quoted in Dean, “John F. Funk,” 259.

³³Dean, “John F. Funk,” 257.

niques as “Funk with both hands in his pockets paced the floor, and with all the language at his command, gave reasons for deferring progressive methods.”³⁴ Brenneman, who fainted when he heard the news, was officially expelled from the Mennonite Church at the Indiana District Conference on April 25, 1874.³⁵ Among the reasons given by the ministers was the following: “He began to teach and practice customs which we hold unscriptural (I Timothy 2:11,12; I Corinthians 14:34-35) and which never have been sanction [sic] by the church.” Thus, the innovation of women visibly participating in the religious life of the church helped launch MBC and a generation of “ministering sisters.”

Brenneman declined to join the groups—the Methodistic Evangelical Association or the Free Methodists—that had influenced his revival because they allowed warfare, baptized infants, and didn’t practice foot-washing.³⁶ Instead, Brenneman allied with like-minded disenfranchised Mennonites to form their own association that combined Mennonite and Methodist teachings.³⁷ The new group was formed in 1883 and was comprised of preachers primarily from the East. These preachers held various affiliations, including River Brethren in Christ of Ohio (“Swankites”), Evangelical Mennonites from Pennsylvania, United Mennonites (New Mennonites from Ontario and Reformed Mennonites from Ontario and Indiana), and Evangelical United Mennonites (formed from Evangelical Mennonites and United Mennonites).

Each in protest against the formalism and hierarchies of the Mennonite Church, these several groups formed a new denomination, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. The influence of holiness groups had made them impatient to begin four-part singing, camp meetings, Sunday School classes, and services spoken in English. The traditionally limited role of women in leadership was one, a relatively minor point of impatience.

³⁴Timothy Brenneman, “Reminiscences of John F. Funk,” *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Historical Committee of Mennonite General Conference), IX (July 1948), 2.

³⁵Tom Price, “Schism! Sunday School Divided First Mennonite Church,” *Elkhart Truth*, June 3, 1995, B4.

³⁶Schlabach, *Nation*, 114.

³⁷One of the other Mennonite groups, the United Mennonite Church, nearly joined the Northern Indiana Eldership of the Church of God, a holiness association, but never consummated the merger despite having agreed upon all the necessary resolutions.

Still, that the MBC began out of conflict with a traditional mother church made it easier to incorporate the innovation of female leaders into their ecclesiology.

2. Emphasis on Experience. One of the distinct points of conflict with the Mennonite Church for founding MBC leaders was the nature of religious expression. The free-flowing, emotional character of MBC worship, with its emphasis on experience, stood in stark contrast to the formalism of Mennonites, who took pride in their long, austere services. This new way to express faith came from holiness and Methodist influences and advanced an ethos in which women could participate publicly in the life of the church.

Contact in the late 1860s and 1870s with regional holiness associations in Pennsylvania, Ontario, and Indiana launched the new denomination and initiated the emphasis on experiential spirituality.³⁸ The MBC quickly learned the language and practices of its tutor. Preachers and writers invoked the Holy Spirit more frequently than before, warning believers not to suppress its influence. B. Bowman wrote in the *Gospel Banner*, “If, however, the Spirit comes as a rushing mighty wind and any are swept away, and act like drunken men, as they will likely do, be submissive, don’t try to rule out the Holy Ghost as many do.”³⁹ Actions that might accompany the indwelling of the Spirit, Bowman suggested, included running, shouting, laughing, screaming, jumping, and the loss of strength. The *Gospel Banner* was full of testimonies of the Holy Spirit. One woman wrote, “The power of the Lord came upon me, I fell over, was powerless, they said, for an hour, and glory be to God, when I recovered the burden was gone.”⁴⁰ Such words and actions, commonplace in the revivals and camp meetings of the nineteenth century, place the MBC squarely in the spirit of the American Great Awakenings.

The MBC adopted camp meetings as a critical component of its ecclesiology almost immediately upon its founding, calling protracted meetings “an especially beneficial means to bring sinners to repentance and conversion,” denominational leaders quickly added camp meetings to their agenda. The first camp meeting, at Fetter’s Grove in Elkhart County

³⁸In *Perfectionist Persuasion*, Charles Jones also cites influence from Free Methodists, United Brethren, and Evangelicals in the northern Midwest (60).

³⁹B. Bowman, *Gospel Banner* (January 1879), 3.

⁴⁰Esther Sherk, “Testimony,” *Gospel Banner* (May 1879), 5.

in 1880, had all the markings of authentic tent revivalism: nineteen tents in a grove of maple trees, hundreds of rows of rough plank seats, oat and wheat straw for the “sawdust trail,” and a mourner’s bench.⁴¹ The first of many camp meetings to be held at Fetter’s Grove drew more than 3,000 people for ten days. Observers called the meetings “usually intense and emotional.”⁴²

Amid the din of physical worship in such an unorthodox setting, women found less opposition to public expression. Just as women began to speak and even preach in holiness revivals, women also began to participate in the emerging MBC denomination. After all, it was a short step from a shriek to a coherent utterance, particularly when a woman could hold the Spirit responsible for her behavior. So women in the MBC began to publicly speak and teach almost immediately. Like holiness women before them, they maintained that the Spirit mandated their speech: “Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?”⁴³

Reliance upon the Spirit in structuring behavior in church soon made its impact on the selection of ministers. In 1875 one of the denominations that later fed into the MBC made a change in how ministers were chosen. If a brother “believed himself to have been called of God to the ministry,” he was to make that call known, and the church would then approve that call.⁴⁴ This was a striking difference from their Mennonite heritage in which a man would wait to verbalize a call until he had been chosen and elected by the church, often by way of the lot. Each individual in a Mennonite congregation nominated candidates. The top vote-getters then pulled songbooks from a table during a church service. The candidate who found a slip of paper with a verse in it (“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”) became a minister.⁴⁵ Through both methods the Spirit was allowed to operate, but the MBC placed more emphasis on the experience and call of the individual. So, while the 1875 resolution made no provision for the selection of women, it was a critical step toward that possibility.

⁴¹Lageer, *Merging Streams*, 66.

⁴²*100 Years of Spiritual Growth* (Elkhart, IN: Bethel Publishing, 1980), 5.

⁴³Elizabeth Risdon, “Letter,” *Gospel Banner* 4 (April 15, 1881), 62.

⁴⁴Jasper Abraham Huffman, *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church* (New Carlisle, Ohio: Bethel Publishing Co., 1920), 163.

⁴⁵Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War*, 63.

From the start of the MBC movement, women were encouraged to actively verbalize and demonstrate faith. But it took a nearly a decade from the time most of the founding members of the MBC were excommunicated from the Mennonite body until women were able to formalize their new freedom through licensure. In 1883 young Janet Douglas became the first woman preacher in the new denomination. Just two years after being converted, Douglas heard a call from God to preach. Initially, she resisted. But soon she rented a small hall in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and preached to contacts she made by visiting homes in surrounding neighborhoods with holiness evangelist S. B. Shaw. A history of the United Missionary Church written nearly a century later described her nascent ministry: "Miss Douglas scarcely knew how to preach, her services consisting mainly of testimonies, followed by a ten- or twelve-minute sermon. God blessed the meetings, however, and more than one hundred professed to be converted. . . ."46

Denominational leaders encouraged her first wobbly steps both ecclesiastically and theologically. The April 1, 1884, issue of the *Gospel Banner* describes her licensure by the Indiana-Ohio-Michigan Conference of the MBC:

Janet Douglas, of Kent County, Michigan, having received a permit from the quarterly conference of that place to labor as an evangelist, has, during her several months' labors, been the means of leading seventy souls to Christ. Hence, upon the evidence of her good moral character and devotions to the cause of Christ, and of her efficiency as a co-worker in the vineyard of the Lord, is recognized by the conference as an evangelist.⁴⁷

The following year the Indiana District of the MBC named Douglas a "mission worker," sent her to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and approved a resolution that "women have a right to go forth and labor in the vineyard of the Lord. . . ."48

Douglas' disclosure of her call and her subsequent foray into public religious service launched a rapid increase of women preachers. By the end of 1885, the number of women preachers had grown to three, possibly four, within the conferences of the MBC. One of them was Mary Ann

⁴⁶Everek R. Storms, *History of the United Missionary Church*, 251.

⁴⁷*Gospel Banner* 7 (April 1, 1884), 52.

⁴⁸Eileen Lageer, *Merging Streams*, 76.

Hallman from Ontario, where Solomon Eby was continuing his revival ministry. She felt a conviction to preach so deeply that she was compelled “to go or to lose her soul.” The daughter of members of the Old Mennonite Church from which Eby had been expelled, Hallman risked parental wrath if she acted upon her call. Her parents were “bitterly opposed to women preaching, and, although pious people, looked upon the conduct of their daughter as a disgrace.”⁴⁹ They threatened to toss her out of their home if she continued.

This opposition to Hallman and the ministry of women in general was replicated throughout areas where the early MBC church ministered. But the growing importance of subjective experience mediated by the Spirit gave many women the courage to act upon their calls. A culture of women testifying in public, coupled with the transition in how ministers were selected, worked powerfully in leading women to more significant spiritual leadership.

3. Theology of Perfection. The holiness emphasis on perfection and entire sanctification added theological grounds to the ecclesiastical support lent to MBC women. John Wesley introduced into the American context the idea that a believer can arrive at a state of perfect love and obedience to God. Distinct from and experienced after justification—or “getting saved”—the arrival at a state of perfection was variously called entire sanctification or the “second blessing.” Historian Donald Dayton argues that the theological particularity of perfectionism is critically important, that it “is the clue that unlocks many mysteries of this period” in regard to women in ministry in the 1800s.⁵⁰

Previously ignored by Mennonites, perfectionist theology was quickly assumed by MBC as conveyed to them by the Methodist evangelist Phoebe Palmer and from the writings of other holiness advocates like George D. Watson and John S. Inskip.⁵¹ Even in its earliest constitutions, the MBC emphasized this “instantaneous act of God” that “excludes depravity and all unrighteousness from the heart.”⁵² They used the theological basis of this doctrine to defend a prominent role for women.

⁴⁹Huffman, *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*, 151.

⁵⁰Dayton, *Holiness Tracts*, vii.

⁵¹Huffman, *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*, 163.

⁵²*Constitution of General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren of Christ Church* (1885), 21.

Specifically, advocates of perfectionism heralded the newness and transforming power of the Spirit to form a new “dispensation” in individuals and societies. Jesus’ coming and the establishment of the New Testament church, perfectionists asserted, ushered in an era that hearkened back to Eden. In addition to the possibility of persons reaching sinless perfection like Adam and Eve before the Fall, the new dispensation also meant that new and better societies could be formed. Perfectionists taught that Jesus trumped the old, imperfect covenant of Hebrew scripture (and even the Jewish-inspired Paul). Thus, institutions like slavery and male dominance were open to severe critique. Perfectionists distinguished between the way things were as opposed to the way they ought to be. Even though slavery might have been employed in the Old Testament, Jesus mandated a new way of structuring society. Dayton writes that, for advocates of perfectionism, the subordination of women “was merely descriptive of the sinful state in which we find ourselves and without any normative value.”⁵³

That contemporary culture (and biblical culture) subordinated women did not make subordination—or even restrictions of female public leadership—a right doctrine, holiness thinkers held. In fact, they believed, women should be released and commanded to pursue active public service to God, though many disapproved of full equality with men. Palmer argued that everyone was charged to preach the gospel of Christ. The same Spirit which commanded every man, woman, and child in New Testament times was still available in this continuing dispensation.⁵⁴ It was not a long step from this assertion to Palmer’s striking conclusion: “O, the endless weight of responsibility with which the church is pressing herself earthward through the depressing influences of this error! How can she rise while the gifts of three-fourths of her membership are sepulchred in her midst?”⁵⁵

This logic was familiar to the MBC; they had been using reasoning similar to perfectionism to defend their nonresistant stance. A new dispensation, distinct from the bloody Old Testament and ushered in by the first coming of Jesus, brought peace and an end to the violence of the old dispensation. Not surprisingly, the MBC saw the same phenomenon at work

⁵³Dayton, *Holiness Tracts*, viii.

⁵⁴Lucille Sider Dayton and Donald W. Dayton, “‘Your Daughters Shall Prophesy’: Feminism in the Holiness Movement,” *Modern American Protestantism and its World: Women and Women’s Issues* (New York: K. G. Saur, 1993), 241.

⁵⁵Phoebe Palmer, *The Promise of the Father* (1859), 347.

in regard to the subordination of women. In an 1881 *Gospel Banner* article, Elizabeth Risdon wrote:

Thanks be to God for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who maketh all equal in Him, whether high or low, rich or poor. We find that in heathen countries woman is no better, yea, even treated with greater contempt than a gally [sic] slave, and nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ entering into these benighted homes can restore her to be, indeed, a true helpmeet for man, his equal, as God designed her to be in the beginning. The curse of bondage is removed and she is free.⁵⁶

An article in the *Gospel Banner* four years later similarly read, “But when the fullness of the time came, and God sent forth his Son to be born of a woman, as well as under the law, then was woman herself emancipated, and restored to her paradisaical equality with man.”⁵⁷

To be sure, not all MBC leaders and members viewed women as under “the curse of bondage” like Palmer and Risdon did. Some MBC constituents opposed female leadership enough that compromise was needed in the denomination. But the holiness-inspired perfectionism of many MBC leaders led them to understand the coming of Jesus as releasing women for extensive service as the Church moved toward a final consummation with God. For many, the possibility of perfection in a new dispensation demanded that all believers preach the gospel.

4. A Staunch Biblicism. Not just protest against traditionalism, the ecstasy of experience, and a theology of perfection shaped the MBC’s ecclesiology. The MBC was also a denomination of the Book. Appeal to scripture was not new for advocates of women preachers. Catherine Brekus shows that eighteenth-century women preachers defended their work, not on the basis of natural right, but on biblical grounds.⁵⁸ Nancy Hardesty succinctly writes that holiness groups “monitored their experience by Scripture and Scripture by their experience.”⁵⁹ The MBC also

⁵⁶Elizabeth Risdon, “Letter,” *Gospel Banner* 4 (April 15, 1881), 62.

⁵⁷G. D. Boardman, “Woman’s Place in the Early Church,” *Gospel Banner* 8 (September 15, 1885), 12. Reprinted from the *Sunday School Times*.

⁵⁸Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 6-7.

⁵⁹Nancy Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 54.

inherited this strong loyalty to Scripture from the holiness tradition, which many used to defend vigorously the practice of women preaching. Nearly a dozen lengthy articles in the 1880s and 1890s appeared in the *Gospel Banner* defending the right and necessity of women in public ministry. Each one used Scripture extensively, keeping the MBC in the holiness mainstream of women pushing for female participation. Like their holiness brethren, MBC leaders primarily used Scripture to justify the new radical idea of bringing women out of the pews onto the platform.

Not all women struggling to rise out of subordination in this era used the Bible in orthodox ways. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, led a committee that published the two-volume *Woman's Bible*, a rewritten and essentially heretical commentary of the Bible. The anti-clerical work dismissed the entire second chapter of Genesis, viewing the creation of Eve out of Adam's rib as a "petty surgical operation."⁶⁰ This radical departure from orthodox interpretation of Scripture received only a small audience in evangelical circles, yet it contained elements similar to the hermeneutic maneuverings of evangelicals interested in rescuing the role of women.

Phoebe Palmer, for example, exhibited an orthodox biblio-centricity while avoiding what she saw as an overly wooden interpretation of Scripture. In her oft-quoted treatise defending women's ministry, she wrote that Protestants do not believe that Jesus literally meant "This is my body broken for you." Why then, she asked, do Protestants literally read Paul's admonition for women to keep silent? She maintained that both transubstantiation and silent women were "relics of Popery."⁶¹ A commonsense, sometimes non-literal reading of Scripture with a heart attuned to Holy Spirit-guided experience was to Palmer—and other evangelical proponents of women preaching like Luther Lee, B. T. Roberts, Catherine Booth, and Fannie McDowell Hunter—the best way to understand the role of women in the church.

The MBC likewise capitalized on non-literal, thematic approaches to Scripture. John Krupp, one of the founding ministers, emphasized instances in the Old and New Testaments of women prophesying and "laboring" (to use MBC nomenclature) for women ministry. Even more passionate were MBC's refutations of Paul, particularly his writing in 1 Corinthians to "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is

⁶⁰Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 37-38.

⁶¹Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness*, 57.

not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also says the law.”⁶² Krupp and others typically advanced the argument that Paul was addressing only disorderly conduct by women. To be consistent, advocates of female silence in church must also practice the holy kiss, an activity that MBC members apparently were not practicing.⁶³ In a talk given before the Pennsylvania conference of the MBC in 1894, C. H. Brunner said, “He [Paul] has in view not those under the influence and command of the Holy Ghost, but the disobedient and disorderly, pronouncing shame upon them for causing confusion. . . .”⁶⁴ In short, Krupp, Brunner, and others argued that these biblical passages were to be taken literally by the Corinthians, but were non-binding for today’s believers. Combining the authority of the Spirit and the denial of Paul’s command as a trans-dispensational rule, MBC leaders insisted that Pauline mandates to women be understood in the context of broader biblical themes and contemporary experience.

The embrace of perfection, an experience-oriented faith, and staunch Biblicism, as well as a rejection of traditionalism within the MBC, were all rooted in holiness influence. Each worked powerfully to encourage MBC women to assume public roles of ministry. The MBC-holiness exchange also demonstrates something about the nature of the holiness movement—that it was pervasive and far-reaching, even on ghettoed groups like discontented Mennonites.⁶⁵

Sympathy With Reform

A force less influential than holiness but still significant also drove the MBC toward advocacy of a greater participation of women in church

⁶²John Krupp, “Women Speaking in Church,” *Gospel Banner* 1 (October 1878), 5.

⁶³“The Devil goes to Prayer-Meeting,” *Gospel Banner* 18 (March 26, 1895), 205.

⁶⁴C. H. Brunner, “What was the Sisters’ Work in the Apostolic Church?” *Gospel Banner* 17 (February 27, 1894), 14.

⁶⁵ The key role of holiness influence in elevating MBC women in ministry is also clear, particularly when MBC is compared to the Missionary Church Association, a group that in 1969 merged with MBC (though by 1969 MBC was known as the United Mennonites). MCA was influenced more by A. B. Simpson’s Keswick-holiness teaching of the four-fold gospel and the “deeper life,” which limited Wesleyan perfectionism. Identification with Keswick, instead of Wesleyan holiness, might explain why far fewer women ministers were licensed in the MCA than MBC, though Simpson himself was in favor of women in ministry. Another reason why the MCA licensed fewer women is because of the MCA’s Amish roots.

leadership. This was not primarily a scriptural-based appeal. Rather, it was sympathy with the feminist reform efforts of women like Frances Willard and Catherine Booth, and it showed itself in equal-rights language promulgated in the *Gospel Banner*. Once holiness had broken new ground for women, this new rhetoric helped push even more of them into active ministry in reform, evangelism, and pastoral roles.

Through the 1890s the *Gospel Banner* devoted an entire page each issue to reform concerns. Topics ranged from advocacy of temperance to anti-smoking and labor reform. The articles often cited reform-oriented journals, and editors frequently reprinted selections from papers such as *Christian Cynosure*, *British Workman*, and the *National Temperance Society*. Women held an integral position in these reform initiatives, often writing articles or responding to articles in subsequent issues. They also pioneered the implementation of this rhetoric, moving to large and mid-size cities like Pontiac, Cleveland, Grand Rapids, and Dayton to work toward spiritual and social reform. Denominational historian Eileen Lageer describes how single women “moved into a town two by two, rented a store or empty hall and took up residence. . . .”⁶⁶ They held services nearly every night of the week, visited the sick, gave food to the poor, and invaded saloons trying to dissuade patrons to give up alcohol. Reform efforts worked in tandem with preaching the gospel, though conversion, in the MBC’s eyes, was always the most effective tool toward reform.

Scholars are discovering that this new rhetoric came from a not-so new source. Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford suggests that one of the more prominent reform organizations, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), was rooted directly in Methodism.⁶⁷ The leader of WCTU, Frances Willard, was a card-carrying holiness convert. None other than Phoebe Palmer had converted Willard during an evangelistic meeting in Evanston, Illinois, in the 1860s. Gifford notes that Willard and others in the WCTU and similar reform organizations used language and behaved in ways that made known their evangelical/holiness commitments. This holiness-reform connection perhaps was the hook that snagged many in the MBC and led some in the denomination to adopt more than holiness ideas.

⁶⁶Eileen Lageer, *Merging Streams* (Bethel Publishing, 1979).

⁶⁷Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, “Sisterhoods of Service and Reform,” *Modern American Protestantism and its World: Women and Women’s Issues* (New York: K. G. Saur, 1993), 174.

Association and identification with the reform movement exposed the MBC to some of its more radical feminist figures and sentiments. Willard, for instance, opposed non-inclusive language and a woman's subordination to her husband, and she advocated women's ordination, a step the MBC was still unwilling to take.⁶⁸ Willard's rhetoric made its mark on MBC women and men. The *Gospel Banner* published several of Willard's articles, many of which argued that terminology shapes views of gender. One such article used rather flamboyant language to denounce the word "female," declaring it disrespectful to women. Current usage of "female," Willard wrote, "applies equally to a hen and to the mother of Oliver Cromwell."⁶⁹ In an article aimed at keeping women from abuse in factories and from prostitution, she wrote, "Let a woman be called a woman, and, if I had the power, a statue should declare it."⁷⁰ Exposure to this brand of activist rhetoric triggered new language and a broad expansion of women's activity within the MBC itself.

This more insistent pro-woman rhetoric stemmed from two new fundamental claims: the assertion that men were morally corrupt and lazy and the recognition of women's capabilities. Women in the *Gospel Banner* called for "real men," men who were "clean from the smell of whisky, free from the fumes of tobacco and delivered from the bonds of a double life." Accusations of male hypocrisy abounded: "There are too many men today living the life of the double standard, demanding of their wives and sisters a morality they have no thought of living up to themselves."⁷¹ Men were portrayed also as lazy, even stupid: "While men are scratching their heads and proving what is not the work of women, the way is being prepared for the coming of the kingdom. Mark you, while they do the theorizing and say women are not to do this, the churches are sending them."⁷² Women, on the other hand, were characterized as having already reached a level of purity toward which only a repentant, reworked man

⁶⁸Janette Hassey, *No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry around the Turn of the Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1986). 101.

⁶⁹Frances E. Willard, "Work for Purity," *Gospel Banner* 18 (November 26, 1895), 15. Quoted from the *Philanthropist*.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹"The New Man," *Gospel Banner* 18 (December 3, 1895), 15.

⁷²"Women's Work," *Gospel Banner* 23 (January 9, 1900), 5, quoted from *The Revivalist*.

could aspire. One writer called for this reformation of men so that they could be worthy of greeting a “bride in the whiteness of her unspotted womanhood. . . .”⁷³

Perceptions of the virtue of women thrived in the MBC and became the basis for the extension of female influence outside the home. Ideas of virtue and purity triggered visions of women doing great things for God and society. One MBC leader proclaimed, “Under the blessed spirit of Christianity they have equal rights, equal privileges, equal blessings, and allow me to add, they are equally useful.”⁷⁴ The visions quickly turned to reality before their very eyes. Not only did thousands of MBC members read hundreds of testimonies and articles by and about women preachers, but an increasing number of members also experienced female pastoral leadership. Jacob Hygema, who later became an MBC preacher (and then a professor at the denominational school, Fort Wayne Bible Institute), was converted by the holiness preacher Laura Mains. In his testimony printed several years later in the *Gospel Banner*, he wrote, “The joy was not so great immediately, but the following day an unutterable joy filled my soul as I sent the news by numbers of letters to my friends in Indiana. My prejudice against women speaking received a terrible blow that night, having been converted among only women. . . .”⁷⁵ The positive nature of women was bolstered, and this resulted in an environment conducive to women in ministry. Though opponents of female spiritual and ecclesiastical leadership might muster theological or biblical arguments, they could hardly deny the effective and sweeping ministry of MBC women throughout the Midwest. Souls were being saved, and God seemed to be blessing their ministry.

What was unusual about the new reform influence was that it created a rationale for women in the MBC to begin to break out of a separate-spheres gender model. Not only could women preach, but they could earn money and be equal to men. One writer asserted, “Now we say, if there be any preference in occupation, let woman have it.”⁷⁶ Whether or not women in the MBC began to assume bread-winning roles is unclear. What is clear is that this equal-rights language provided further ideologi-

⁷³“The New Man,” *Gospel Banner* 18 (December 3, 1895), 15.

⁷⁴C. H. Brunner, “What was the Sisters’ Work in the Apostolic Church?” *Gospel Banner* 17 (February 27, 1894), 15.

⁷⁵Jacob Hygema, “Letter,” *Gospel Banner* 18 (October 1, 1895), 11

⁷⁶“Women’s Opportunities,” reprinted from *Christian Herald, Gospel Banner* 18 (December 3, 1895), 6.

cal support for the burgeoning ministries of women like Janet Douglass and Mary Ann Hallman. These two pioneers were quickly joined by dozens of other women. From 1890 to 1910, licensed female ministers in the MBC rose from five to 220, a remarkable jump. Many MBC writers began to claim in the 1890s something much more than the right of women to preach; they argued that women were inherently equal to men and deserving of the same opportunities. The denomination as a whole did not accept the claim, but these assertions inspired many women like Mae Shupe to work as if they were.

Denominational Compromise

That women were newly permitted to share in the privilege of ministry with men in the MBC reflects the transformation of ideas of gender in the broader society, as well as in some segments of the church. As the proportion of employed women increased from 14.7 to 24.8 percent from 1880 to 1910,⁷⁷ patterns of rhetoric and practice within the MBC reveal a denomination caught between the competing tensions of a two-sphere model and an impulse of female equality. Beyond association with holiness theology and a reform ethos, certain denominational particulars provided for a rise in female participation in ministry. Ironically, traces of restraint and compromise on the part of denominational leaders interested in releasing women for ministry in the end allowed women to preach and exhort with extraordinary frequency and sway.

Early denominational leaders staunchly supported women in ministry. Daniel Brenneman, in particular, facilitated training for women and helped launch their ministries. As many young MBC women attended holiness Bible schools, Brenneman organized several groups of them into ministry teams. One of them remarked, "It was easy to go to him with our troubles and difficulties."⁷⁸ The nurture of MBC leadership toward women gave women nearly unrestricted access to every kind of ministry in the denomination. Within years of its formation, women preached in city missions, camp meetings, and in denominational gatherings. They wrote in conference journals, including the *Gospel Banner*, which was edited by Brenneman. They founded and administrated city missions,

⁷⁷Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 25.

⁷⁸Eileen Lageer, *Merging Streams*, 76.

schools such as the Michigan Holiness School, and organizations such as the Gospel Worker Society. And they were sent abroad as missionaries. The pages of the *Gospel Banner* are full of energetic reports of success and failure by women. Facilitating a support network for young female preachers, MBC leaders launched an unprecedented jump in ministry activity by women.

But even within this welcoming constituency, the MBC harbored pockets of opposition. Much of it came from members with a traditional Mennonite background. One denominational historian wrote of Janet Douglas: "In some quarters she received little encouragement, and on one occasion a lady advised her to 'let the men preach, and go home and help your mother.'"⁷⁹ In Muncy, Pennsylvania, an MBC woman preacher, a Mrs. L. Musselman, was accused of being a witch, undoubtedly the result of locals unfamiliar with seeing a woman preach with such popularity and effect.⁸⁰ A. J. Huffman, another denominational historian, notes that "the opposition to women preaching was quite general, at first, despite the evangelistic spirit of the church, but the prejudice was gradually overcome. Those who received a call of God to preach later did not have this difficulty to encounter."⁸¹

If some MBC members were uncomfortable at first with women preaching, even more were uncomfortable with the equal-rights language used in the *Gospel Banner* in the 1890s. Articles lauding domesticity, homemaking, and submissive wives proliferated, running alongside equal-rights rhetoric. A model wife, one writer asserted, is one "who looks after his household, and makes her hospitality a delight to him. . . ."⁸² Another defended homemaking as a legitimate occupation: "It is as honorable to sweep the house, make beds or trim hats as it is to twist a watch-chain."⁸³

Even those who extended a woman's right to work outside the home as a preacher or worker assumed that she would continue to keep house. While defending the right of women to work outside the home, one MBC writer, lamenting the fact that women work outside the home, wrote, "How can there be a proper home life, with the wife and mother at work

⁷⁹Storms, *History of the United Missionary Church*, 251.

⁸⁰"Ho! Ho! What Next! Muncy Again Taking the Lead," *Gospel Banner* 22 (December 26, 1899), 10.

⁸¹J. A. Huffman, *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*, 152.

⁸²"What is a Model Wife?" *Gospel Banner* 16 (March 21, 1893), 4.

⁸³"Women's Opportunities," *Gospel Banner* 18 (December 3, 1895), 6.

all day in a factory?"⁸⁴ Another writer took a mediating position of encouraging women to "publish salvation"—to preach—and to "be domestic."⁸⁵ This incongruity in views of gender roles in the MBC held the potential of stopping the rise of women in ministry. Instead, the denominational leadership's ability to compromise between two competing inclinations among its constituents resulted in numbers of women preachers and church workers that dwarfed most other denominations.

First, MBC leaders modestly limited the responsibilities of women in leadership. From the beginning of the denomination, women were excluded from full ordination. The constitution adopted in 1880 stated, "They shall be received . . . except ordination."⁸⁶ Like men, they were officially licensed as evangelists, helpers and missionaries. But beyond licensure, women, upon passing a reading course (the same one as men took) satisfactorily, were recognized only as "approved ministering sisters."⁸⁷ An amendment to the MBC constitution in 1885 clarified that "we permit a sister, chosen of God, to preach and to labor for the salvation of souls, under the supervision of a minister or presiding elder."⁸⁸ This subordinate position did little to limit women in their work as pastors, keeping them only from performing marriage ceremonies and keeping them under the supervision of male headship. These limitations were self-imposed; no legal restrictions by the state kept women from officiating weddings.

Furthermore, MBC policy stated that women were to be replaced as pastors of church plants once the congregations were more firmly established. Denominational leaders, feeling heat from gender traditionalists, declined to go completely egalitarian. Even though women could officially fill the office of church pastor, it was expected to be temporary. That men rarely actually replaced women pastors does not remove the

⁸⁴Mary G. Stuckenberg, "Our Working Women," *Gospel Banner* 19 (March 3, 1896) 14, reprinted from *Union Signal*.

⁸⁵"A Bible Portrait of Woman," *Gospel Banner* 25 (August 23, 1902), 6.

⁸⁶"The Doctrines and Discipline of the Evangelical United Mennonites" (Goshen, Indiana: E. U. Mennonite Publishing Society, 1880), 72. Archives of the Missionary Church.

⁸⁷"The Doctrines and Discipline of the Evangelical United Mennonites" (Goshen, Indiana: E. U. Mennonite Publishing Society, 1880), 72. Archives of the Missionary Church.

⁸⁸"MBC Constitution," (1885), 6. Archives of the Missionary Church.

intent; it only supports Chaves' idea of loose coupling, that rules and practice were usually inconsistent. That women participated in the public life of the church at unprecedented levels does not eradicate the traces of subordination women still in the MBC. Despite an increase of women in the middle strata of MBC leadership, subordination did not completely end.

Had MBC leaders in favor of full ordination and equal status for women not limited their goals, traditionalists might have revolted. The rhetoric of separate spheres was strong and indicated a sizeable constituency in opposition to full ordination—part of which did not affirm women preaching at all. As the MBC matured as a denomination and incorporated traditionalists into its midst, the reality of competing parties moderated the founding impulse in favor of women in ministry. The compromise that excluded women from full ordination also allowed for widespread and intense institutionalized participation by women to an extent unprecedented in nineteenth-century America.

Assessments

Max Weber's theory of non-privileged, economically lower-class groups that tend to grant equality to women is, in the case of the MBC, inconclusive. Mennonites in Clinton Township, Elkhart County, Indiana, the epicenter of the nascent MBC movement, were of average wealth for the area. With the exception of one wealthy landowner, the total wealth per Mennonite vis-à-vis their neighbors in 1850 was nearly equivalent.⁸⁹ Almost exclusively, MBC members from Indiana came out of Elkhart County Mennonites. Though statistics are unavailable, likely less-well-off Mennonites tended to join the movement. The claim that the economic status of early MBC leaders and members was lower can only be made tentatively.

The MBC had several reference groups in the late nineteenth century. Most notable were their holiness connection and their Mennonite heritage. As the MBC movement began, its members experienced vastly different social responses from the two. The MBC was socially disprivileged in its relationship from Mennonites. Their excommunication from the Mennonite body meant estrangement from a spiritual and social community in which most members had spent their entire lives. Those

⁸⁹Schlabach, *Nation*, 41.

expelled did not attend the communion service held the Sunday after their excommunication. Many of their own families would not eat meals with them.

That the MBC no longer associated with the Mennonite hierarchy probably enhanced their broader social standing. Despite Mennonite economic stability, their self-imposed isolation and peculiar beliefs and dress often served to alienate their neighbors. The MBC also identified with holiness groups, and identification with them increased their social status. Robert Anderson's distinction between the socialization of holiness and pentecostal people explains how the MBC was able to function fairly effectively in broader society. The MBC participated in reform efforts. Writers in the *Gospel Banner* pushed for women's rights, prohibition of alcohol, and health reform much more vigorously than pentecostals. As Victorian America faded and women began to work, reform efforts on the part of the MBC and holiness groups became an advantage in achieving upward social mobility.

That said, MBC stood as a small denomination with tenuous ties to many groups. They identified with certain holiness groups, Mennonites, Dunkards, Quakers, and Free Methodists. But MBC leaders kept a self-imposed distance from them because of disparate theological positions. Thus, the groups (such as the Evangelical United Mennonites and the Brethren in Christ) that made up the MBC were disinherited from their social and spiritual heritage and uncomfortable with simply taking on a new, unfamiliar one. If the ambiguity in Weber's undeveloped thesis, then, allows for the absence of social as well as economic privilege, the MBC was unquestionably disprivileged (though admittedly by choice), which may have led toward considering women as prophetic equals.

Despite Anderson's clear distinction between the pentecostal and holiness movements, early pentecostalism and the MBC shared several key ideals and characteristics. Each movement held related theological and ecclesiastical commitments, including a perfectionist orientation and an experiential bent in worship—all of which fit nicely with Dieter's explanation of how women were able to engage in public ministry.

The primitivist nature of MBC (as with Pentecostalism) showed itself most clearly in its emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Compared to its Mennonite roots, MBC paid inordinate attention to an active, expressive Holy Spirit. Further, MBC's unremitting attention in the *Gospel Banner* to women prophetesses in Scripture and its theology of perfection indi-

cates a preoccupation in returning to first things. Pragmatism, though, mostly drove the rise of women in MBC ecclesiastical life. The primitivist desire to save society and souls despite its potential offensiveness to culture induced pragmatic methods. The perception of women's pure spirituality and "unspotted womanhood" necessitated (for the good of the church, advocates said) female involvement in public ministry. Observations and personal experience of effective female ministry led leaders and constituents to reason, "We need more preachers, so let's use women." By 1894, one leader had concluded that "women are equally useful."⁹⁰

It appears that, in general, the MBC's treatment of women in leadership is unusual among Protestant denominations (except for holiness groups). Its "almost equal" policy actually resulted in more inclusive practice toward women than denominations that endorsed female ordination. Even Congregationalists, Unitarians, and Disciples of Christ, each of which had granted full clergy rights to women by 1888, did not have a "broad progressive spirit permeating the denomination."⁹¹ The MBC, on the other hand, did. And it almost certainly had significantly more female preachers, missionaries, and city workers than denominations that ordained their women early. Many of the holiness churches that comprise much of the "conservative" National Association of Evangelicals allowed much more latitude for women than the "liberal" churches of the National Council of Churches.

Epilogue

This generous latitude for women in church leadership, however, did not last long. Within fifteen years of Reverend Mae's fiery egalitarian rhetoric in 1933, just a handful of women ministers remained. Only one woman was licensed in the MBC (by then known as the United Missionary Church) after 1955. The Canadian Northwest Conference stripped the right to vote from women ministers whose husbands were also pastors because "they have their interests duly represented through their husbands."⁹² By 1989 women were removed from positions as senior pastor except "in situations of need," though this rule was already a *de facto*

⁹⁰C. H. Brunner, "What was the Sisters' Work in the Apostolic Church?" *Gospel Banner* 17 (February 27, 1894), 15.

⁹¹Chaves, *Ordaining Women*, 28.

⁹²Jason C. Garnaas, "Women in Ministry in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ" (unpublished paper, December 1995), 8.

reality. Historian Tim Erdel writes that “by the time the statement was written, the text was actually seen as a bit ‘liberal’ by some who were by now convinced women had no business whatsoever in formal ministry.”⁹³

Why the interpretive u-turn after nearly half a century of Janet Douglass, Mae Shupes, and near egalitarianism? What about the holiness ties, the affinity with reform efforts, and strategic compromise that allowed the MBC to include women in ministry leadership so early and with such ease in the late nineteenth century?

Perhaps the very real numbers and admirable exploits of MBC women in the early years of the denomination are a bit misleading. Perhaps the compromise between two competing inclinations that served to elevate the position of women at the same time constructed it on a foundation shakier than the foundations of denominations that recognized full clergy rights. Paradoxically, the pragmatism and political expediency that triggered an unprecedented level of responsibility for women meant that there wasn’t a principled stand at a formative time in its history.

When fundamentalism hit the scene in the early- and mid-1900s, there was no principle holding the MBC to the inclusion of women in leadership. In essence, fundamentalism replaced holiness as its primary reference group. The MBC certainly retained much holiness doctrine, but its primary association with Methodism, revivalism, and Simpson’s four-fold gospel was displaced by D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, dispensationalism, and an emphasis on biblical inerrancy and rules of order. These formidable pressures, chronicled by Margaret Bendroth in *Fundamentalism and Gender*, overwhelmed the MBC women’s public roles by the 1950s.

The story of women in the MBC bears an uncanny resemblance to the hundreds of long-lost female preachers Catherine Brekus revealed in *Strangers and Pilgrims*. Her eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century subjects had long, glorious careers as fiery preachers, healers, and shapers of American faith. But within decades of the ends of their careers, most were forgotten by denominations eager to hide evidence of female “enthusiasts.” Even women preachers were unaware of their predecessors. Female preaching, then, has been an enterprise of discontinuity. Brekus asserts that a separate-sphere model of gender was to blame. Female preachers

⁹³Tim Erdel, “Pedagogy, Propaganda, Prophetic Protest, and Projection: Dangers and Dilemmas in Writing an Authorized Denominational History” (unpublished paper given at Conference on Faith and History, October 2002), 6.

needed to “lose their ‘feminine’ identities.”⁹⁴ Some dressed like men. Some tried to sound like men. Nearly all denounced their femininity. By doing so, Brekus claims, the female hold on ministry was necessarily tenuous.

The practice of denying femininity began to change in the mid-nineteenth century. Brekus writes that “in an ideological shift of stunning proportions, many nineteenth-century evangelicals affirmed that women had a right to preach as *women*.”⁹⁵ Those who embraced their gender and functioned within a denomination that established formal equality for them were able to create a continuous stream of female ministry. The stream often slowed to a trickle—often nowhere approaching MBC levels—as unofficial discrimination flourished. But those denominations that ordained women in full equality with men retained ordination through the years of fundamentalist pressure.

In contrast, the river of MBC women in public ministry slowed to a trickle and then stopped. The reform, same-sphere influences of Frances Willard and Stanton didn’t capture enough support within the denomination to establish formal equality. Holiness preacher Phoebe Palmer, who held greater sway upon the MBC, supported female preaching, but did not endorse full equality. As routinization took hold and fundamentalism reared its head in the decades after Palmer, only residues of its nineteenth-century holiness roots and reform sensibilities remained. Once-flourishing, progressive views of gender were not deeply rooted enough to allow women a prominent, public role past its first seventy years of existence. The MBC’s middle-ground position (represented and helped along by Palmer) between reformist views of gender and traditional Mennonite views of gender eventually silenced radical voices in the wilderness like Shupe, who demanded “rights and privileges . . . and the right to be ordained. . . .” For Shupe and her would-be successors, ordination—and even preaching itself—ceased to be an option because of a pragmatic compromise half a century earlier.

⁹⁴Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 15.

⁹⁵Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 15.

THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALISM ON THE THEOLOGY AND EDUCATION OF H. ORTON WILEY

by

James Matthew Price

This study traces the influence of personalism on the life and thought of H. Orton Wiley, noted theologian and educator in the Wesleyan tradition. Attention will be given to the development of the philosophy of personalism in the United States, including a review of the major thinkers and how they influenced Wiley through his intellectual mentor, John Wright Buckham. Wiley's personalistic influence upon his own students will be considered through a brief review of two baccalaureate sermons from his first presidential tenure at Nazarene University, a case study of his correspondence with one of his brightest students, and the general influence of personalism in his wake.

After earning certificates to be a pharmacist and public school teacher in Oregon, twenty-three year old Wiley left home and traveled south to begin a lifelong career in liberal arts education, beginning as a student at the state university in Berkeley, California. He roomed in Oakland and rode his bicycle down Telegraph Street to attend class.¹ His ride to school passed Peniel Mission, a small evangelical Christian church led by the dynamic preacher, C. W. Ruth, later a prominent leader in the fledgling Church of the Nazarene. Wiley began attending services with a

¹Grace Ramquist, *The Boy Who Loved School* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1963), 23.

college classmate. During these months, Wiley learned more about and experienced entire sanctification, which became a central teaching in his later career as theologian and educator.

By 1902, Wiley was married to Alice and licensed to preach in the United Brethren Church of northern California. After serving on a couple of three-church circuits located north of Sacramento, Wiley was asked by E. A. Girvin to move to Berkeley and become an associate pastor at the Church of the Nazarene, the daughter church of the first one located in Los Angeles. While Girvin was in Los Angeles serving as a court reporter, Wiley would fill the pulpit. Girvin and the congregation were impressed with the young preacher and soon introduced him to Phineas F. Bresee, pastor of the church in Los Angeles. After being ordained by Bresee in 1906, and within weeks of completing his undergraduate studies in 1910, Wiley became Dean of Nazarene University and would serve over four decades as a professor or president in Nazarene universities.

Wiley later returned to Pacific Theological Seminary (later known as the Pacific School of Religion) and completed a master's degree under the teaching of John Wright Buckham. This time was formative in Wiley's acceptance of personalism within his own theological development. According Richard M. Vaughn, "Personalism has no more persuasive exponent than Professor Buckham."² To understand Wiley's career as an educator and theologian, one must also understand the philosophy of personalism as it developed the United States during the first decades of the 20th century.

The Development of the Philosophy of Personalism

Personalism can be defined as "the philosophy that gives priority to the personality, regarded as constituting the chief reality and highest value."³ The terms personality, person, and self generally refer to the same central construct of reality—the person. Wiley defined the person as "a dynamically integrated Self, striving toward an ethical-social Ideal, having ultimate Value-Reality, and a conscious or semi-conscious relation

²Richard M. Vaughn, *The Significance of Personality* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930), 290, footnote. Vaughn, a former student of Buckham's, thanked Professor Buckham for reading the manuscript of the book (Preface).

³H. Orton Wiley, "A Study of the Philosophy of John Wright Buckham," Nazarene Theological Seminary Lecture Series, October 1959, 44.

to the Supreme Person.”⁴ The Person is the sum of its parts, the self and individual are meaningless without its relation to a future Ideal or its relation to the Other. The philosophy of personalism attempts to bridge the ideal with the real, the spiritual with the material, the monistic with the pluralistic, and the value of self with the value of community. Personalism is the culminative thought of various theologians, philosophers, and educators. A brief overview of the development of personalism, particularly its American expressions, will clarify the principal thinkers, origins, and connection of this philosophy to Wiley and Nazarene higher education in the United States.

If one can say that the 19th century added “holiness” to Wesleyan theological dialogue, the 20th century added “personalism.” Personalism emerged as a philosophical system from several intellectual sources. In the early 1920’s, John Wright Buckham⁵ and Edgar S. Brightman⁶ gave brief overviews concerning the content and etymology of personalism. Later, Ralph T. Flewelling founded and edited the *Personalist* journal in 1947.⁷ The *Personalist* published articles that gave a succinct overview of Personalism’s main proponents and concepts. Borden Parker Bowne, however, is the personality “most definitely identified with [Personalism] as a system of philosophy.”⁸ Bowne’s *Personalism*, written in 1908, is considered one of the first methodological explications of personalism.⁹

⁴Wiley, 1959, 43.

⁵John Wright Buckham, “A Personalist’s View of Reality,” *Personalist*, Vol. III, No. 4, October 1922, 244-253.

⁶Edgar S. Brightman, “The Use of the Word ‘Personalism,’” *Personalist*, Vol. III, No. 4, October 1922, 254-259.

⁷The *Personalist* was published quarterly from April 1920 until October 1979 through the University of Southern California. Ralph T. Flewelling was the founder of the *Personalist* and the editor for its first 40 years. In 1979 the journal changed its title to the *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*. However, it was only one of 15 personalistic journals published in 11 different countries. Ralph T. Flewelling, “This Thing Called Personalism,” *Personalist* 28 (Summer 1947): 229-236.

⁸Flewelling, 1947, 233. Also see Borden Parker Bowne, *Personalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908) and Albert C. Knudson, *The Philosophy of Personalism: A Study of the Metaphysics of Religion* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1927, 1969).

⁹Brightman, 1922; Knudson, 1927, 1969; Flewelling, 1947; Paul Deats and Carol Robb (ed.), *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social Ethics, and Theology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986).

Bowne's work was followed by Brightman, Buckham, and Flewelling who approached personalism in three distinct ways. They wrote from the perspectives of an etiological word study, a philosopher, and an intellectual historian, respectively.

Brightman's review focused primarily on the English use of the word "personalism."¹⁰ "Personalism," according to Brightman, is "far from being classical," since it is relatively absent from dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories and introductory texts of philosophy published previous to 1922. Brightman admits that "personalism" is a relatively new word, and is fighting for recognition," although the concepts found in personalism may have deeper roots in philosophical history.

Personalism, according to Brightman, is a word used in three distinct ways: the logical, ethical, and metaphysical.¹¹ The logical use coincides with a "humanistic" understanding of "pragmatism" in which "the personal life with all its needs" replaces "reason alone" as a "guide to truth." Ethical uses of personalism refer to the ethics of "personality," "self-realization," or "perfectionism." Later in the 20th century, various Catholic and Orthodox theologians have co-opted the term for developing a distinct view of spirituality and morality.¹² Finally, personalism is used most frequently when describing a metaphysical approach to philosophy and theology. George H. Howison, Mary W. Calkins, and Borden Parker Bowne were the first American philosophers to use the term as an identifier for a philosophical school of thought.¹³ Howison's theory of personal idealism and Calkin's view of absolutistic personalism are not only

¹⁰Brightman, 1922, 254-255.

¹¹Brightman, 1922, 257-258.

¹²Prudence Allen, "Analogy and human community in Lublin existential personalism," *Toronto Journal of Theology* (Fall 1989), 5:236-246. Allen reviews the personalism of Lublin University in Poland, especially as developed in the thought of the former ethics professor, Karol Wojtyla (later named John Paul II). A related work is a response to the papal encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* from Michael E. Allsopp and John J. O'Keefe, eds., *Veritatis Splendor: American Responses* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1995). For a critique of Western (Catholic) and Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity, see Georges A. Barrois, "Two Styles of Theology and Spirituality," *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 26 No. 2: 89-101 (1982).

¹³American poet Walt Whitman used the term in his work "Democratic Vistas" and Bronson Alcott used the term to identify his brand of theism. Flewelling, 1947, 233.

attempts at metaphysical explanations of the universe, but a beginning point for ethical discussions.¹⁴ Calkins and Bowne used the term concurrently between 1906 and 1908 in public discourses.¹⁵ It was John Wright Buckham, a contemporary of Howison, Calkins, and Bowne, who viewed personalism as a metaphysical philosophy.

In an article aptly entitled “An Outline of a Philosophy of Personalism,”¹⁶ Buckham’s theological tone further expounds Brightman’s search for a definition. Buckham’s personalism explains reality as the construct of persons that “experience, perceive, conceptualize, relate, and unify.”¹⁷ A person may only consciously know what may be known about the world and the self. The self constitutes reality in that “[E]verything else is less real than the self by whom it gets its place and meaning in the realm of reality.”¹⁸ The central theme of self as personal reality is organized around three major characteristics of self-activity (will), self-expression (creativity), and self-worth (value). Persons are “self-directive” and seek “to project into the outer from something of the wealth of its inner content,” giving the personal self a sense of value, or “personal worth.” Buckham states that “personality [is] . . . in the making,” or that a person progressively develops as guided by “the eternal Creative Person” or Divinity.¹⁹

Flewelling’s historical study identified three geographical sources for personalism: German, French, and American. According to Flewelling, personalism gained momentum with Berkeley and later English Personalists. The German influence came through Leibniz who “might be conceded as the source of German Personalism,”²⁰ and continued through contributions from other German scholars, including Kant,

¹⁴John Wright Buckham and George Malcolm Stratton, *George Holmes Howison Philosopher and Teacher: A Selection from his Writings with a Biographical Sketch* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), 129. P. Magg, “The Personalism of Mary Whiton Calkins,” *Personalist*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Winter 1947, 48-49.

¹⁵Flewelling, 1947, 233. For more elaboration on how Calkins and Bowne used the term personalism, see Brightman, 1922.

¹⁶Buckham, 1922, 244.

¹⁷Buckham, 1922, 245.

¹⁸Buckham, 1922, 245.

¹⁹Brightman, 1922, 246, 248, 252, 253.

²⁰Flewelling, 233.

Hegel, and Lotze. Hermann Lotze has the most direct influence upon American personalism as one of Bowne's professors in Germany during the 18th century.²¹ Lotze receives considerable attention from Wiley.²² France contributed to personalism through Charles Renouvier (who also taught William James), Felix Ravaisson, and Henri Bergson. An example of Ravaisson's approach to personalism is found in the assertion that "mechanism could never explain organism."²³ In other words, mechanistic philosophies and science, unlike personalism, can not make sense of complex and rational organisms like human beings. Only humanity can make sense of reality, which is similar in thought to Buckham. Bergson replaced reason with feeling, or intuition, as a means for understanding the universe.²⁴ Bergson's philosophy also had social implications. Flewelling claims that Bergson's personalism was behind a "democratic movement [in France] based on the value of the Person and opposed to every type of totalitarianism, Facist, Nazi, Marxist, or Clerical."²⁵ German and French influences were complementary to a personalistic school of thought that emerged in the United States in the first decade of the 20th century. Flewelling noted the importance of Bowne and the "St. Louis School," including the influential idealist George H. Howison.²⁶

How Personalism Moved from the East to the West Coast

Bowne taught at Boston University from 1876 to 1910 and served as dean of the Graduate School beginning in 1888. His writings include 17 books on philosophy and theology, as well as 133 articles written for pop-

²¹Francis John McConnell, *Borden Parker Bowne* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1929), 37, 115.

²²H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1940), 1:296-298.

²³Flewelling, 1947, 231.

²⁴H. Orton Wiley, Lecture Notes, "Philosophy 110, Bergson and Other Contemporary Tendencies," Pacific Theological Seminary, June-July, 1914. Wiley Collection, Point Loma Nazarene University Archives, San Diego, CA. Buckham noted Bergson's emphasis upon "intuitive empathy," an intellectual or spiritual tendency that has roots in ancient writings from Lao-tzu, the Bhagavad-Gita, Socrates, and Christian thinkers such as Augustine, Pascal, Schleiermacher, and American thinkers like Edwards and Emerson. From John Wright Buckham, *Christianity and Personality* (New York: Round Table Press, 1936).

²⁵Flewelling, 1947, 235.

²⁶Flewelling, 1947, 233-234.

ular religious and scholarly periodicals.²⁷ Bowne wrote that his work was essentially a philosophical rebuttal of Comte's positivism, with a more theological approach to the study of knowledge and presenting instead a basis for a personal metaphysics.²⁸ There were, however, other thinkers outside of Bowne's influence that were developing similar notions of personalistic thought.

As a young mathematics professor at Washington University in St. Louis, George H. Howison came upon "a large number of German intellectuals; and he was soon in the midst of zealots, the very breath of whose nostrils was German speculative ideas."²⁹ Howison developed several friendships in St. Louis, including William T. Harris,³⁰ the leader of the Kant Club, a small and informal group of philosophers, and later U.S. Commissioner of Education. The Kant Club included other notable 19th-century figures such as writer Bronson Alcott and writer/poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. This group formed the core of what was later called the St. Louis school of personalism. Howison eventually held teaching positions at the University of Michigan, Harvard University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.³¹

²⁷McConnell, 282-286.

²⁸Borden Parker Bowne, *Personalism* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1908). Boston Personalism emphasized the connection between philosophy (reason and coherence) and theology (faith and confidence), the importance of critical rationalism alongside sense experience, and ideals such as personal freedom, teleological concerns in philosophical discussion, and ethics, especially social ethics through former students such as Martin Luther King, Jr. See Paul Deats and Carol Robb, eds., *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social Ethics, and Theology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 7-12.

²⁹Buckham and George M. Stratton, *George Holmes Howison Philosopher and Teacher* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1934), 49-52.

³⁰William T. Harris (1835-1935) served as the Superintendent of the St. Louis Public Schools and later became the United States Commissioner of Education. For more information on Harris's educational philosophy, see *American Hegelians and Education* (<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/5079/hegedu.html>). According to this web page, the Hegelian influence on American education should not be overlooked. Harris viewed elementary school as the thesis, high school as the antithesis (reflective stage), and colleges/universities as the synthesis of educational development.

³¹Howison also spent two years in Germany sitting under the teaching of Michelet, the scholar and professor who followed Fichte and Hegel at the University of Berlin (Buckham and Stratton, 1934, 66-69).

It was, however, in smaller venues at the Concord School of Philosophy and the Chestnut Street Club where Howison gained the attention of William James and Thomas Davidson. These friendships led Howison to the Mills Chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy and Civil Polity at the University of California in Berkeley. The importance of gaining an endowed chair rested upon "its own [financial] foundation and could not be overturned in some chance haste for economy," as was his former position at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.³²

Howison preferred the intellectually engaging friendships found in Boston, but took in stride the transition to Berkeley. He soon made his mark as a professor of philosophy with a personalistic bent. George M. Stratton, a former student and biographer of Howison's, wrote that Howison "saw young men and women in need of becoming, first of all—not economic factors given to producing, distributing, and consuming marketable things; nor as learners of some liberal profession—but of becoming, or of being transformed into something more humane."³³ Professor Howison dealt "with the whole person before him . . . with his power to act morally by treating himself and all his fellows as of eternal worth. . . . He saw himself as a teacher of persons possessed of power to observe, to think, to enjoy beauty, to devote themselves to the great community of persons, of which the greatest of all is God."³⁴ Howison's concept of Personal Idealism³⁵ was explicated at various times, such as the lectures presented to the Philosophical Union in Berkeley,³⁶ where Howison's influ-

³²Buckham and Stratton, 73.

³³Buckham and Stratton, 15.

³⁴Buckham and Stratton, x.

³⁵Buckham and Stratton edited and published again the article "Personal Idealism," on pages 125-138. Personalist Idealism rejects the Absolutism of monism and "puts forward a Pluralism, an eternal or metaphysical world of many minds, all alike possessing personal initiative, real self-direction, instead of an all-predetermining single Mind that alone has real free agency" (p. 127). This is not to be confused with Individualism which asserts "the dissolution of reality into a radically disjunct and wild 'multiverse'" (William James' terminology), but rather "the universe of final harmony which is the ideal of our reason" (p. 127). Howison's thought, by his own admission, is guided by Aristotle, Berkeley, Kant, and Leibniz. Howison is described as the "moving spirit" of the Philosophical Union. See Harland E. Hogue, *Christian Seed in Western Soil: Pacific School of Religion through a Century* (Berkeley, CA: Pacific School of Religion, 1965), 69-71.

³⁶Buckham and Stratton, 10.

ence made an impression upon his colleagues, including John Wright Buckham.³⁷

Buckham like Howison was a New Englander transplanted to California.³⁸ Buckham's conception of personalism originated in Boston under Bowne's influence and became ingrained in Berkeley through Howison's friendship.³⁹ Buckham contributed a unique understanding of self, especially in the dynamic tension between personality and individuality.⁴⁰

Buckham's dialectical understanding of personalism included "the *individual* with his [or her] physical composition and racial inheritances, [who] is born, matures, decays, and dies, . . . [and] the *person* within the individual [who] can neither be born nor grow old and die."⁴¹ There is a developmental scheme at work in order to "actualize" the individual into a person that finds an impetus in an "awakening" or "rebirth" to a "higher self."⁴² This psychological progression toward an ideal maintains, in Buckham's opinion, a theological origin.

According to Buckham, four influences shape the "person-to-be"⁴³ (or self) into a person (or higher self): heredity, environment, destiny, and freedom.⁴⁴ Psychophysically, "heredity and temperament" shape potential

³⁷Buckham was "strongly effected" by Howison as well as Bowne. Hogue, 1965, 82.

³⁸John Wright Buckham, "The Septuagenarian 'Atlantic'," *The Personalist*, Vol. IX No. 4, October 1928, 251-257). He relishes the memories of the East Coast after receiving the complete bound editions of the *Atlantic Monthly* periodicals at his home in California. Buckham, a Congregationalist minister who chose his first parish in New England "as much for the mountains nearby as for the people," arrived at Pacific Theological Seminary in 1903 as professor of Christian theology. Buckham's father was President of the University of Vermont. Hogue, 1965, 81.

³⁹Buckham cites Howison, Bowne, the Philosophical Union, and his students as the major influences upon his own personalistic philosophy, *Personality and the Christian Ideal* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1909), vi.

⁴⁰This dialectic tension is found later in a short chapter by Jacques Maritain, "Education at the Crossroads," *Classic and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, edited by Steven M. Cahn (New York: MacGraw-Hill Company, 1997), 456-460, especially 459-460.

⁴¹Buckham, 1909, 37, italics added.

⁴²Buckham, 1909, 109, 111.

⁴³Buckham, 1909, 65.

⁴⁴Buckham, 1936, 60-61.

persons. The environment operates to form the person within the social context. Destiny also plays a vital role in guiding the person's development, whether one refers to that form of guidance as providence or fate. The self, however, has freedom, or the "power of choice," among alternatives in taking the initiative to become the ideal of person. Personal freedom allows persons to "lay hold of the external, the past, the distant, the determined and makes these his [or her] own and out of them fashions the new."⁴⁵ Personality and individuality comprise the progressive tension inherent within the self. There is a danger in this definition of the self becoming preeminent in a Hegelian progression toward the Ideal. Wiley attempts to avoid this trap by describing the incarnation of the Other, the Logos in Christ, as the only Perfect Personality, as noted in the following from volume one of *Christian Theology*:

"[I]t is because the Christian conception of the Logos given us by St. John is both personal and creative that we are preserved from pantheism which, on the one hand, would merge everything into God or, on the other, regard the world as an emergence or emanation from God."⁴⁶

In *Personality and the Christian Ideal* (1909) Buckham initially described his view of the personality and individuality in the following manner.⁴⁷ Personality refers to the "potency" of "character" in tension with the "possession" of individual "talents." Whereas talent refers solely to finite "natural endowments," character reveals the "spiritual uniqueness" of persons. The principle of "Spiritual Uniqueness", according to Buckham, differentiates "personality from individuality."⁴⁸ And it is "the struggle for character [that] is the supreme struggle of one's inner life."⁴⁹ How Wiley melded Buckham's thought with his own is exemplified most concisely by the following quote in a 1959 lecture: "By a series of free, selective, self-determining acts of the self, it enters the moral and spiritual realm and becomes a person."⁵⁰

⁴⁵Buckham, 1936, 64-65.

⁴⁶*Christian Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1940), 1:302.

⁴⁷Buckham, 1909, 34-37.

⁴⁸Buckham, 1936, 86.

⁴⁹Buckham, 1909, 67.

⁵⁰Wiley, 1959, 26. It is not clear whether Wiley was quoting Buckham or relaying his own thinking.

H. Orton Wiley eventually chose Buckham as his major professor and adviser.⁵¹ Fireside chats after a homemade dinner at the Buckham's home highlighted Wiley's seminary days.⁵² Wiley spent three years studying theology with Buckham, eventually earning a Master of Sacred Theology degree in 1917 and receiving, by vote of the seminary's faculty, the Doctor of Sacred Theology degree in 1929.⁵³ Wiley once reminisced, "While I understood but little of his teaching during my earlier seminary years, I am now increasingly conscious of the debt I owe him."⁵⁴ It was with Buckham, whether in the classroom or by the fireside, that Wiley brought personalism into his theological thought and educational practice.

Personalism in Wiley's Development as a Theological Educator

In 1897 Wiley entered professional life as a pharmacist in Oregon.⁵⁵ Vocational education and subsequent qualification for a viable occupation

⁵¹Wiley, 1959, 2.

⁵²Wiley, 1959. "The intimacy of campus life made possible close and lasting friendships, and these relationships were often between faculty and students" (Hogue, 1965, 88).

⁵³Price, Ross E., "H. Orton Wiley: The Man and His Ministry," The Wiley Lectures, Point Loma Nazarene College, January 31-February 3, 1984. Unpublished manuscript, 145. Price, 1984, 145. Biographers generally concur as to when Wiley completed his academic degrees. Timothy L. Smith, Ronald Kirkemo, Grace Ramquist, and "This is Your Life" (1959) confirm that Wiley received his Bachelor of Arts and his Bachelor of Divinity degrees in 1910. Wiley, however, did not complete his Master's in Sacred Theology until 1917. Over ten years later, Wiley was conferred the Doctorate of Sacred Theology in 1929 based on his thesis on the Prologue to the Gospel of John (according to the diploma in the Wiley Collection, Point Loma Nazarene University Archives). In a lecture series from 1959 (a study of the philosophy of John Wright Buckham, NTS, Oct. 20-23, 1959), Wiley confirms that he completed academic work at Pacific Theological Seminary in three years and earned his Masters of Sacred Theology and Doctor of Sacred Theology from Pacific School of Religion (p. 2). Pacific Theological Seminary Board of Trustees decided to change the name of the school to the Pacific School of Religion in April, 1916, in order to emphasize the "undenominational" character of its faculty, students, and educational partnerships (Harland E. Hogue, *Christian Seed in Western Soil: Pacific School of Religion through a Century* (Berkeley, CA: Pacific School of Religion, 1965), 92-94.

⁵⁴Wiley, 1959, 2.

⁵⁵Price, 1984, 145. Wiley received his diploma from the Oregon State Board of Pharmacy on March 9, 1897. The original diploma is in the Wiley Collection, PLNU Archives.

did not satisfy Wiley, nor did his classification as a producer of “marketable things” (see Howison above). Instead, Wiley sought further education in the liberal arts at the University of California in Berkeley. Wiley’s life thus posed an example of the tension between vocational and liberal education in the United States of the late 19th century.⁵⁶

H. Orton Wiley later considered liberal arts to be the “best possible preparation for the great work to which God has called” for all university students.⁵⁷ In the same article he cautioned students to avoid the desire to earn money as the main motive for attending college. Rather, students should pursue an education that offers “true worth [that] will seek the spiritual things of the kingdom of God.” For Wiley, a liberal arts campus was the best place to develop personal worth and encourage a vital spirituality.

From the beginning, Wiley believed the liberal arts college needed to establish a place for students to “cherish and enfold the mentality with which God has endowed us in loyal relation to the Divine.”⁵⁸ The students’ relationship with God was of primary importance. The liberal arts curriculum cultivated a connection to the Divine through an emphasis on developing the whole person in the sense of the “spiritual, moral, mental and physical.”⁵⁹ The liberal arts experience provided students with a balanced or “symmetrical” development of personality. Education answered the “dissatisfaction” of modern life, which failed to activate the operations of the “whole being.” Instead of instructing an individual in a certain set of skills to accomplish a repetitive task, a liberal education provided a well-rounded body of experiences that awakened and challenged the totality of students’ knowledge and abilities.

Wiley conveyed the importance of liberal arts education in his first position as academic dean (1910-1913) and president (1913-1916) at the Nazarene University (NU) in Pasadena, California. He sought to balance

⁵⁶College curriculum veered away from liberal arts toward vocational specialization at the end of the 19th century. See Christopher J. Lucas, *Crisis in the Academy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 129.

⁵⁷H. Orton Wiley, “The Value of a College Education,” *Nazarene Messenger*, January 1918.

⁵⁸*Nazarene University Catalogue* (1912-1913), 14. File #367-29. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. File #367-29. This document was written and edited by H. Orton Wiley, dean of the university.

⁵⁹Wiley, “The Value of a College Education,” *Nazarene Messenger*, January 1918.

the Bible school emphasis with a liberal arts education. Wiley's purpose and practice seemed divergent, however. In a college address given early in his career, Wiley states,

The emphasis upon development in the study of biology, the evolutionary hypothesis in philosophy, the educational ideal of a religious nature inherent in the child to be unfolded and developed, of depravity as a theological dogma no longer tenable—all these and many others, combined to weaken the faith of the student in the fundamental doctrines of grace, and to minify the importance of a definite and conscious experience of salvation from sin.

Yet, he sought to widen the perspective of Nazarene college students by introducing a liberal arts curriculum into a college what had been solely a Bible school. NU based its course of study on a “group elective plan, affording a wide and consistent choice of electives” in music, history, science,⁶⁰ education, philosophy, archeology, and foreign languages.⁶¹ It should be noted that extracurricular activities were limited to practical ministry experiences, literary societies, and outdoor sports like hiking and swimming. Athletics and Greek societies were deemed to carry the “spirit of boisterousness and rowdiness.”⁶²

In defining the role of higher education, Wiley tended to incorporate the language of holiness theology with a personalistic bent. During a 1914 baccalaureate sermon, Wiley proclaimed,

Let us make Christ our Truth; truth not as a logical abstraction but a divine personification; . . . Christ in every truth until it becomes an apocalypse of glory. Oh for that waking! to come forth into that sunrise! Out of all our darkness and weakness, our numbness and deadness, into that light, the glow, the power and the glory of that beatific Christ-Shine. In the out-

⁶⁰Wiley may have verbally and personally disagreed with biological developmentalism and the evolutionary hypothesis. However, due to his commitment to building a liberal arts college, he later hired a physicist named Phil Carlson, a Ph.D. from the University of Washington, who introduced “an acceptance of geological evolution” into the science department (in Kirkemo, 1992, 146-147).

⁶¹“Our University a Necessity,” a college address by H. Orton Wiley. Undated. Early Papers from Nazarene University and Pasadena University, File (1), Wiley Collection, PLNU Archives.

⁶²Wiley, “Our University a Necessity,” Ibid.

streaming of God, the divine halo, to exercise intuition, reflection, faith, worship. God shining all about you and in that shining to behold and believe; God's warmth within you, and in that warmth to feel; God's love flooding your soul, in that love, to love.⁶³

Wiley further conveyed his educational aim for Nazarene college students: "When [students] thus come to know God, every discovery in the created world, whether in science, or history, or philosophy, of mathematics or music only leads them to greater adoration of God." In Wiley's educational philosophy one can see the influence of Buckham's Personalism, Bergson's Intuitionism, and American holiness theology.

The ethical dimension of personalism was united to holiness religious experience as conveyed in Wiley's baccalaureate sermon in 1915.

We come to see God in this aloneness [of individualization]; we view our lives against the moral background of God's righteousness and see ourselves and the true quality of our lives for the first time. Then it is that there comes such an awakening as we never expected. We see the qualities of our being for the first time and behold the sinfulness of our being.⁶⁴

Christian education for Wiley combined the personalistic ideals of his intellectual mentors as well as the influence of his religious experiences in the American holiness movement.

Wiley wanted to distinguish liberal arts education in a Christian university from instruction in Bible schools. Later in his career, Wiley asserted: "Christian education means more than merely placing the Bible in the school and surrounding the students with a spiritual atmosphere. . . . Christian education means a radical change in viewpoint, and more or less change in method."⁶⁵ Christian college curriculum is not the Bible sur-

⁶³Wiley, Baccalaureate Sermon, Class of 1914, Nazarene University, Pasadena, CA. Wiley Collection, Early Papers, Nazarene University/Pasadena College, File (10). The cover page reveals that this sermon was preached to the "first class graduating with full four years in college."

⁶⁴Wiley, "Baccalaureate Sermon, Class of 1915." Pasadena College (Nazarene University). Wiley Collection, Early Papers, Nazarene University/Pasadena College, File (12). PLNU Archives.

⁶⁵Wiley, letter to Professor Louis A. Reed, Pasadena University, 31 March 1921. Wiley Collection, PLNU Archives.

rounded by other similar supporting subjects, but a balance between “divine revelation and human acquisition,”⁶⁶ or, stated another way, as a balance between the Bible and a liberal arts curriculum. Wiley did not want only to make preachers and other Christian practitioners, but to offer a well-rounded “education of Christian young men and women” with “moral character and worth.”⁶⁷ The moral character and worth of students is noteworthy and should be read in light of Buckham’s notion of Spiritual Uniqueness. This notion is juxtaposed to the superficial, individualistic renderings of character or worth as determined by American university admissions policies in the early 20th century. Harvard and Columbia were accused of limiting the number of Jewish minorities through admission policies based on appearance as well as extracurricular achievements and character.⁶⁸

One of Wiley’s students exemplified his attempt to recognize the character and worth of all students within a Christian liberal arts education. Wiley recalled his first interaction with this young student. He wrote:

I first met Esther Carson at the corner of Lake Avenue and Washington Street in Pasadena, at the opening of the first semester in 1910. . . . We were waiting for the college bus. . . . I asked her what year she would be in, and she replied, “A freshman.” She then asked me what year I was in, and so we became acquainted. This was the beginning of a friendship between dean and student—a friendship that was to reveal one of the most brilliant students that ever graced the college campus.⁶⁹

Esther Carson wrote an extracurricular essay as a college sophomore that was later found in Wiley’s personal files. Entitled “The Chemistry of Human Life,” she translated the interaction of human personalities and

⁶⁶“Christian Education,” Keynote Address delivered at the Third Educational Conference, Church of the Nazarene, held at Pasadena College, Pasadena, California, October 17-19, 1951.

⁶⁷Wiley, “Our University a Necessity,” Wiley Collection, PLNU Archives.

⁶⁸Helen L. Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 103-106.

⁶⁹H. Orton Wiley, “Personal Recollections of Esther Carson Winans,” Carol Gish, editor, *Letters of Esther Carson Winans* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1951), 11.

relationships from the scientific jargon of chemistry. She enveloped her scientific knowledge within a personalistic structure. She wanted to convey that the self is more than a mechanism. Carson followed Wiley and other Personalists in affirming the primacy of the person over a mechanistic view of humanity. In the words of Ravaission, "mechanism [can] never explain organism." Commenting on the law of the conservation of energy, Carson writes, "But the crowning marvel of this great chemistry of human life is the way elements and compounds [analogies for humans and their relationships] are changed and purified by the wonderful processes of the great Chemist."⁷⁰ In Carson's case, the organism explains scientific processes in an unmechanistic and idealistic fashion. Wiley's student had caught the idealistic notions of personalism. Carson was only a college sophomore when she penned this essay.

Originally Carson thought about college teaching as a profession. She was later offered a position by Wiley teaching Spanish at Northwest Nazarene College. Before she could begin, Carson decided to go to Peru as a missionary where she taught pre-literate people how to read. Moreover, she translated the Bible into the Aguruna dialect. This dialect had no written form until Carson put the language into writing. Tragically, Carson died during the birth of her second child and is buried at the top of a hillside outside the first Nazarene preaching point in Peru. Carson was an example of a student who had taken advantage of a balanced liberal arts education with an emphasis on a personalistic vocation⁷¹ under the educational leadership H. Orton Wiley.

The Influence of Personalism on Wiley's Selection of College Faculty

Although personalism has been recently characterized as a "theological fad,"⁷² it had a lasting influence on the faculty Wiley brought to Pasadena Nazarene College (PNC) during his tenures as President (1913-1916, 1926-28, and 1933-1948). The University of Southern California

⁷⁰Carson, "The Chemistry of Human Life," unpublished manuscript, 1912. Wiley Collection, PLNU Archives.

⁷¹Thomas O. Buford, *In Search of a Calling: The College's Role in Shaping Identity* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), 165-190. Located in chapter 7, "Educating for a Calling," 165-190.

⁷²Sam Powell, "A Critical Analysis of Relational Theology," unpublished manuscript, undated, 3.

(USC) was the epicenter of personalistic thought on the West Coast. As previously noted, Robert Flewelling was the long time editor of *The Personalist*, an academic journal in the field. Flewelling's book *Creative Personality* was required reading in PNC philosophy courses. According to James Jackson, a graduate of PNC and USC, "We had a good relationship with USC and they would accept our graduates without a problem," which was important at the time for the then unaccredited liberal arts college.⁷³

On the PNC campus, there was a student organization known as the Bowne Philosophy Club named after Borden Parker Bowne. Bowne's *Metaphysics* and *Theology of Thought and Knowledge* were used as theology texts at PNC. W. T. Purkiser, President of PNC following Wiley, and Joseph Mayfield, the first Dean of Students, completed graduate work at USC. John Wright Buckham authored five of the twelve books required for Wiley's graduate Systematic Theology class as late as 1958.⁷⁴ Students taking that course went on to become denominational leaders, missionaries, and pastors.

Personalism addressed the essential as well as the existential value and worth of the individual. Wiley communicated this idea through the Founder's Address on October 17, 1947: "Are we to forget the individual in our attempt at mass organization?"⁷⁵ A sense of having personal significance filtered through Wiley to the faculty, staff, and students at PNC. Jackson acknowledged that "there were administrators that I have worked with that I wasn't always pleased in how they dealt with people, but [Wiley] always seemed to have an integrity in how he dealt with people. . . ."⁷⁶

In dealing with students, Wiley invited difficult questions, even though the questions were not popular with church leadership. Wiley

⁷³Jackson, Oral History Interview. H. Orton Wiley Collection. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. Audio recording and transcript.

⁷⁴Systematic Theology Class List and Bibliography, undated, probably 1958, Point Loma Nazarene University Archives. Other interesting historical notes from this archival file: Paul Benefiel and George Rench later became pastors and district leaders; Robert Scott and Norma Storey later became missionaries; Gene Van Note later edited adult Sunday School curriculum for Nazarene Publishing House.

⁷⁵Wiley, "Founder's Day address," October 17, 1937 (or 1957, date was partially missed in duplication), Box Miscellaneous Sermons, Wiley Collection, PLNU Archives.

⁷⁶Jackson Oral History Interview. H. Orton Wiley Collection. Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. Audio recording and transcript.

listed a series of questions from college students that dealt with “religious life and experience.” The following is a good example from the *Herald of Holiness*:

How many different meanings does the Apostle Paul have for sanctification, and how may one determine the specific meaning intended? Is not this varied use of the term a cause of disputation? . . . What is guidance by the Holy Spirit—a fortuitous shifting of circumstances, or a strong mental impression in what seems to be a logical direction? . . . Can one be sanctified and be unethical? . . . Did Adam and Eve sin with the desire for the fruit or in yielding to the desire? . . . What does it mean in the Bible where it says that it is a glory for a woman to have long hair. Does it mean real long, or just below the ears? . . . Will you please explain as you see it and in terms which are not theological what being saved and being lost eternally mean? What are your actual concepts of heaven and hell? I am honest and would like to face this question intelligently. I have never heard it discussed before.⁷⁷

Wiley received criticism for allowing such questions to challenge orthodox thinking. Yet, intelligent responses could not be given to questions that were never asked.

W. T. Purkiser and Joseph Mayfield were hired in the late 1930's as professors who were also “more open to student questions and discussion and were less aloof in their relations with students.”⁷⁸ Wiley valued the individual worth of those persons who administered, taught, and studied at the College.

Wiley's personalism influenced students who later became professors in Nazarene colleges and authors of more recent theology texts. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop was a student at NNC and later at PNC. She began teaching theology at Trevecca Nazarene College in the 1950s. Her book *Theology of Love* (1972)⁷⁹ was influential in holiness studies. H. Ray Dunning, a later proponent of relational theology, wrote *Grace, Faith,*

⁷⁷*Herald of Holiness*, 10 August, 1935, 3; Kirkemo, 1992, 142; Kirkemo, 1992, 389, footnote 17.

⁷⁸Kirkemo, 1992, 144.

⁷⁹Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1972).

and Holiness (1988),⁸⁰ now a standard in ministerial preparation for the Church of the Nazarene. Rob L. Staples, a graduate of PNC and Pacific School of Religion, conveyed a personal-pastoral understanding of the Christian sacraments through his book *Outward Sign and Inward Grace* (1991).⁸¹ Michael Lodahl taught at NNC and now teaches at Point Loma Nazarene University. His book *The Story of God*⁸² incorporates aspects of personalistic-relational theology. All of these works represent a continuum of Wiley's personalistic influence in Nazarene theological inquiry.

Summary

By age 39, H. Orton Wiley had been a pastor in rural and urban churches, a college professor, a dean at a liberal arts college, and a president at two Nazarene liberal arts colleges. Within a decade of being ordained in ministry, Wiley was ushered into a national leadership role within the Church of the Nazarene. During this time, he managed to earn four postsecondary degrees. He also discovered a philosophical perspective for his theological and educational commitments. Wiley's thought was saturated in personalism as he moved into major roles in educational and denominational leadership and began to write the most widely recognized systematic theology for denominations in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition.⁸³ Wesleyan theologians would do well to note the influence of personalism upon the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition.

⁸⁰ H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Systematic Wesleyan Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988).

⁸¹ Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1991).

⁸² Michael Lodahl, *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1994).

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WESLEY'S DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT

by

Winfield H. Bevins

Although John Wesley had spoken about the Holy Spirit prior to 1738, it was not until after Aldersgate that he began to develop a distinct pneumatology. Aldersgate was not Wesley's conversion-initiation; rather it was largely a pneumatological experience of the "internal witness of the Spirit."¹ His "heart strangely warmed" marked a theological shift from outward works toward an experiential focus on the Spirit. He continued to develop this focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian experience throughout his life. One can trace the role of the Spirit in the three distinct stages of Wesley's thinking—early, middle, and later.²

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that there is a recognizable development of Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which began to take form at Aldersgate and continued to be developed throughout his lifetime. This article will begin by briefly looking at the role of the Holy Spirit in each of the three stages of Wesley's life and at the corresponding sermon corpus. This will lead to an analysis of the various influences on

¹Outler, Albert. "A Focus on the Holy Spirit: Spirit and Spirituality in John Wesley." *Quartely Review* (1988).

²In the preface of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, Albert Outler said that "the problem of development in Wesley is thus far woefully underdeveloped." *Sermons*, 1, 1-33 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984). Preface X. Thus, a chronological analysis of his sermons would be of benefit. There are three definable stages in Wesley's thinking: early 1725-1738, middle 1738-1770, and latter 1770-1791.

the development of Wesley's pneumatology. In addition, there will be an evaluation of the various ways in which the Holy Spirit played a role in Wesley's overall theology.

The Early Wesley, 1725-1738

There are three distinct stages of Wesley's theological development. The early Wesley refers to the time between his ordination as a deacon on September 19, 1725, and his Aldersgate experience on May 14, 1738. Many scholars believe that 1725 marked the beginning of John Wesley's religious awakening and the first of three phases in his theological development.³ He began to think seriously about entering the Church and his parents enthusiastically encouraged him.

During this time several major things helped shape Wesley's religious thought. Wesley came into contact with Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*, Thomas a' Kempis's *Christian's Pattern*, and William Law's *Christian Perfection and Serious Call*.⁴ These writings made a profound impact upon Wesley's spirituality. They put him on the path toward inward holiness.

Wesley was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College on March 17, 1726. Around the same time, his younger brother, Charles, had become a student at Christ Church and was a member of a small group of Oxford students who meet regularly for the purpose of spiritual formation. It was not long until John became the unofficial leader of this group. Along with their academic pursuits, they engaged in prayer, Bible study, fasting, Communion, and social work, which included visiting the prisons and caring for the sick. It was because of these practices that the group got nicknames such as: "Enthusiasts," "Bible Moths," "Sacramentalists," "Holy Club," and "Methodists," which in time became the title of the Wesleyan movement.

³In *A Plan Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley notes, "In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met with Bishop Taylor's *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*. In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the Devil." See also Albert Outler, Preface to *Sermons*.

⁴Wesley, John. *The Works of John Wesley*. Jackson, Thomas. Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998). 6:366-367.

Another important development was that Wesley became acquainted with ancient Christian literature through the assistance of fellow John Clayton, who was a competent patristics scholar.⁵ Wesley's love for the Eastern Fathers can be seen throughout his *Works*, particularly "Macarius the Egyptian" and Ephrem Syrus.⁶ He became convinced that their pattern of holy living was true and authentic Christianity. More importantly for this study was the ancient Christian emphasis on the person and experiential work of the Spirit, which no doubt had an impact on Wesley's thinking.⁷ These various influences made Wesley's time at Oxford an important season of religious and theological development and no doubt sowed impressionable seeds that later would develop into Wesley's mature pneumatology.

"The Circumcision of the Heart," 1733. On January 1, 1733, at Saint Mary's Oxford, Wesley preached "The Circumcision of the Heart", which contains the basic elements of his soteriology. This sermon also says more about the Holy Spirit than any of his other sermons prior this time. However, it appears that he was still working out his understanding of the relationship of the Holy Spirit and his overall theology. He said that, "without the Spirit we can do nothing but add sin to sin," and "that it is impossible for us even to think a good thought without the supernatural assistance of his Spirit as to create ourselves, or to renew our whole souls in righteousness and true holiness."⁸ Wesley recognized early on that Spirit played a vital role in overcoming sin and living a holy life. He was also developing his doctrine of Christian assurance. It is important to mention that Wesley sought assurance long before Aldersgate. He said:

⁵Outler, Albert. Introduction. *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 9.

⁶For various discussions on Wesley's use of the Eastern fathers, see Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences." *The Asbury Theological Journal* 45, no. 2 (Fall 1990), 29-53; Kenneth J. Collins, "John Wesley's Critical Appropriation of Tradition in His Practical Theology." *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. Vol. 35, no. 2, Fall, 2000; Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1991).

⁷Outler notes that there was a "deepening influence of Greek Catholic spirituality (with its distinctive pneumatology that Wesley embraced wholeheartedly)." Introduction. *Sermons*, 1:36. See also Burgess, Stanley M. *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.) See chapters 15 & 21 for discussion on the pneumatology of Macarius and Ephrem.

⁸*John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, 24.

This is the next thing which the “circumcision of the heart” implies—even the testimony of their own spirit with the Spirit which witnesses in their hearts, that they are the children of God. Indeed it is the same Spirit who works in them that clear and cheerful confidence that their heart is upright toward God; that good assurance that they now do, through his grace, the things which are acceptable in his sight; that they are now in the path which leadeth to life, and shall, by the mercy of God, endure to the end.⁹

The Holy Spirit is God’s empowering presence that works mysteriously in the hearts of men and women to bring them to full salvation in Christ. “He alone can quicken those who are dead unto God, can breathe into them the breath of God, and so prevent, accompany, and follow them with his grace as to bring their good desires to good effect.”¹⁰ The Spirit is the “inspirer and perfecter both of our faith and works.”¹¹ Again, these references show that Wesley was trying to articulate the role of the Holy Spirit in process of salvation, but, as we shall see, his later sermons demonstrate a much more sophisticated understanding of the Spirit of God.

In 1735, John and his brother Charles set sail for Savanna, Georgia. They had been commissioned by the Society for the propagation of the Gospel. John’s primary intention for traveling to America was to minister to the Indians, but he served as parish minister to the colonists in Savannah. He became acquainted with a group called the Moravians. The Moravians were German pietists who were associated with teachings of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

The Moravians taught a simple faith and assurance of salvation through the “inner witness of the Spirit.”¹² John interacted with them on the way to Georgia, during his stay, and on the trip back to England. He was impressed with their confidence, piety, and assurance of faith. He was challenged by the example of faith in Christ that the Moravians had demonstrated and realized that he lacked the Spirit’s assurance of salvation. On February 7, 1736, while in Georgia, a Moravian leader by the

⁹*Ibid*, 27.

¹⁰*Ibid*, 30.

¹¹*Ibid*, 30.

¹²McGonigle, Herbert. *John Wesley and the Moravians* (England: The Wesley Fellowship, 1993).

name of August Gottlieb Spangenburg began to question Wesley's faith. Wesley recounts the dialogue:

He said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused, and said, "I know he is Saviour of the world." "True," replied he, "but do you know he has saved you?" I answered, "I hope he has died to save me." He only added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do." But I fear they were vain words.¹³

After returning to England, John and his brother Charles met a Moravian by the name of Peter Böhler. He convinced John further that conversion happened in an instant and that a real Christian would have an assurance of salvation. He testified to this experience and brought Wesley several other witnesses who also testified to the same experience of instantaneous faith. As a result, Wesley determined:

I was now thoroughly convinced and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end, first, by absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works of righteousness—on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up.¹⁴

The Moravian's impact upon Wesley's pneumatology cannot be overestimated. Herbert McGonigle states that, "No group of Christians had helped John Wesley more sincerely or more profoundly than the Moravians."¹⁵ In Wesley's journal entries from April 2 to May 24, 1738, we can see that the Moravians were instrumental in leading him to search for an inward Christianity of the heart that was accompanied by the inner witness of the Spirit. From the Moravians he learned faith, assurance, and Christian experience, which are rooted in the experiential work of the Holy Spirit. Their lasting influence can be seen in Wesley's concept of the

¹³*Works*, 1:23. Journal, Feb. 7, 1736.

¹⁴*Works*, Journals, May, 1738.1:102. One can find a unique self-analysis in Wesley's journal entries during the months just prior to his "Aldersgate experience." There is a trajectory that was set into motion through Wesley's correspondence and interaction with the Moravians. To understand the nature of these events, one cannot overlook this connection.

¹⁵ McGonigle, *Moravians*, 24.

“witness of the Spirit” which can be found throughout his writings, especially in his sermon corpus.¹⁶

At this stage of Wesley’s life, his major focus was on how the Holy Spirit works in the believer in the process of salvation (*ordo salutis*).¹⁷ Although initially his interest in the Spirit was primarily soteriological (how one *becomes* a Christian), he increasingly became convinced through his dialogue with the Moravians that he needed to broaden his understanding of the work of the Spirit to include the inner witness of the Spirit (how one *knows* they are a Christian).¹⁸ The shift toward the Spirit’s role in Christian assurance would not fully take place until after his Aldersgate experience. During the years 1725 to 1738, Wesley’s doctrine of the Spirit was relatively undeveloped, but important seeds were sown for the development of a pneumatology that was to emerge in the important years that followed.

The Middle Wesley, 1738-1769

May 24, 1738, marked the beginning of the second stage of Wesley’s theological development. During this time he began to further develop his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in which his emphasis on the role of the Spirit began to move from internal to external, from the process of salvation to the witness of the Spirit, and eventually to the fruit of the Spirit. 1738 to 1739 would especially prove to be a very important time in his pneumatological development and his overall theology.

While attending a prayer meeting at Aldersgate Street in London, John Wesley had an experience that forever changed his life. He writes:

In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt

¹⁶See specifically sermons “The Witness of the Spirit I” (1746), “The Witness of the Spirit II” (1767), and “The Witness of Our Own Spirit” (1746).

¹⁷To see some of Wesley’s references to the soteriological work of the Holy Spirit before 1738, see sermons; “The Circumcision of the Heart” (1733), “A Single Intention” (1736), and “On Love” (1737).

¹⁸Heitzenrater, Richard P., “Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity.” Randy Maddox ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1990), 52

I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.¹⁹

This experience has been called by some Wesley's conversion-initiation. However, Albert Outler said that "Wesley came to realize that Aldersgate had been *one* in a series of the "turning points" in his passage from don to missionary to evangelist."²⁰ Corresponding to these turning points is the unique theological development that Wesley underwent. Aldersgate was an important event in John's religious and theological development and changed the course of his life and ministry. The Aldersgate experience introduced a new emphasis on the Holy Spirit into Wesley's theology.²¹ Richard P. Heitzenrater says that the significance of Aldersgate is:

It is the point in his spiritual pilgrimage at which he experiences the power of the Holy Spirit and at which his theology is confronted by a dynamic pneumatology. From that point on the Holy Spirit has a central role in Wesley's definition of the "true Christian," his understanding of how one becomes a Christian, and his explanation of how one knows he or she is a Christian.²²

His newly found assurance would not last long. After only a short time Wesley began to have doubts about the nature of his salvation.²³ Over the next year, he struggled to appropriate the full implications of the "witness of the Spirit." In the summer of 1738, John traveled to Herrnhut, Germany to visit the homeland of the Moravians. There he hoped to solidify the work which God had wrought in his heart. He said, "I hoped the conversing with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith and yet able to bear with those that are

¹⁹*Works, Journal*, 1:103.

²⁰Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford Press, 1964), 52.

²¹Larry W. Wood. *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism: Rediscovering John Fletcher as Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor* (Scarecrow Press, 2003). Quoting from Richard Heitzenrater. *Mirror and Memory*, 108-109.

²²Heitzenrater, Richard P., "Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity." Randy Maddox ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1990), 90.

²³Wesley shared his personal struggles that followed Aldersgate in his journals from September 1738 to April 1739.

weak would be a means, under God, of so establishing my soul that I might go on from faith to faith and from strength to strength.”²⁴

He met Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf and observed the lifestyle and religious practices of the Moravian community. At the time he seemed to be impressed with their unity and piety. However, only a few months after he returned to England Wesley complained that they were too passive and did not exercise enough care in practicing the means of grace such as prayer, fasting, Communion, and Bible study.²⁵ They over-emphasized the internal witness of the Spirit and made assurance a requirement for salvation. This was to be the beginning of Wesley’s rift with the Moravians.

Wesley began to realize that there were degrees of faith and degrees of assurance that can be mixed with both doubt and fear.²⁶ He began to sense that full assurance of faith was not necessary to the new birth, but a “measure of faith” was adequate for reconciliation through Christ.²⁷ Although a believer can expect to receive the witness of the Spirit, it is not necessarily the true evidence of genuine conversion. Wesley said, “I have not yet that joy in the Holy Ghost, nor the full assurance of faith, much less am I, in the full sense of the words, “in Christ a new creature.” I nevertheless trust that I have a measure of faith, and am “accepted in the beloved.”²⁸ Over the next several months he continued to struggle with the notion of whether or not he was a true Christian. He sought to fully authenticate his Christian experience through the witness and fruit of the Spirit.

There are three significant events that helped Wesley overcome this impasse in his spiritual pilgrimage and played an important role in his pneumatological development. First, on October 9, 1738, while walking from London to Oxford, he began to “read the truly surprising narrative of conversions lately wrought in and about the town of North Hampton in New England.”²⁹ Wesley fully accepted Jonathan Edwards’ analysis of the “distinguishing marks of the work of the Spirit of God.”³⁰ From read-

²⁴Wesley, Journals, June 7, 1738.

²⁵See “The Rift with the Moravians,” Outler, *John Wesley*, 353.

²⁶Collins, Kenneth J., *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley’s Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abigdon Press, 1997), 131-152.

²⁷Heitzenrater, Richard P., “Great Expectations,” 71.

²⁸*Works*, 1:162-163. Journals, October 6, 1738.

²⁹*Works*, 1:160.

³⁰Outler, Introduction, *John Wesley*, 15.

ing Edwards' treatise, he saw the significance of the outward work of the Spirit in New England and was unknowingly building a foundation for his doctrinal understanding of the work of the Spirit in the Methodist revival.

The second major event was when Wesley made a critical reappropriation of the Anglican *Homilies*, which pointed him back to the "much controverted point of Justification by Faith," and widened the theological gap between Wesley and the Moravians.³¹ He found within his own Anglican heritage the answers to many of the theological quandaries that he had with the Moravians. As a result, he published them in an extract for the use of others.³² Outler notes that this marked the final stage of Wesley's maturation as a theologian: "his encounter with Edwards and his vital reappropriation of his Anglican heritage—the frame of Wesley's theology was finally set, and would so remain there after."³³

The third event took place in 1739. Wesley had been preaching in different parishes, but his new message of "salvation by faith" was not received well by the established Church of England. On November 30, 1738, George Whitefield returned from a successful ministry tour in America. Whitfield's method was "field preaching" in the open air to the common people. On April 2, 1739, Whitfield convinced Wesley to preach in his absence in the open air in Bristol. John reflected on the occasion in his journal: "I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city about three thousand people."³⁴

This event marked the beginning of John Wesley's evangelistic ministry and a further maturation in his pneumatology. His emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit began to move from the internal work of the Spirit (new birth, witness of the Spirit) to the external work of the Spirit (witness and fruit of the Spirit) among the people. Heitzenrater points out that Wesley's quest "becomes less singularly personal as he begins to sense the work of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the people, a phenomenon not unlike what he had read about in Jonathan Edwards' writings."³⁵ Wesley was able to make a synthesis of these events and integrate them

³¹*Works*, 1:164. Journals, November 12, 1738.

³²*The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith, and Good Works: Extracted from the Homilies of the Church of England* (1738).

³³Outler, Introduction, *John Wesley*, 16.

³⁴*Works*, 1: 185. Journals, April 2, 1739.

³⁵Heitzenrater, Richard P., "Great Expectations," 75.

into his overall pneumatology. His doctrine of the Spirit was not changing as much as it was maturing and broadening to include the outward work of the Spirit. The outward signs of the Spirit among the people proved the authenticity of the gospel message he preached.

The sermons during this period show a progression and maturation in the development of Wesley's doctrine of the Spirit. Sermons prior to 1738 say little concerning the Holy Spirit, but in the following years the sermons begin to discuss in greater detail the work of the Spirit as a regular part of the Christian life by including an emphasis on the witness and fruit of the Spirit. Outler notes that "in a series of published sermons in 1746-48 he began to sort out his doctrine of grace . . . in a perspective that is explicitly pneumatological and implicitly Trinitarian."³⁶ Beginning with the early 1740's, there is a rise of Spirit language in Wesley's sermons that continued throughout his life. This development in his sermons demonstrates a more mature and holistic pneumatology in Wesley's thought.

"Salvation by Faith," 1738. On June 11, 1738, Wesley preached a sermon entitled "Salvation by Faith" at Oxford University before his Oxford colleagues just a month after Aldersgate. The sermon represented a clear shift in his theology from salvation by works to salvation by faith. The role of the Spirit is also clearly defined in the process of salvation. He said that those who were saved by faith were "sealed with the Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance"; "and the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts through the Holy Ghost which is given them"; and they are "born again of the Spirit unto a new life which is hid with Christ in God."³⁷ Wesley is placing a more articulate emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer who is saved by faith. He makes another reference to assurance by saying, "The Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God."³⁸ In this sermon we can see that Wesley is beginning to integrate the Spirit's work into his theology. By this time the Spirit is becoming a central focus in his soteriology.

"Scriptural Christianity," 1744. In a sermon preached at St. Mary's on August 24, 1744, entitled "Scriptural Christianity," Wesley clearly emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. His chosen text was "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 4:31).

³⁶Outler, "A Focus on the Holy Spirit," 167.

³⁷*Works*, 5:11, "Salvation by Faith."

³⁸*Ibid*, 5:10-11.

Wesley was not concerned with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, but the ordinary fruit that should accompany the life of a true Christian. He said:

Whether these gifts of the Holy Spirit were designed to remain in the church throughout all ages, and whether or not they will be restored at the nearer approach of the "restitution of all things," are questions which it is not needful to decide. . . . It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."³⁹

The ordinary fruits of the Spirit were to remain throughout all ages as the true sign of scriptural Christianity.

Wesley saw "being filled with the Spirit" as the evidence of true Christianity. He asked, "Where does this Christianity now exist? . . . Are we considered as a community of men, so 'filled with the Holy Ghost,' as to enjoy in our hearts, and show forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of the Spirit?"⁴⁰ True Christianity is found in people who are filled with the Holy Spirit, who have the evidence of the fruits of the Spirit. In the Methodist revival, the work of the Spirit was becoming evident in the lives of believers, and Wesley became increasingly convinced that the fruit of the Spirit was the sign of Scriptural Christianity. This is a significant leap to suggest that true Christianity must be evidenced with outward signs of the fruit of the Spirit. It is important to note that this sermon caused no small amount of scandal at Oxford and shows that Wesley's emphasis on "spiritual Christianity" was revolutionary in every sense of the word.⁴¹ "Scriptural Christianity" shows Wesley's theological progression to include the fruits of the Spirit as an external evidence of true Christianity.⁴²

³⁹*Works*, 5:38, "Scriptural Christianity."

⁴⁰*Ibid*, 5:47.

⁴¹Wesley attached the following footnote to the sermon, "It was not my design, when I wrote, ever to print the latter part of the following sermon: But false and scurrilous accounts of it which have been published, almost in every corner of the nation, constrain me to publish the whole, just as it was preached; that men of reason may judge for themselves." *Works*, 5:37.

⁴²See also the sermon "The First Fruits of the Spirit" (1746), in which Wesley argues that, "These are they indeed 'walk after the Spirit.' Being filled with faith and with the Holy Ghost, they possess in their hearts and show forth in their lives, in the whole course of their words and actions, the genuine fruits of the Spirit of God, namely, 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance,' and whatsoever else is lovely or praiseworthy. "They adorn in all things the gospel of God our Saviour;" and give full proof to all mankind, that they are indeed actuated by the same Spirit "which raised up Jesus from the dead." *Works*, 5:89.

“Witness of the Spirit,” 1746. Although the gestalt of Wesley’s understanding of Christian assurance can be seen as early as 1725, he does not begin to fully explicate his mature thought on the “witness of the Spirit” until 1746 in several key sermons. In “The Witness of the Spirit” (1746), Wesley sought first to describe the connection between the witness of the Spirit and the witness of our spirit, and secondly to distinguish it from the presumption of a natural mind. This was an attempt to answer the critics who opposed his doctrine of assurance (by charging him with enthusiasm) and to instruct his followers how to discern between the genuine witness of the Spirit and human feelings in order to keep them from falling into enthusiasm.⁴³ A part of the problem was that enthusiasts claimed to have the inner work of the Spirit without bearing the outward fruit of the Spirit. In the “Witness of the Spirit,” he focuses on:

The testimony of the Spirit as an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved, and given himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.⁴⁴

The testimony of the Spirit must be an antecedent to the testimony of our spirit. He said, “We cannot know his pardoning love to us till his Spirit witness it to our spirit.”⁴⁵ The Spirit of God comes before the testimony of our spirit, gives us the divine testimony, and allows our testimony to confirm it. The two witnesses work together in order to let us know that we have become a child of God. This testimony must have discernable features. He describes the testimony of our spirit as “A consciousness that we are inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.”⁴⁶

The witness of the Spirit with our spirit demands an ethical response to God. For Wesley, pneumatology is never merely spiritual without an ethical imperative, or the reverse.⁴⁷ There are several distinctive ethical marks that distinguish true assurance from false assurance.

⁴³This was an argument that was important enough for him to write a second discourse by the same title in 1767, over twenty years later. See also “The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” (1746); and “The Nature of Enthusiasm” (1750).

⁴⁴*Works*, 5:115.

⁴⁵*Ibid*, 5:115.

⁴⁶*Ibid*, 5:115.

⁴⁷Outler, “Spirit and Spirituality in John Wesley,” 168.

1. Repentance, or conviction of sin, as constantly going before the witness of pardon.⁴⁸
2. There will be a vast and mighty change “from darkness to light,” as well as “from the power of Satan unto God.”⁴⁹
3. We keep his commandments. He said, “A true lover of God hastens to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven.”⁵⁰
4. By the fruits of the Spirit, which he has wrought in your spirit, you shall know the testimony of the spirit of God. There are both immediate fruits (love, joy, peace) and outward fruits (doing good to all men, doing no evil, walking in the light).⁵¹

These distinguishing marks accompany the true testimony of the Spirit with the spirit of a believer and should become discernable to others. As the witness of the Spirit confirms the new birth, the fruits of the Spirit confirm the Spirit's testimony with our spirit that we are indeed children of God.

Although there are several other key sermons in the middle stage that discuss the Holy Spirit, the previous sermons demonstrate the progression in Wesley's pneumatology. As the Methodist revival began to take shape, he discerned the work of the Spirit among the people. As a result, his emphasis on the Holy Spirit shifted from the inward personal work of the Spirit to include outward evidences of the Spirit's work. His understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit began with the new birth, accompanied by the witness of the Spirit with our spirit, and eventually included the ordinary fruits of the Spirit (both immediate and outward) as the external evidence of the Spirit's witness, all of which have a unique ethical imperative. A person who is born of the Spirit and has received the inner testimony of the Spirit must now demonstrate the distinguishable marks of this experience.

The Later Wesley, 1770-1791

Outler said that the “later Wesley” was “a time of still further theological maturation” . . . and “has suffered the most neglect in Wesleyan

⁴⁸*Works*, 5:118.

⁴⁹*Ibid*, 5:118.

⁵⁰*Ibid*, 5:120.

⁵¹*Ibid*, 5:122.

studies generally.”⁵² He further said that “the sermons from these last two decades are, therefore, of great importance for any rounded view of his vision of the Christian life.”⁵³ Therefore, it is important for a study about Wesley’s theological development to look at the latter stage of his life and theology. As we have seen, his earlier emphasis on the role of the Spirit shifted from personal salvation to the witness of the Spirit, and then included the fruits of the Spirit. In the latter Wesley, his emphasis expanded even further to include the universal work of the Spirit in the Methodist revival.

There are several influences to take into consideration at this point. First, as we saw earlier, Wesley came under the influences of Edward’s views of revival.⁵⁴ Edwards had a millennial view in which he believed the revival in New England was a part of a great end-time revival. Edwards said:

Indeed, I have often said, as I say now, that I looked upon the late wonderful revival of religion as forerunners of those glorious times so often prophesied of in Scriptures, and that this was the first dawning of that light, and beginning of that work which, in the progress and issue of it, would at last bring on the church’s *latter-day glory* . . . and Christ’s kingdom shall be everywhere established and settled in peace, which will be the lengthening of the millennium.⁵⁵

Notice the similarities in the following excerpt from Wesley’s “The Signs of the Times”:

The times which we have reason to believe are at hand (if they are not already begun) are what many pious men have termed the time of the “*latter-day glory*”; meaning the time wherein God would gloriously display his power and love in the fulfill-

⁵²Outler, Introduction, *Sermons*. 46. Cited in Wood, *Meaning of Pentecost*.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 46.

⁵⁴Wesley continued to publish and distribute Edwards works even in the later stage. *An Extract from the Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (Bristol, 1773); and rev. ed. of the *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions, The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit, and Thoughts* (1773). See also “The Work of God in North America” where Wesley connects Edwards and the revival in New England to the extended work of God in North America. *Works*, 7:410.

⁵⁵Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening, Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 4:560.

ment of his gracious promise, that "knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters of the sea."⁵⁶

Although Wesley's vision of the revival was not as specifically millennial, the theory of an end-time revival is clearly evident. His understanding of an end-time revival had its roots in Edwards's earlier influence on his concept on revival of religion.

Larry Wood notes that shortly after his memorial sermon, "On the Death of George Whitefield," preached on November 18, 1770, Wesley entered into a unique alliance with John Fletcher which shifted the direction of Methodist history.⁵⁷ Fletcher worked closely with Wesley and soon became one of the most influential leaders in early Methodism. Fletcher is perhaps best noted for his *Checks to Antinomianism* (1771) which defended the theological views of John Wesley and the early Methodism. Wesley was so impressed by Fletcher's piety and theological prowess that Fletcher became his "authorized interpreter and designated successor."⁵⁸

As a result of Fletcher's influence, Wesley's latter sermons "highlighted the Methodist phenomenon as inaugurating a 'Pentecostal Church' in the world."⁵⁹ The distinct contribution that Fletcher made upon Wesley's theology was the concept of a "Pentecostal Church," which helped Wesley articulate and defend the extraordinary work of God that was happening through the Methodist movement. Wood notes that Wesley's latter sermons focused on a pentecostal theme because he believed that the Methodist revival in his day was the first sign of a new Pentecost. He believed that a new pentecostal church was being re-established on the earth that would be the fulfillment of the first Pentecost.⁶⁰ The external evidence of the outward work of the Spirit resembled the

⁵⁶*Works*, 6:307, "The Signs of the Times."

⁵⁷Larry Wood has written a compelling book that demonstrates the critical influence that John Fletcher had on Wesley and early Methodism. This influence can especially be seen in the Wesley's later sermons. For a more detailed discussion on this vital connection, see Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism: Rediscovering John Fletcher as Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor* (Scarecrow Press, 2003), 9.

⁵⁸*Ibid.* See chapter 5, "Wesley's Authorized Interpreter and Designated Successor," 75-94.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁰Wood, Larry. *Meaning of Pentecost*, 168.

first Pentecost and demonstrated that God was indeed with the Methodists as they spread universally throughout the world. Wesley's concept of a pentecostal church demonstrates a growing interest in the universal work of the Spirit and marks a further shift in Wesley's pneumatology.

Wesley's inclusive views on the universal work of the Holy Spirit made him open to "extraordinary" measures. Because God was inaugurating a "New Pentecost," there were certain exceptions that he was willing to make to the established ecclesiastical norms of the Anglican Church. As early as 1750, Wesley defended the practice of laypersons preaching the gospel by referring to the "practice of the apostolic age." In reference to Acts 8:4, he said, "Here you see not one but a multitude of 'lay preachers,' men that were only sent by God."⁶¹ In 1771, he went even further to include the practice of allowing certain women to preach because they were under an "extraordinary dispensation" of God. In a letter to Mary Bosanquet he said:

I think that the strength of the cause rests there—on your having an *extraordinary* call. So I am persuaded has every one of our lay preachers; otherwise I could not countenance his preaching at all. It is plain to me that the whole work of God termed Methodism is an *extraordinary dispensation* of His providence. Therefore I do not wonder if several things occur therein which do not fall under the ordinary rules of discipline.⁶²

"On Laying the Foundation," 1777. There are several particular sermons that articulate the latter Wesley's concept of the universal work of the Spirit in relation to the Methodist revival. In the following two sermons, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel" (1777) and "The Late Work of God in North America" (1778), Wesley describes the progression in which Methodism spread throughout North America and the British Isles. In reference to the British Isles, he notes:

For such a work, if we consider the *extensiveness* of it, the *swiftness* with which it has spread, the *depth* of the religion so swiftly diffused, and its *purity* from all corrupt mixtures, we must acknowledge cannot easily be paralleled, in all these con-

⁶¹*Works*, 2:74-75, "A Caution Against Bigotry."

⁶²Letter to Mary Bosanquet (June 13, 1771). Telford, John, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*. 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 5:257.

current circumstances, by any thing that is found in the English annals, since Christianity was first planted in this Island.⁶³

It is clear that he believed that the Spirit of God was doing an extraordinary work through the Methodist revival in America and England, which he associated with the great *latter-day glory*. His focus of God's redemption moved beyond the borders of England and America toward a global vision of salvation.

“The General Spread of the Gospel,” 1783. The emphasis on the universal work of the Spirit becomes even more extensive in “The General Spread of the Gospel” (1783). He not only acknowledged the work of the Spirit in Great Britain and Ireland, and America, but he also thought it would spread throughout the world. He speculated:

Probably it will spread from these to the Protestants in France, to those in Germany, and to those in Switzerland; then Sweden, Denmark, Russia, and all other Protestant nations in Europe. May we not suppose that the same leaven of pure and undefiled religion, of the experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness, will afterwards spread to the Roman Catholics in Great Britain, Ireland, Holland; in Germany, France, Switzerland. . . . And may it gradually be diffused from provinces of Turkey, in Albyssinia, yea, and in the remotest parts, not only of Europe, but of Asia, Africa, and America? And in every nation under heaven, we may reasonably believe, God will observe the same order which he has done from the beginning.⁶⁴

Wesley's universal vision of the work of the Holy Spirit included people in every country and in every part of the world. From the previous excerpt there can be no doubt that Wesley was an inclusivist who “believed that God's Spirit was at work everywhere in the world, extending God's prevenient graciousness among all peoples.”⁶⁵

The Spirit offers Christ's cosmic salvation to all the people of the world regardless of their nationality, socio-economic background, ethnicity,

⁶³*Works*, 7:427, “On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, Near City-Road, London” (1777).

⁶⁴*Ibid*, 6:282-283, “The General Spread of the Gospel.”

⁶⁵Runyon, Theodore, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 33.

or gender. Wesley goes on to say that the latter-day glory will be a time that God will have “accomplished all those glorious promises made to the Christian Church, which will not then be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth.”⁶⁶ Thus, the latter Pentecost will be greater than the first Pentecost because it will fulfill all of the promises of the first. Finally, Wesley believed that the end-time work of the Spirit had already begun in his day with the rise of the Methodist movement and that it would continue to spread throughout the world. He said:

He is already renewing the face of the earth: And we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun he will carry out on unto the day of the Lord Jesus; that he will never intermit this blessed work of the Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises, until he hath put a period to sin, and misery, and happiness, and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, “Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”⁶⁷

“The Signs of the Times,” 1787. In “The Signs of the Times” (1787), Wesley continued to describe his understanding of the growing universal work of the Holy Spirit through Methodism. He compared and contrasted the differences between the former religion and the latter-day glory, which was marked by the “extraordinary work of God.” He called for Christians to discern the signs of the times. However, he noted that wise men of the world, men of eminence, men of learning and renown, cannot discern the signs of the times!⁶⁸ What are the signs of the times? It will be marked by the universal spread of the gospel, which will be accompanied by:

Inward and outward holiness, or “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” which hath spread in various parts of Europe, particularly England, Scotland, Ireland, in the Islands, in the North and South, from Georgia to New England, and Newfoundland, that sinners have been truly converted to God, thoroughly changed both in heart and in life; not by tens, or by hundreds alone, but by thousands, yea, by miraiads!⁶⁹

⁶⁶*Ibid*, 6:287.

⁶⁷*Ibid*, 6:288.

⁶⁸*Works*, 6:309, “Signs of the Times.”

⁶⁹*Ibid*, 6:308.

The rapid spread of the gospel was a convincing sign of the times. Not only was the gospel preached, but it also resulted in genuine converts who were not only Christian in name (as in former times) but were "changed both in heart and life." The result was inward and outward holiness. The fruit of the Spirit authenticated the genuine conversion experience of the newly converted and contributed to the further spread of the gospel. In other words, true Christianity is contagious. Wesley attributed this to the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people. He said, "How swift, as well as how deep and how extensive, a work has been wrought in the present age! And certainly, not by might, neither by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord."⁷⁰ Thus there is a connection between the way the Spirit works in personal salvation and the further spread of Christianity. Wesley's pneumatology was ever expansive and finally included a worldwide perspective of the Spirit's work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article is an attempt to demonstrate that there is a distinct development in his pneumatology that can be seen throughout his sermons. The historical development of Wesley's doctrine of the Spirit can be divided into three stages: early, middle, and latter. The early Wesley emphasized the personal work of the Spirit in salvation (how one *becomes* a Christian). The middle Wesley emphasized the role of the Spirit in Christian assurance and gradually focused on the fruit of the Spirit (how one *knows* he or she is a Christian). Then the latter Wesley began to focus on the universal and extraordinary work of the Spirit in relation to the Methodist revival (how to *spread* Christianity).

Wesley's mature pneumatology was a synthesis of various influences and significant events that took place throughout his lifetime. There is a direct correlation between his life, the rise of the Methodist movement, and the development of his doctrine of the Spirit. Pneumatological seeds were sown during his Oxford years that sprang forth much later in his life. During this time he explored the personal work of the Spirit in salvation and sanctification. Through the Moravian correspondence, Wesley began to develop a doctrine of Christian assurance or witness of the Spirit and began to work out his understanding of the fruit of the Spirit as a regular part of the Christian life. From Whitfield he gained an outward

⁷⁰*Ibid*, 6:311.

perspective on the work of the Spirit within the Methodist revival. From reading Edwards account of the New England revival, he gained a broader understanding of the universal and extraordinary work of the Spirit of God. And finally, Fletcher helped Wesley see the growing Methodist movement as the formation of a new end—time pentecostal church.

These events and influences are directly connected to the development of Wesley's doctrine of the Spirit. To separate them would be to misunderstand the uniqueness of Wesley's theological development. In addition, the stages of his pneumatological development are not separate from one another; rather they represent maturation and continuity in Wesley's understanding of the Spirit. Like concentric circles, each stage is connected and builds upon the other. This progression began with an emphasis on the role of the Spirit in personal salvation, then included the witness and fruit of the Spirit, and finally expanded even further to include the universal work of the Spirit.

Finally, Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not just a category in his theology, but is intricately connected to his overall theology. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in personal salvation, church formation, and the general spread of the gospel. The progression of Wesley's pneumatological development was dynamic, ever expanding, and inclusive. His doctrine of the Holy Spirit has a distinct contribution to make in the contemporary ecumenical movement.⁷¹ The significance of rediscovering Wesley's emphasis on the Holy Spirit would perhaps bridge gaps between Wesleyan and Pentecostal movements and create a forum for theological and ecclesiastical dialogue between Protestants and Roman Catholics.⁷²

⁷¹Starkey, Lycurgus, M. *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 140. For further discussion on the ecumenical significance of pneumatology see also the works of the following contemporary theologians: Clark Pinnock, Jürgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg.

⁷²There are a number of books and articles that have discussed the theological connection between the Wesleyan-Holiness movement and Pentecostalism. A few of them are: Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (New Jersey: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987); D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Steve J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); and Vinson Synan, *The Holiness/Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic*

There is no telling what will happen when the church rediscovers Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Movements in the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997). Steven J. Land urges both Wesleyan/Holiness and Holiness/Pentecostals to collaborate together in developing a distinctive theology of the church, salvation, and mission ("The Triune Center: Wesleyans and Pentecostals Together," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34:1, 1999).

SOME RECENT TRENDS IN WESLEY SCHOLARSHIP¹

by

Henry D. Rack

What is “Wesley Scholarship” or what is often termed “Wesley Studies”? It may be something that simply focuses on Wesley—usually meaning John, but sometimes including Charles. On John it may be something mainly concerned with John Wesley as an historical figure, either for biographical purposes or sometimes for his placement in the history of doctrine. More broadly, he may be seen as the leader of an eighteenth-century religious movement, so that “Wesley Studies” may be extended into something more like studies of “Methodism.” If Wesley’s theology is the main focus of interest, it may well extend beyond the purely historical into an attempt to develop a distinctive school of what is often termed “Wesleyan” theology applied to a variety of modern concerns.

I have often thought that we can see a fairly marked difference between American and British Wesley scholarship, especially in recent decades. Americans have produced far more “Wesleyan” theology, and often with an eye to modern applications. British scholarship has shown more interest in the general history, including Wesley’s biography, but also in nineteenth-century English Methodism and local Methodist history. In recent decades there has also been a marked interest among both Methodist and non-Methodist English historians in the social significance

¹This is an updated version of a paper delivered at the Nazarene College, Manchester, England, April, 2005, made available through the generosity of Herbert McGonigle.

of Methodism, particularly in the nineteenth century. This has been reflected, for example, in the subjects of articles in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* and academic theses.

My remarks on tendencies in American Methodist scholarship apply strictly to the relative dearth of work done on Wesley biography and early Methodism in England. American scholars have, of course, produced work of great distinction and sophistication on the history of American Methodism and revivalism, from which we should all learn. Some idea of recent findings can be glimpsed in Professor David Hempton's thought-provoking *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (2005).

Of course, these are very broad generalisations and exceptions will occur to you from both sides of the Atlantic. Richard Heitzenrater has become pre-eminent in work on Wesley's life and the sources for it, and as the editor of the Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's *Works*. Herbert McGonigle and students of the Nazarene College in Manchester, England, have produced much work on Wesley's doctrines. While revising this lecture I was reminded of a formidable team of younger Methodist theologians whose first drafts of a recent collection of theological essays for modern Methodist readers I was privileged to view (Clive Marsh and others, *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, Continuum, 2004). Looking at this work again, it is noticeable how limited is the reliance on Wesley. More reference seems to be made to twentieth-century Conference pronouncements and present-day theological concerns.

Before going on, I should mention two basic modern aids which help to sustain most forms of Wesley scholarship. First, bibliographies, of which there are several. Simply for convenience of reference and because it is annually updated, I single out Clive Field's classified list in volume IV of the *History of Methodism in Great Britain* (1988) supplemented by wide-ranging annual updates in the *Proceedings of the WHS*. The other major tool is the Bicentennial Edition of John Wesley's *Works*, on which I shall say more in what follows.

John Wesley and "Wesleyan" Theology

Non-Methodist and even Methodist writers have often almost disregarded John Wesley as a theologian. He has been seen rather as an evangelist, organizer of a religious movement, and unwitting church founder. When he has been viewed theologically, it has been commonplace to emphasize that he was not a "systematic" theologian and that he was

highly eclectic. Yet, despite all of this, it is noticeable how, especially in recent decades in America, we can see determined attempts to study Wesley as a significant theologian and to develop at least a distinctive if not strictly systematic theology from his writings.

For this purpose, the Bicentennial Edition of his *Works* is so far of somewhat limited help. There is a volume of Wesley's *Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion*. The *Journal* (now complete) does not offer much directly, apart from his famous review of his religious development prefaced to the account of his conversion. In some ways, this is actually misleading as it does not represent his final views even on his early beliefs. The letters are much more illuminating. Unfortunately, they only so far reach 1756 and, for his extended letters defending his teaching (apart from those to "John Smith"), we have to fall back on Telford's edition, although some items are in volume 9. The most valuable new tool for Wesley's theology is undoubtedly the four volumes of sermons edited by Albert Outler. They include a massive addition of information about the sources, circumstances, and interpretation of the sermons. Outler had also, as will be shown in a moment, helped earlier to set much of the agenda for the modern development of "Wesleyan" theology.

This is indeed a modern phenomenon or at least a twentieth century one. Methodist theologians have been rare in England and, although more common in America, it seems to be the case that they have often developed their theologies along lines reflecting current fashions, with only limited reference to Wesley (and usually on specifically "Wesleyan" doctrines such as Arminianism and Christian perfection). This was true of the first English Wesleyan systematic theology in the 1820s by Richard Watson and similar tendencies can be seen in America. (See Randy Maddox's essay on the subject in a collection of essays he has edited on *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism* (1998).) In England in the earlier twentieth century there were indeed monographs on individual Wesley doctrines, but mainly of an historical nature. But for some years now there has been a proliferation of American Methodist theology of an avowedly "Wesleyan" character.

The acknowledged lack of system in Wesley's writings has been no deterrent. Of course, one *can* extract his views on the traditional range of topics in systematic theology and arrange them in the traditional order. Collin Williams did this in his well-known *John Wesley's Theology Today* (1960)—still, I think, the handiest guide of its type. More generally, it has

been recognized that Wesley's central concern was with the theology of salvation. Some, however, feel that one can identify leading and recurring concerns which can be used to illustrate various other theological topics in a systematic way and so construct a kind of system, if not in a conventional manner. I mentioned that Albert Outler initiated some significant trends. In his selection of writings in *John Wesley* (1964) for the Library of Protestant Theology, he identified Wesley as a "folk theologian," expressing the Christian message in its fullness and integrity in "plain words for plain people." Further, the sort of theology Wesley advocated was always directed to practical ends; doctrinal opinions were always valued for their "contribution to vital faith."

Outler also made the point that Wesley glimpsed the underlying unity of Christian truth in both the Catholic and the Protestant traditions, although he was not the first to do this. See the famous claim by G. C. Cell in *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (1935) that he synthesized the Catholic doctrine of holiness with the Protestant doctrine of grace. For Outler's remarks, see his *John Wesley*, vii-ix, 26-33. Outler had in mind not simply Wesley's drawing on patristic, Catholic, and Anglican sources, but also his persistent and characteristic concern for sanctification as well as justification. Outler also claimed that Wesley's views on perfection owed more to Eastern than to Western traditions and this, along with his emphasis on Wesley's debt to the Fathers, especially the Eastern ones, has inspired further work on similar lines.

Outler's emphasis on Wesley as distinctively a *practical* theologian continues to be evident in more recent writing. See, for example, Robert Cushman's *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity* (1989) and Randy Maddox's *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (1994). In the collection already mentioned, *Rethinking Wesley's Theology*, Thomas Langford contends that Wesley's theology is always related to Christian faith and living. The rest of this collection gives a good idea of the range of "Wesleyan" theology and the interests it serves. It covers such issues as stewardship, conversion, evangelism, ecumenism, Latin America, South Africa, and revolution. A similar range of applications to present-day concerns can be found in the papers published by the successive Oxford Institute conferences. Some Wesley scholars have also pursued the possibility of finding a unifying or underling theme in Wesley's apparently piecemeal utterances. An interesting example is Theodore Runyon's *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (1998). He pursues this theme

through ideas of God, grace, salvation, the means of grace, and then on to modern preoccupations with human rights, poverty, women's rights, the environment, and ecumenism.

The theologians mentioned are a guarantee of solid and creative thinking—and there are many more. There will not doubt be more to come, both on Wesley's ideas in their historical context and continuing discussion about his affinities with Puritan, Roman Catholic, and other types of Christian tradition. One may also expect more to come from re-evaluations of the Christian tradition, including the Wesleyan part of it, from theologians in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, the growth areas for present-day Christianity.

Constructing "Wesleyan" theologies and applying them are, I am sure, legitimate enterprises. A historian may perhaps add a few cautionary words. There is a danger of anachronism and claiming too much for Wesley, unless one is quite clear what one is doing. To recover the thought of the historical Wesley in his historical context is one thing. To transfer and apply it to the present day is another and is subject to inevitable limitations. I am happy to admit that, from time to time, I attempt to find useful lessons from Wesley for today, but I think the lessons are fairly general. I would add that to interpret his theology, even in strictly historical terms, one needs to bear in mind a vital point, not always sufficiently recognized. It is that Wesley developed and changed, not only before his conversion, but also long after. So, if you see him in his maturity, say from the mid-1740s and even more from the 1760s onwards, what you see is not the dogmatic high churchman of his early years or the dogmatic "evangelical" at the time of his conversion, but rather what I would call a "both-and" rather than an "either-or" theologian. This runs through his theology and his practice. Thus, justification *and* sanctification; formal *and* informal worship; individual *and* collective piety; spiritual *and* social salvation. Even more challenging is his claim that church order must be subordinated to the demands of evangelism and pastoral care.

John Wesley and His Biographers

When it comes to biography, the new *Works* become of prime importance. We now have the *Journal* complete with the surviving diaries from 1735 (the point at which the *Journal* begins). What we do not yet have are the much more revealing Oxford diaries that are promised for a separate volume. Meanwhile, we can obtain a good idea of their contents from

Vivian Green's *Young Mr Wesley* (1961) and Richard Heitzenrater's unpublished Duke University thesis on "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists" (1972). The other major source in the BE is the letters. As already noted, so far they only reach 1756, but they have the great advantage over the old Telford edition of including much of the other side of the correspondence. An important part of the improved text of the *Journal* is Professor Ward's remarkable Introduction. This not only places the *Journal* in the context of contemporary modes of religious biography (into which, like much else about Wesley, it fits rather awkwardly), but also makes clear, more or less for the first time, just what kind of document it is and how tricky it is to handle it as a biographical source. Biographers have accepted it far too uncritically and allowed it to shape too much of their lives of Wesley. It is essentially a selective work of propaganda, written and published in installments several years after the events described. It is liable to represent Wesley's views at the time of publication. Ward also points out that it is an awkward source and model for a biography since it naturally lacks the orderly shape and plan of an account written after the life is complete.

The stock evangelical life that climaxes in conversion is a particularly awkward model which in Wesley's case has over half a century to run after conversion. The *Journal* is also not very revealing of Wesley's inner life. The letters have more to offer here. Finally, if one is relying on the *Journal* for Wesley's biography, one is offered very little apart from a few retrospects on his life before the age of thirty-two. Both older biographers, musing that the child is father to the man, and modern psychological ones who suspect that character is largely determined by development before the age of five, are liable to be frustrated by this. Indeed, we hardly know any more about Wesley's life before the age of twenty than Tyerman in the 1870s or even Adam Clarke and Henry Moore in the 1820s. Much of what appears to cover that period of his life really depends on Mrs. Wesley's famous account of her child-rearing methods, plus a few well-worn anecdotes and evidence about the rest of the family.

Turning to modern lives of Wesley, there is one outstanding aid to be mentioned first, although it is not a straight biography. This is Heitzenrater's *Elusive Mr Wesley* (1984, new ed. 2003). It is really three books in one. Part I is a kind of critical selective documentary life which dissects and corrects a number of legends, as well as including some extracts from Wesley's self-examinations in his early diaries. Part II is a unique collec-

tion of descriptions and comments about Wesley from his contemporaries. Part III is a bibliographical essay tracing the development and characteristics of Wesley biographies from the 1790s. I have added a detailed study of the circumstances shaping the earliest biographies that continued to influence the later ones. See *Methodist History* (January 2005).

In reading Wesley biographies, one needs to be aware of some long-standing problems. Heitzenrater has useful things to say about this in the introduction to his book. I would underline the following points rather summarily. The more popular (and sometimes the more scholarly) lives are liable to recycle traditional stories without re-examining the evidence, while also relying too heavily on the *Journal* without realizing the problems it poses. Methodist biographers may be well informed on Wesley, but lack up-to-date knowledge of his times. Non-Methodists may or may not have up-to-date knowledge of his times (quite often they don't), but lack adequate knowledge or understanding of the man and his movement. On the other hand, non-Methodists are less likely to suffer from the hagiographical fault of supposing that Wesley was always right and his critics wrong. They have often displayed much better insight into the complexities (and weaknesses) of his character. Inevitably, in recent times, some biographers (mostly non-Methodists) have attempted to develop psychological analyses of this complex man. Such analyses, although notoriously hazardous when applied to people in the past, cannot (in my judgment) be avoided. But they do require accurate facts. For example, one otherwise plausible analysis of this kind drew elaborate conclusions from the supposed fact that Wesley was baptized as John Benjamin. But, unfortunately, we now know that his belief is based on a nineteenth-century error. It is still sometimes repeated by those who ought to know better. See R. L. Moore, "Justification without Joy," *History of Childhood Quarterly* II (1974), 31-52.

I would like to mention a few modern Wesley biographies because they seem to add fresh insights to the often-repeated stories in the older ones. I have already mentioned Green's study of Wesley's early life. Even more impressive is his *John Wesley* (1964) that is arguably still the best short life. It is extremely penetrating on Wesley's personality and uncomfortably critical of the early Methodist moral achievements when measured against their perfectionist claims. This is an understandable Anglican perspective in some respects, but not necessarily the last word on the issues it addresses. Yet it remains a challenge too seldom met by

Methodist biographers. The other older life of special value is Martin Schmidt's *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* (ET 3 vols., 1962-1973). This expresses a Lutheran point of view but, more importantly, adds a dimension of Continental and especially Pietist and Moravian information lacking in English accounts until recently. It also pays attention to Wesley's Catholic sources. Although not strictly a biography, the late Frank Baker's *John Wesley and the Church of England* (1970 and recent reprint) is the nearest he came to writing one and is a mine of information on a perennial subject for debate. Heitzenrater has added to the books already mentioned a moderate-sized life in *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (1995) which is particularly good on the development of the Methodist organization. It is a pity that, so far in his valuable studies of Wesley, he has not attempted a systematic analysis of Wesley's character.

This character dimension is certainly not omitted from a work that I have to mention for the sake of completeness, my own *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1989; 3rd ed. 2002). This work studies Wesley partly in terms of the paradox of the title, that is also a reminder of differences of opinion over whether Methodism was a modernizing or reactionary movement. The attempt is also made to interpret Wesley's ideas and activities in relation to his context. Apart from this, the generosity of my publishers allowed me to go into detail on problems about sources and interpretations of controversial episodes. It is, therefore, a handy compendium of information and points of view, regardless of the view taken of the line of interpretation.

One last study is too easily overlooked. John Walsh probably knows more about Wesley, the early evangelicals, and their times than anyone else. Unfortunately, his modesty has hindered him from extensive publication, but his essays are truly seminal and some will be mentioned later. For Wesley himself, Walsh's brilliant 1993 Dr Williams' Library Lecture on *John Wesley: A Bicentenary Tribute* should not be missed. It is a lively and masterly survey of Wesley's character and activities, and it is full of original observations.

Finally, I offer a reminder of a different aspect of Wesley—portraits. We badly need a full study of these. There is an interesting essay in J. Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits* (1997) I, 297-304, based on those in the National Portrait Gallery. I hope that one day Peter Forsaith—who has made himself an expert on Wesley family and other Methodist portraits—

will give us a full-scale study. Donald Ryan, who has also interesting things to say in this field, has studied and published especially on Wesley ceramic images. For a recent example, see his “A Brand Plucked from the Fire: Wesleyana as a source of Methodist Historical Research,” in the *Bulletin of the Wesley Historical Society in Ireland*, 10 (2004/5,) 14-26.

Future developments in Wesley biography, I would suggest, will certainly depend partly on the more refined texts supplied by the BE and the critical reappraisal of traditions contributed to by Heitzenrater and others. More candid views of Wesley’s character will, one hopes, come from the Methodists, as they certainly will from others. But, for understanding his life and work, what may turn out to be even more important is a better understanding of Wesley in his eighteenth-century environment and in relation to the evangelical and other religious movements of his day.

Charles Wesley’s Poetry and Biography

We must note that “Wesley Studies” includes—or should include—Charles as well as John. What may be most needed here is an attempt to see Charles not simply as a hymn writer, but as a leader of early Methodism in his own right. He was not simply an adjunct to his brother or only to be seen through his brother’s eyes—a perennial problem indeed for the study of any aspect of early Methodism. The difficulty of avoiding such prejudices in relation to Charles is only one of several problems that have damaged study of his work. The basic problem is the sorry state of the sources. This is partly (though by no means wholly) to blame for the almost equally sorry state of the biographical record.

The source problem is this. Charles’ surviving manuscript journal runs only from 1736 to 1756 (when, perhaps significantly, he ceased to itinerate), and there are gaps even in what has survived. The only fairly full edition is Thomas Jackson’s of 1849 that is not complete. John Telford published a fuller version for 1736-39 in 1910, but he did not go further. The letters are scattered and a number of them are undated. There has never been anything like a complete edition. Some compensation for this can be found in Frank Baker’s *Charles Wesley as Revealed by his Letters* (1948) that is a useful outline life based on substantial extracts from manuscript letters. The fullest collection of the *Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley* was edited by George Osborn as long ago as 1868-72 (in 13 volumes) and is not complete.

It is understandable that much of the writing on Charles has been about his hymn writing, but that has left the rest of his role in Methodism

much less adequately studied. The work of the Charles Wesley Society has especially furthered the study of his poetry and hymns and related subjects. So far they have done less for biographical and wider historical issues. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., and the late Oliver Beckerlegge published three volumes of *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley* (1988ff.)—an entertaining collection which shows how much more Charles was than a hymn writer. This perception is, indeed, one of the important developments in recent study.

Literary historians and critics have usually found it difficult to see hymns as poetry because of their apparent limitations in subject and technique, but one will now find examples of people like Watts and Wesley in modern anthologies of eighteenth-century poetry. The anthologies also give a much more wide-ranging sample of the century's poetry than used to be the case (see, e.g., R. Lonsdale, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse* (1987)). Donald Davie, a distinguished literary critic, helped to put Watts and Wesley on the poetic map, for example in his *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (1952) and elsewhere. Frank Baker published *Representative Verse of Charles Wesley* (1964), with an extensive introduction revised and reprinted separately in 1988 as *Charles Wesley's Verse: An Introduction*. This showed him to be a practitioner of "sacred verse" only a part of which (and probably a minority) can be classed as "hymns." There is much more in the corpus of a personal, polemical, political, and family nature. Baker also explored various technical issues of Wesley's poetics and how he obtained his effects. This process of analysis has been carried further to show the power and subtleties of his art, notably by Richard Watson in his *The English Hymn* (1997).

But what about the biographical record? I have already indicated that the problems involved here go beyond the defects in the sources. Apart from Charles being seen as adjunct to John and seen through John's eyes, he was notoriously at odds with John's policy towards the church in later life, hostile to any drift towards separation, and in a state of mutual hostility with some of the leading preachers. Since his conservative policy towards the church was superseded by events after his death, as a gradual separation did take place, it has been too easy to see his whole career as a misguided rear-guard action. The biographical record has been affected by these problems and perceptions and by a failure to tackle the unpublished sources. The longest life remains that of Thomas Jackson (2 vols.,

1841) which is marked by the conflicts just mentioned and the embarrassment they caused. Later lives have usually done little more than recycle printed material, except for Baker's study based on the letters. Fredrick Gill's *Charles Wesley, the First Methodist* (1964) is perhaps the best of the rest and takes a broader view than usual of Charles's role, although the title reflects what is a myth (or at least an exaggeration) often repeated.

It is, indeed, fair to say that a fully satisfactory life of Charles may always be a more difficult enterprise than one of John. This is because, quite apart from the problems already listed, a biographer needs to be equally at home with the historical issues and with the literary questions raised by the verse. However, substantial improvements are on the way. In addition to the new volumes of verse, Kenneth Newport has produced an exemplary edition of Charles's sermons (2001). The only drawback is that they are few in number and mostly early, so that Newport's careful analysis of their theology necessarily omits areas in which Charles differed from John (notably on perfection). Newport has also prepared a full text of the *Journal* and is at work on an edition of the letters. Meanwhile, there are very useful calendars edited by Gareth Lloyd of the letters and papers of Charles and other members of the Wesley family preserved in the Methodist Archives—fortunately much the greater part of what has survived.

Two further projects will considerably improve understanding of Charles. One is Gareth Lloyd's unpublished Liverpool Ph.D. thesis (2002) on Charles' career apart from his hymns and theology. Based on all of the surviving manuscript sources, this is a thorough re-examination of Charles' role in early Methodism, including his relationship with his brother; and the significance of his view of what Methodism should be in his later years. I must not anticipate Dr Lloyd's findings, which should be published before long. It must suffice to say that this is the first comprehensive study to be based on all the manuscript sources, and it shows how important Charles was to the whole Methodist enterprise in the early years. Furthermore, while confirming Charles' later differences with his brother, it is shown that in later years he represented a party with similar views differing from John, rather than being a solitary voice. The other project is a collection of essays by an Anglo-American team that will cover various aspects of Charles' career. It is timed to appear for the centenary of his birth in 2007.

I will add a couple of personal observations based on some limited research for a concise life of Charles contributed to the new *Oxford Dictionary of Biography* (2004). This certainly confirms Charles' importance in early Methodist evangelism, at least up to his marriage in 1749. After that his role seems to become more limited and there is at least a suspicion that, well before his cessation from itinerancy in 1756, he may have traveled mainly to discipline the societies and preachers and to counter anti-church feeling rather than coordinating his activities systematically with his brother. On the other hand, it could well be argued that his opposition to ordination and separation in the 1750s may have staved off a premature separation. This would have narrowed Methodism's appeal that depended partly on its ambiguous position between Anglicanism and Dissent. Future study of Charles' career and role may well develop along these lines.

Wider Aspects of Wesley Scholarship

Advances in scholarship related to John Wesley need to involve a better understanding of his times, context, and followers. It is in the light of such knowledge that we shall better understand not only his own teaching and activity, but also how and why he affected or failed to affect the religious life of his day. Relevant also is the secular impact of his work and the significance of Methodism for social life—and, of course, how social factors affected Methodism. His followers need to be studied, and the effects of the interaction between them and Wesley, as well as his relationships with the church and with the evangelical and other clergy. These relationships help to bring out his distinctiveness as well as explain some of his attitudes. The application of new modes of historical and other scholarly analyses and techniques—e.g., feminism and literary theory—may make an increasing impact on Wesley studies. Some comments on these issues follow.

Professor Ward has already been mentioned for his important work on Wesley's *Journal*. But this is only the latest of his major contributions. Perhaps his most significant work has been to show the international and especially the continental origins and ramifications of the revival of which Wesley and his following were only one part. Ward's *Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (1992) is a unique survey of the whole field, with an emphasis on continental origins. For England, G. M. Ditchfield's *The Evangelical Revival* (1998) offers an excellent outline and introductory summary of the international context.

This is perhaps the time to call attention to the development of a substantial and growing body of scholarly work on evangelicalism. David Bebbington's *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989) covered the story up to the 1980s, helped to set new standards on the subject, and posited an influential definition of evangelicalism. This was in terms of "conversionism," "activism," "biblicism," and "crucicentrism." An important challenge has just appeared to this which notes the omission of elements of mysticism in the pietist tradition (Wesley's ambiguity on this subject should be noted). The challenge is by W. R. Ward, for example, "Evangelical Identity in the Eighteenth Century" in D. M. Lewis (ed.) *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (2004). He also calls attention to elements of eschatology—concern for various notions of the second coming.

Historians of Methodism may also feel that Bebbington assimilates Wesley and Methodism too easily into typical evangelicalism. Wesley's critics would not have agreed! Mark Noll, one of the leading scholars in furthering study of evangelicalism, has just published the first (eighteenth century) volume of a projected five-volume history of evangelicalism in the English-speaking world (*The Rise of Evangelicalism* (2004)). It helps to put Wesley in context. Equally welcome are excellent critical biographies of Wesley's contemporaries, some of whom deeply influenced his policy. They include two of Lady Huntingdon (*Spiritual Pilgrim* [1995] by Edwin Welch and *Queen of the Methodists* by Boyd Schlenker [1997]). Other notable examples are Bruce Hindmarsh on John Newton (1996), P. F. Streiff on John Fletcher (ET, 2001), and Anne Stott on Hannah More (2003). Such works set a new standard of scholarship in an area in which repetition of venerable traditions and hagiography have failed to do justice to some remarkable and highly individual characters.

As to the international scene, the one episode of which English readers have long been aware is Wesley's encounter with the Moravians. We now have an expert study of their work in England by Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728-1760* (1998). This work corrects misleading elements in Wesley's accounts of them and explains their (often misunderstood) aims and achievements. Despite his break with the Moravians, it appears that Wesley long retained his fascination for them and later probably played down his debt to them. Clearly we need to pay attention to this point in assessing the influences on him, although F. Dreyer's very interesting *The Genesis of Methodism* (1999) surely goes too far in ascribing almost everything in Methodism to this source.

The other recent work relating Wesley to the revival at large is John Kent's characteristically controversial work *Wesley and the Wesleyans* (2002). Among other things, he denies that there was a large-scale "revival of religion" in the eighteenth century, but he also makes an interesting distinction between primary and secondary religion. The former is a desire to tap into supernatural power. This distinction seems to merit further attention, and not just for the history of Methodism.

Kent also gives a kinder picture of eighteenth-century Anglicanism than used to be customary, but his view is symptomatic of what is likely to be one of the major conditioning factors in estimates of Wesley and his movement for some time to come. This is a substantial and growing body of scholarship designed to revalue the condition and performance of the Church of England in this period. In the older literature, the eighteenth-century church was almost universally written off as corrupt and sub-Christian. For high churchmen, it lacked sacramental soundness; for evangelicals, it lacked belief in justification by faith; for secular nineteenth-century reformers, it was simply inefficient and possessed too much ill-distributed wealth. Though this image still persists, for a number of years now there has been a degree of revisionism at work, but this has recently gathered increased weight and momentum. It has gone along with more exact and broadly-based revaluations of other aspects of English history in this period.

The new research includes specialized work on individual dioceses and localized areas. It takes account of variety within different regions. Also important is the fact that the work is solidly based on archival research, whereas the traditional estimates tended to rely too heavily on published and literary sources. The general effect has been to give a more positive account of the church's pastoral performance and its response to changes in society. Among the more comprehensive works of this kind are: J. Walsh, C. Haydon, and S. Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England c.1689 to c.1833* (1993), with an important introductory essay surveying the field; J. Gregory and J. S. Chamberlain, *The National Church in Local Perspective* (2003), and a pioneering study by W. M. Jacob titled *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (1996).

Some of the more enthusiastic studies may perhaps overstate their case, but the variety of areas studied does do justice to the variability of the church's performance. For Wesley scholarship, three points are worth making. One is that Methodists and all kinds of evangelicals were in a

small minority. For whatever reasons, the majority did not respond or were hostile. Second, on the other hand, those who did respond clearly found conventional Anglican (and Dissenting) religion unappealing. Thirdly, the revised view of eighteenth-century Anglicanism also seems to show the possibility of more flexibility on the part of individuals within the structures of the established church than we had supposed. This may allow us to see the Wesleys in a new perspective—that is, as less eccentric within the broader Anglican spectrum than they usually appear to be. It also makes their claims to be faithful Anglicans somewhat more plausible.

Jeremy Gregory in Manchester, England, has been working recently on essays on each Wesley brother with these perspectives in mind, which will produce some distinctly original results. Here it is of interest to recall that, back in 1973, W. R. Ward argued that Wesley's ordinations for America were not (or not merely) the culmination of years of irregularity, but a response to a trans-Atlantic crisis precipitated by the loss of the American colonies, and affecting American episcopalians as well. The familiar story of Samuel Seabury's successful search for episcopal orders obscures the fact that other American episcopalians narrowly escaped a presbyterial ordination! See Ward's essay in A. Whiteman, et al., *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants* (1973), repr. in Ward, *Faith and Faction* (1993).

Older studies ostensibly on early "Methodism" often turn out to be largely about John Wesley. What needs to be realized is that, by his own confession, John often did not achieve his ideals. His local impact and even that of his preachers was intermittent. The splits in nineteenth-century Methodism brought out into the open the long-standing fact that there were several varieties of Methodism differing on polity, belief, and practice. To understand Wesley himself and his activities, we have to take seriously the complicated mutual influences between him and his followers. For exploring their lives, there are hundreds of biographies, autobiographies, and letters that have never been fully exploited. I would call attention to the little used nineteenth-century Jackson edition of *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers* (6 vols.) or (in a slightly different early twentieth century version by Telford) *Wesley's Veterans*, 7 vols.

Perhaps equally illuminating are Leslie Church's *The Early Methodist People* and *More About the Early Methodist People* (1948-49). These give an affectionate profile of their activities and their mentality based on a mass of biographical and local history sources. To this may be added

some useful brief lives and other material in recent collective works: D. M. Lewis (ed.), *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (1995); J. Vickers (ed.), *Dictionary of Methodism in Great Britain and Ireland* (2000), and the increased entries of leaders and humbler folk in the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004). What we need is a deeper and more critical study of these varied lives to reveal the grassroot mentalities and gritty reality of Methodism. If Wesley studies include the nineteenth century, it is worth noting that two very recent monographs remind us of types of Methodism most remote from Wesley's regimented ideal: J. K. Lander's *Itinerant Temples* (2003) on the Tent Methodists and John Dolan's *The Independent Methodists: A History* (Cambridge, James Clarke & Co., (2004) who still exist.

One particular category of lay people has to be the subject of more study, and in varying degrees this is already happening. I am thinking of women who may have contributed over half of the Methodist membership. There are already some good studies of women preachers and we could use more on other kinds of leaders and ordinary members. As to the preachers, two important but contrasting studies are Paul Chilcote's *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism* (1991) and D. M. Valenze's *Prophetic Sons and Daughters* (1995). Chilcote gives an explanation of the rise of women under Wesley in terms of the internal dynamics of Methodism that led women (like men) from simple testimony by stages to preaching. Valenze explains the rise of later Bible Christian and Primitive Methodist preachers by changes in domestic, cottage-based economy. I don't think these explanations are mutually exclusive. It seems likely that both apply at both stages. Furthermore, there were at least forty female preachers at work in Wesley's lifetime. They were not banned by the Wesleys in 1803 (as is sometimes implied), but only officially restricted. This was clearly a compromise and in fact some continued in Wesleyanism until at least the 1820s. The other Methodist bodies were surely aware of this and perhaps we should think of a continuous and expanding tradition.

The other point that should be emphasised is that, given the almost overwhelming social and religious conventions militating against the practice- of which the women were always painfully aware, only a compelling sense of divine call could have enabled them to persist. More was required than favoring social circumstances, and that is what the evidence suggests. Feminist historians obviously have much to contribute here. I remember

hearing a non-Methodist scholar identifying some early Methodist women leaders as battered wives who found a kind of substitute and warmer family in Methodist circles. There is little doubt that this is correct, and there are certainly signs of important female support groups for preachers and others. One caution is in order, however. These women, although undoubtedly finding in Methodism a sphere of useful and fulfilling activity in place of the frivolity and husband-hunting of genteel eighteenth-century female life, were seldom if ever advocates of women's rights as we now think of them. The divine compulsion is arguably more important. That compulsion of "duty" might lead also to the assertion of the "right" to speak. Such concerns also affected their marriage choices, for they had to be sure that their husbands would not curtail activities such as preaching—some certainly supported it. Methodist family life is another subject for investigation as an aspect of the Methodist ethos.

The social and political significance and influence of Methodism has long been a subject of controversy among Methodist and non-Methodist historians. Historically-minded sociologists have also weighed in, although some may feel that their sociological categories have not necessarily added much to some perfectly respectable history! I have in mind works like Robert Currie's *Methodism Divided* (1968) and Robert Moore's *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics* (1974)). The most famous and often-debated claim is that Methodism "helped to save England from revolution." Often claimed by Methodists with gratification, it is as well to realize that this is not a compliment for a left-leaning historian like the late E. P. Thompson (an old boy of Wesley's Kingswood School). In his celebrated *Making of the English Working Class* (1963), he condemned Methodism for stifling both their reforming and their sexual instincts, or rather perverting them into unnatural religious channels. Not everyone would agree; and it has often been thought unlikely that Methodism could have seriously influenced the prevention of a potential English revolution. Its absence appears to have depended on a number of other factors.

That Methodist experience may have helped to teach discipline and methods of organization of some working-class leaders seems more plausible, but no doubt this debate will go on. What should be recognized in any case is that the reputation of Methodism in the eighteenth century and later was that of a disruptive and subversive force, and it really did divide families and communities. There also continues to be room for further studies of Methodist social concerns, for example, in charity and social

work. The question raised earlier about Wesley—is he to be regarded as a modernizing or reactionary figure?—applies to Methodism more generally, and either possibility might be true of different Methodist characteristics and individuals.

It is worth adding that one of the happiest developments in Methodist scholarship in recent decades has been the advent of historians who have bridged the gap between historians at home with the eighteenth century and those at home with Methodism. Ward is one example. Another is John Walsh whose essays include pieces that continually stimulate his readers to develop his insights further. For example: “Elie Halévy and the Birth of Methodism” in *Trans. of the Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th series, 25 (1975); “The Origins of the Evangelical Revival” in G. V. Bennett and J. D. Walsh (eds.), *Essays in Modern English Church History* (1966); “John Wesley and the Community of Goods” in K. G. Robbins (ed.), *Protestant Evangelicalism* (Studies in Church History Subsidia, 7 (1990); and “The Bane of Industry: Popular Evangelicalism and Work in the Eighteenth Century” in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History* (Studies in Church History 37, (2002)). David Hempton has not only contributed much to the scholarly study of Methodism in his native Ireland, but also has offered original analyses in *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland* (1996) and essays on the *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion* (1996). This is very much the kind of subject on which we can expect more research and it concerns the Methodists as a body and not simply John Wesley, although he continues to figure prominently.

Finally, it will be surprising if we do not see at least some application of post-modern historical and literary analyses to some aspects of Methodist history. This certainly tends to come up in any feminist approach to women in Methodism. An example that has come my way is by a young Belgian scholar, J. P. van Noppen, *Transforming Words: The Early Methodist Revival from a Discourse Perspective* (1999). Without going into all the technicalities (although these are fairly clearly explained), the important point is that van Noppen addresses a subject too rarely tackled by scholars of the Revival or of Wesley: that is, exactly how and why did their audiences respond to the celebrated preachers of their day? Van Noppen casts fresh light on how their impact worked and he endeavours to refute the claim that they were exploiting their audiences in a manipulative way. For good measure, he includes an interesting economic and ethical analysis of Wesley’s message.

THE REDEMPTION AND SANCTIFICATION OF HUMAN GENDER AND SEXUALITY: A CONSTRUCTIVE WESLEYAN PROPOSAL

by

Heather Ann Ackley

Wesleyan churches and institutions are struggling with gender issues (from addressing women college students as sexual “stumbling blocks” to debating women’s submission in marriage and church to dividing our academic and worship communities over the recognition of same-sex partnerships). Social problems of gender violence and gender discrimination are addressed mainly by feminist and womanist theologians, if at all. These broader social and sexual issues do indeed affect the whole church, however. Divorce, domestic violence, rape, incest and other forms of sexual violence, homosexuality, sexual promiscuity and serial monogamy are concerns that touch the lives of members of every Wesleyan congregation and institution. While secular institutions engage such social issues from an ethos of diversity (including religious, class, and ethnic diversity as well as gender), Wesleyans have an opportunity to engage these issues from our inherited ethos of service and missions. By doing so, we can lovingly but faithfully challenge both the church in its reactionary stance or denial of these issues and those within and perhaps even outside of the Christian community who would analyze these issues without reference to the theological categories of sin and spiritual healing (redemption and sanctification). Having surveyed a good bit of the secular and Christian literature on these issues in tandem with ongoing holistic biblical study and dialogue with contemporary Wesleyan clergy and scholars of theol-

ogy, biblical studies, philosophy, I offer the following evaluation and proposal toward a Wesleyan theology of gender and sexuality. This Wesleyan response to confusion in evangelical churches over issues of sexuality and gender is one among many possible faithful Christian options.

Hermeneutical Issues: The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Those who use the Wesleyan quadrilateral to engage these issues differ in their interpretations of how biblical and social scientific issues (reason and experience) interact, and how these are interactions to be evaluated. While dialogue among Wesleyans with both hermeneutics would be fruitful, we would all do well to remember Wesley's own frustration with those who "overthrow the whole Christian revelation" by setting scripture against scripture, interpreting some texts to "flatly contradict all the other texts."¹

Among Wesleyans, the greatest differences in conclusions about matters of gender and sexuality appear between perspectives heavily favoring scriptural primacy within the quadrilateral and perspectives moving more toward a balance or creative tension between the four quadrilateral elements. Though all Wesleyans affirm biblical authority and primacy, there is a difference in emphasis that affects doctrinal conclusions. Those who weight scriptures heaviest within the quadrilateral consider all four elements. However, the primacy of scripture within the quadrilateral guards against individual interpretations based on tradition, reason and experience. Those who emphasize biblical primacy sometimes base this emphasis on the assumption of a traditional interpretation of scriptures. Most importantly for the purposes of this paper, those who emphasize biblical primacy tend to be certain that the Bible gives us definitive answers to questions of sexual identity and practice.

Those who hold the elements in more of a balance tend to emphasize experiential and rational (literary critical-historical) interpretations of scripture. Tradition, for example the creeds and liturgies of the church, may be considered as significant sources inspired by the Spirit along with scriptures. Scriptures "speak a living word . . . inspired in their being read and lived" as well as in being written—thus we read to learn not only what God did but what God's doing: The Spirit is still using the Scriptures is dynamic, novel, creative, transforming albeit FAITHFUL ways."²

¹Cited in Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998, 39.

²Craig Keen, electronic conversation.

Tradition and our understanding of scripture are understood as emergent. Because the Spirit continues to live and move among Christians as we grow in our understanding and application of Scripture, they approach the text with openness to correction by the Spirit.

From this perspective, many of these Wesleyans follow ancient patristic tradition by tending to read the material in Genesis 1–3 allegorically—as describing deeper spiritual realities of the relationship between God, creation, and humanity—rather than as a scientific account of human nature (including gender and sexuality). Though it is controversial, allegorical reading is one of the most ancient Christian strategies for biblical interpretation, according to theologians John O’Keefe and R. R. Reno in their 2005 book *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation*, Origen, Augustine, Irenaeus, Ambrose of Milan, and Gregory of Nyssa, among many other “fathers” of the ancient church and Christian theology used allegorical interpretation as a strategy for understanding “incoherence” or “obscurity in the literal text,” narrative “anomalies and inconsistencies, in the Bible,” for example (as O’Keefe and Reno note) “in the beginning of Genesis.”³ When the literal meaning is clear and self-coherent, “allegorical reading adds a level of meaning that surpasses [, complements, extends,] and completes the literal. . . . The second, allegorical, meaning is not imposed upon the text; it flows outward from the text.”⁴ Allegories are “interpretations that claim that the plain or obvious sense of a given text,” the literal sense,” actually points to “another realm of meaning” that is actually “more real and more important,” so that the literal sense of the text (the *historia*) must be decoded to understand “the true or extended [spiritual] meaning,” the *theoria*.⁵ The Bible is considered authoritative and inspired, but its very authority comes from the “religious or theological truths” and “divine reality beyond the text itself” to which it refers. The earliest church fathers, most of whom used this method, assumed that the Bible was the center of a “complex reality shaped by divine providence, true because scripture has the “power to illuminate and disclose the order and pattern

³John O’Keefe and R. R. Reno. *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2005, 94-95.

⁴Ibid., 99-100.

⁵Ibid., 89-90, 100.

of all things.”⁶ Committed to the authority of scripture, the church fathers found “canonical justification for [their] use of allegory . . . in Galatians 4:21-26, where Paul himself describes the story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, and Ishmael as “an allegory,” then proceeds to explain the spiritual application of this story to the Christian community of his time.⁷ As demonstrated by Paul and in the biblical exegesis of the church fathers, “the purpose of the allegorical reading is to transform a canonical story into a narrative applicable to Christian practice.”⁸ This goal is shared by Wesleyan scholars who read the Bible in this way today.

Other Hermeneutical Issues: Evangelical and Feminist Hermeneutics

Evangelical theology as a whole tends not to deal explicitly with gender issues. Further, as Gary Dorrien observes, evangelical theology speaks with a “male voice,” expressing male theologians’ views of gender (such as those of Paul Jewett) rather than female views of gender (which are dismissed as “feminist”).⁹ More than twenty years after evangelical women such as Virginia Ramey Mollenkott and Nancy Hardesty “first called for the development of an evangelical feminist theology, the promise of evangelical feminism as a systematically articulated theological perspective remains unfulfilled.”¹⁰ Mollenkott and Hardesty have moved on.¹¹

⁶Ibid., 11.

⁷Ibid., 90-91.

⁸Ibid., 100-101.

⁹Gary Dorrien, *Remaking of Evangelical Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998. Paul Jewett’s works include (with Virginia Ramey Mollenkott) *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Perspective*. Eerdmans, 1975; (with Margaret Shuster) *God, Creation, and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology*. Eerdmans, 1991; and Margaret Shuster, ed., *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human: A Neo-Evangelical Theology*. Eerdmans, 1996.

¹⁰Dorrien, 203; Virginia Ramey Mollenkott’s works include *Man as Male and Female* with Paul Jewett, cited above; (with Vanessa Sheridan), *Women, Men and the Bible, with Study Guide*. Crossroads/Herder and Herder, 1988; and *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female*. Crossroad/Herder and Herder, 1993. Nancy Hardesty’s works include (with Letha Scanzoni) *All We’re Meant to Be: Biblical Feminism for Today*. Eerdmans 1992 and (with Craig Ballard Millett) *In God’s Image: Archetypes of Women in Scripture*. Lunamedia, 1991.

¹¹More recently, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott has published *Transgender Journeys*. Pilgrim, 2003, and *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach*. Pilgrim, 2001.

Patriarchal and feminist assumptions both affect the reading and translation of the Bible as well. Patriarchal and feminist hermeneutical differences lead to differences in theological assumptions about gender and sexuality. Christian conservatives like James Dobson, R. C. Sproul, John Piper, and Wayne Grudem find the feminist gender egalitarian hermeneutic fundamentally incompatible with their own biblical hermeneutical assumptions that Christian scriptures are infallible and that these infallible scriptures teach male privilege (“headship”).¹² Those with an egalitarian hermeneutic and those with a patriarchal hermeneutic both agree that men and women are biologically different. However, Christian feminists (like humanists) tend to believe that the *values and implications* of gender differences find their source in *culture* rather than in God’s will. Therefore, those operating out of an egalitarian hermeneutic tend to view patriarchy as a historical system with a historical beginning. (Egalitarian theologians associate the historical beginning of patriarchy with the Fall.) Whether humanist or Christian, those who see patriarchy as a historical phenomenon argue that if it had a beginning, it can be ended. Humanists promote behavioral change and education alone as means to achieve that end, while Christian theologians find hope in Christ’s redemptive work and the Holy Spirit’s transforming power. However, those who see patriarchy as natural, as part of the divinely instituted order of creation, assume that it neither can nor should be changed. Indeed, to change the patriarchal relations between the genders would require changing human nature itself. Fortunately, this is not beyond God’s power! Even those who argue that patriarchy is part of the order of creation believe that salvation and sanctification redeem gender and sexuality.

Core Doctrinal Issues: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption

As theologians and biblical scholars discuss issues of gender and sexuality—from the ordination of women to the recognition of same-sex domestic partners, core theological doctrines are either invoked or

¹²James Dobson’s works on these topics include his edited volume *The Complete Marriage and Family Home Reference Guide*. Tyndale, 2000; *Love for a Lifetime: Building a Marriage that Will Go the Distance*. Multnomah, 2000; and *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*. Tyndale, 1988. R. C. Sproul (with R. Kent Hughes and John McArthur). *The Coming Evangelical Crisis: Current Challenges to the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel*. Moody, 1997. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, ed., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Crossway, 1991.

assumed to support their arguments. Even the secular humanists of second wave feminism recognized that the definition of human nature was central to understanding gender relations. As recently as the 1960s and 1970s, the medical and psychological view of human nature classified women as aberrant from the human norm (implicitly male) due to the influence of female hormones, chemicals, and tissues. Women were, in effect, defined by biological parts instead of as whole human beings. In 1972's *Ms. Reader*, Cynthia Orick observed that defining the identity of any class of people in any historical or social condition externally because their individual humanity is defined as "different" from "standard" humanity debases everyone.¹³ Both secular humanists and Christians attempt to recover a holistic understanding of human nature as they struggle to define gender.

As they struggle to understand God's will for human nature, including gender and sexuality, Wesleyan thinkers seem to focus on the creation of human beings in Genesis 1–3, but arrive at varying conclusions about theological anthropology (particularly the definition of the *imago dei*), hamartiology (especially the nature of the fall), and redemption. These doctrines underlie and are central to contemporary Wesleyan discussions of gender and sexuality. Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that Wesley considered these same three theological concerns part of the "core of Christian doctrine." Based on his quadrilateral method, he distinguished between the core of Christian faith and the *adiaphora*, identifying the human condition (including both the *imago dei* and original sin), the divine response to the human condition (justification by faith), and the means (holiness) to restore humanity from its present condition as key to the Christian understanding of salvation.¹⁴

Theologians and biblical scholars always define God's ideal for human nature as a whole (God's "original blessing") in terms of the *imago dei* mentioned in Genesis 1, 2 and 5. For some, the sequence of events in the creation stories is endowed with significant theological meaning and is key to understanding human nature and God's intention for it. Theologians and biblical scholars also relate issues of "fallen," broken and sinful experiences of human sexuality (the current state of gender

¹³Francine Klagsbrun, ed., *The First Ms. Reader*. New Yorker: Warner, 1974, 66.

¹⁴Runyon, 19.

roles, gender identity, sex roles, and sexual relationships) to the fall of the order of creation and the fall of the *imago dei*. When theologians and biblical scholars differ in their definitions of the *imago dei* and the importance they place on the concept of the order of creation, their views on human gender and sexuality are correspondingly affected, as will be demonstrated below.

Created in the Image of God, Male and Female

In general, it seems that Wesleyans tend to have a relational and social understanding of the *imago dei*, following Wesley himself.¹⁵ Rather than engaging the debate that some Christian feminist scholars have argued as to whether the priestly version in Genesis 1 or the Yahwist version in Genesis 2 is the definitive creation story, Wesleyans generally concur that even though the stories are distinct, their canonical integrity demands the reader to read them together as complementary parts of a broader truth. Further, Wesleyans agree that the biblical account clearly teaches that humans are created in God's image and that understanding that image is central to understanding God's will for human nature. However, Wesleyans differ in their interpretations of the definition of the *imago dei*, emphasizing different aspects of Wesley's teachings on this issue.

Of the many traditional definitions of the image of God in or as human nature (Nazarene theologian Craig Keen cites at least ten), Wesley favored what Runyon cites as the natural, moral, and political images.¹⁶ The natural image makes us capable of God, able to enter into conscious relationships with God through reason and free will.¹⁷ In "On the Fall of Man," Wesley teaches that humans reflect God's likeness in the world by exercising God-given will, liberty, moral agency, and self-determination.

¹⁵John Wesley, "The Image of God" (1730). *The Works of John Wesley* 4, *Sermons* 4. ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987.

¹⁶Craig Keen, "Homo Precarius: Prayer in the Image and Likeness of God." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:1 (1998). <http://wesley.nnu.edu/WesleyanTheology/theojrnl/31-35/33-1-7.htm>; Claus Westermann. *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*. Augsburg Fortress, 1984; Runyon 14–18.

¹⁷John Wesley, "The New Birth" (1760) and "On the Fall of Man" (1782). *The Works of John Wesley* 2, *Sermons* 2, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985; "The Image of God" (1730) and "Heavenly Treasure in Earthly Vessels" (1790). *The Works of John Wesley* 4, *Sermons* 4. ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987.

These qualities permit us to respond to God freely, allowing genuine holiness and virtue (rather than divinely coerced or manipulated).¹⁸ Wesleyan scholars seem to agree that this aspect of the *imago dei* is involved when they discuss issues of gender and sexuality as they affect individual human nature and behavior. The “moral image” of God is relational: Powered by the Holy Spirit, we related to God and others with love, justice, and grace, according to God’s will, power and intention.¹⁹ Wesleyan scholars seem to agree that this is the norm for human relationships and should guide any Christian response to issues of human sexuality.

Those whose hermeneutic is most traditional in emphasizing the primacy of Scripture may infer from the image of God as relational that both male and female are necessary for that image to be wholly displayed. Others may focus on the functional definition of the image of God, what Wesleyan theologian Theodore Runyon calls the “political image” of God in Wesley’s thought: Human beings are to be God’s representatives on earth, faithful stewards of God’s creation.²⁰ Creation and human nature before the fall are wholly good because they are complete in their original form. Man and woman are truly one, as they should be. Some may understand male headship to be part of the *imago dei* since Christ is seen as ontologically and spiritually male rather than understanding this as a phenomenal category of his creaturely existence during the incarnation.²¹

Those who tend to hold the elements of the quadrilateral in more of a balanced creative tension as they interpret Scripture may emphasize God rather than humanity within the relationally-defined *imago dei*. The image is ever-emerging in response to the aid and call of the Spirit, not an inherent self-contained possession of any human individual.²² In his later years, Wesley seems likewise to have seen the *imago dei* not as a quality

¹⁸John Wesley, “On the Fall of Man” 1:1 (1782). *The Works of John Wesley* 2, *Sermons* 2, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

¹⁹John Wesley. “The End of Christ’s Coming” (1781) and “The General Deliverance” (1781). *The Works of John Wesley* 2, *Sermons* 2, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

²⁰David J. A. Clines. “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968) 53-103; John H. Walton. *Genesis: From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life*. Zondervan, 2001; Runyon, 14-18.

²¹S. M. Hutchens. “Heretical Bibles.” *Priscilla Papers* 15/3: 4-5 and “Unmanning the Bible.” *Priscilla Papers* 15/5: 3-5.

²²Keen, “Homo Precarius.”

inherent in humans but as a capacity for knowing, loving, obeying, and enjoying God.²³ Runyon summarizes Wesley's view of the *imago dei* as a vocation, a calling, rather than as innate. The fulfillment of this call is the true destiny of humankind.²⁴ Wesleyan scholars who emphasize or assume this aspect of Wesley's thought about the *imago dei* tend to infer that although the Bible teaches that image of God is relational and social, it does not necessarily follow that the image is best expressed through marriage. Celibate people *can* display the *imago dei*. (The Bible and church tradition have sometimes promoted unmarried chastity as the ideal Christian lifestyle, for example in 1 Corinthians 7; "tradition" holds that even Jesus Christ himself was unmarried.) For these Wesleyans, God's primary concern in creating humans is the *imago dei* as the relationship between God and humans and the as the norm for human relations in general. Gender and sexuality appear later in Genesis 1:26-28. Both biblical references to the *imago dei* connect human sexuality with God's creation of humanity in God's image but distinguish the two: Sexuality is a phenomenal category shared with other creatures.²⁵ Wesley himself distinguished such categories as incompatible with God's supreme perfection. For some Wesleyan scholars then, not only are sexuality and gender *not* part of the *imago dei*, they are among the very aspects of human nature that distinguishes us from God, whose likeness we otherwise bear in the world.²⁶ Creation and human nature are good in their original state because their relationships are holy. Creatures relate to God and each other as God intends. Goodness, like the *imago dei* itself, is not inherent but exists only in relationship (specifically in relation to God).

While Wesleyans agree on many aspects of their definitions of the image of God in human nature, their nuanced differences leave certain questions open. Does the *imago dei* include gender and sexuality? Are

²³John Wesley, "The End of Christ's Coming" (1781) and "The General Deliverance" (1781). *The Works of John Wesley* 2, *Sermons* 2, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985, and "Heavenly Treasure in Earthly Vessels" (1790). *The Works of John Wesley* 4, *Sermons* 4, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987.

²⁴Runyon, 13-14.

²⁵Alan Padgett, "Is God Masculine? Orthodoxy vs. Traditionalism (In Reply to Touchstone Magazine's Priscilla Papers." *Priscilla Papers* 16/4 (Fall 2002).

²⁶Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 5:1-2.

gender and sexuality (and sexual behavior/relationships) central to what it means to be human? If so, are a specific *kind* of gender, sexuality, and sexual behavior/relationships central to what it means to be human? These are the very questions that have led to debate and dissension within our churches and institutions.

The Sequence of Events at Creation

Those who read and interpret the Bible with a very strong emphasis on scriptural primacy more often tend to present arguments about gender and sexuality based upon the sequential order of the events of creation as described in the biblical narrative. Christian tradition recognizes that the Bible teaches that God cannot be adequately described in human terms. God is physically neither female nor male. However, tradition implies that God is spiritually masculine. Some Wesleyan scholars assume that this traditional concept of divine spiritual masculinity is reflected in the very chronology of the creation narratives. In the Yahwist version of creation, the woman is created differently than the man: The male alone is created in God's image.²⁷ God-given power of human naming (including the naming of the human female) is given to the man, creating order and meaning. Historian Gerda Lerner observes that in traditional interpretations of this passage, the man names the male-female relationship itself as intimate and binding: Woman is man's flesh, and he has authority over her.²⁸ Initially, Wesley himself seems to have assumed this traditional interpretation of male dominance and female subordination as part of the divinely-instituted structure of creation, for example in his comments on 1 Timothy 2:13 in *Notes Upon the New Testament*.²⁹

Lerner argues that the argument from the order of creation is one of the two most powerful metaphors for female subordination in the Bible. The other is based upon Eve's role in the fall, but this metaphor seems far less important within the Wesleyan tradition. The traditional pre-Christian and Christian argument from the order of creation is based upon a literal interpretation of the creation of the first woman from Adam's rib, implying her God-given inferiority to the man. Male headship is inferred from

²⁷Genesis 2:18-25; Gerda Lerner. *The Creation of Patriarchy: Women and History Volume I*. Oxford University, 1987, 185.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 181.

²⁹John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*. London: William Bowyer, 1755.

the sequence of events at creation as well. Since the man is literally understood to have been created first, men are seen as the primary and comprehensive representatives of humanity. Explanations of woman's appropriate role, for example by relatively egalitarian Wesleyan scholars such as Junia Pokrifka-Joe and Joseph Coleson, have sometimes explained the creation of the *ezer kenegdo* ("helper") as implying that the original human (sometimes described as neither male nor female, sometimes as both) was not *yet* good, not complete (Genesis 2).³⁰ The human beings are blessed in both Genesis 1 and 2 when they are explicitly both male and female, not before. Conservative Wesleyan scholars and communities may argue from Genesis 1 and 2 that originally, human nature was created with male-female duality and that therefore, heterosexuality is implicit within it. Such arguments assume heterosexual coupling as a necessary (rather than contingent) condition of human nature.

Those who balance the Wesleyan quadrilateral differently, though still basing their arguments on the scriptural authority that they assume, may argue that gender and sexuality simply aren't the point of the creation story and what it teaches us about divine or human nature. Keen summarizes this view: "Genesis 1:27 is all about *God*, not about us." For these scholars, gender as part of the "*order of creation*" is not central or even clear as a biblical concept.³¹ While the power and priority of the male may be part of traditional Christian theology, it does not necessarily follow from the biblical text.³² Scholars who appeal to empirical evidence as they try to understand and apply scripture, based upon their understanding of the Wesleyan quadrilateral, may point to scientific and sociological studies, including those on the existence of some species that are neither or both genders, some species that change genders over the course

³⁰Junia Pokrifka-Joe has presented an unpublished paper on this topic to the Haggard School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University and has had her dissertation on this topic approved at Saint Andrew's University, 2003; Joseph Coleson, *Ezer Kenegdo*, The Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy Association, 1998.

³¹Because of their understanding of the way reason and experience can aid biblical interpretation, such scholars cite medical and psychological sources such as Alice Dorumat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2000; Thomas Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1992; Simon LeVay, *The Sexual Brain*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.

³²Padgett, "Is God Masculine?" and "What is Biblical Equality?" *Priscilla Papers* 16:3 (Summer 2002): 22-25.

of their life cycles, and others (including humans) that include individuals whose “gender” may be unclear (for example, “hermaphrodites”). Mollenkott in particular is notable for critiquing what she calls “the binary gender construct” as a theologian rather than on a medical or psychological case history basis alone.³³ For these theologians and biblical scholars, these variations on the theme of gender may be an example of God’s creativity and will (per Stephen Jay Gould’s *Wonderful Life*), rather than a symptom of the fall of the order of creation.³⁴

Christian feminists from the nineteenth-century’s Sarah Grimke to contemporary biblical scholar Phyllis Trible have also argued that the Bible (particularly the priestly version of the creation) teaches that men and women were created together by God, both in God’s image.³⁵ The male does not have priority in this account. Some feminist theologians even infer that from this that together men and women express the unity and identity of complete humanity, reflecting masculine and feminine aspects of God. Wesleyan theologian Alan Padgett observes that even Paul seems to reject the argument for male primacy from the order of creation, even to counter it directly in 1 Corinthians 11 7:4 and 11:11-12 as well as the more famous passage in Galatians 3:28. Paul explicitly teaches that man and woman are not independent from each other, that both come from God, and that in Christ there is neither male nor female.³⁶ Trible further infers that the description of woman as *ezer kenegdo* literally means she is “a power equal to man,” not that she is a subservient “helpmeet.”³⁷ Wesleyan scholars such as Padgett understand Genesis 1 and 2 to describe only the difference between men and women, not a power relationship

³³Alice Dorumat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2000; Mollenkott, *Trans-Gender and Omnigender*.

³⁴Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*. W. W. Norton, 2000.

³⁵Gerda Lerner and Sarah Moore Grimke, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke*. Oxford University, 1998.

³⁶Padgett, “Is God Masculine?” See also Thomas Cahill, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills: The World Before and After Jesus*. New York: Doubleday, 1999, 141.

³⁷Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation.” *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 41 (March 1973): 31-42; Coleson and Pokrifka-Joe (cited earlier) concur with this interpretation.

requiring female subordination.³⁸ While some of the more conservative Wesleyans share these theological assumptions about gender and human nature, their conclusions differ, especially when they have different assumptions about the order of creation as inherently patriarchal rather than inherently egalitarian.

Godly Human Sexuality: Inferred from the Imago Dei and the Order of Creation

All Wesleyan scholars seem to agree that scripture clearly teaches human sexuality was originally good.³⁹ God created and blessed sexuality, even commanding the first couple to reproduce. As argued earlier, Wesleyans who most heavily emphasize the primacy of scripture within the quadrilateral may find the order of creation to be an important category for understanding human nature and relationships, even though this is an extra-biblical theological concept read into the text rather than a truly literal reading. Accordingly, they may emphasize Genesis 1 and 2 in their definition of God's will for human sexuality. Doing so, they point to the first couple as normative: One man, one woman. Further, those who are complementarians may argue that the *ezer kenegdo* of Genesis 2 completes and makes good the original genderless human. These Wesleyans affirm sex as part of the originally good order of creation, but sexual behavior should occur only between one man and one woman within marriage.

Wesleyans who hold tradition, reason, experience and scripture in more of a balance (though still affirming scriptural primacy) may be more open to exploring questions about human sexuality. Empirical evidence demonstrates that sexuality is shared in common with other creatures, but reason and experience do not help us discern quite as clearly whether scripture teaches that sexuality or gender are part of the *imago dei*. Though originally blessed, perhaps our sexuality and gender are the very aspects of our human nature not made in God's likeness.

The Fall of the Imago Dei, Order of Creation, Gender, and Sex

Observing the universal persistence of evil in the human heart (not just in the environment), Wesley concluded that sin is a "fundamental

³⁸Other evangelical Christian scholars who concur with this biblical interpretation include Stanley Grenz, Denise Muir Kjesbo, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Ruth Tucker, and members of Christians for Biblical Equality.

³⁹Genesis 1:26-28, 5:1-2.

problem” in human nature that can’t be fixed by human efforts or with human resources. In “God’s Approbation of His Works,” Wesley defines sin as turning from God to seek “happiness independent of God,” using our God-given freedom to turn from (rather than respond to) God. Our fallen nature tends to seek self-sufficiency.⁴⁰ Human disobedience disrupts the relationship between the *imago dei*. Since the *imago dei* resides not in the human but in the way we live our relationship with the creator, it can be betrayed in this way.⁴¹ Wesleyans in general tend to follow Wesley’s lead in interpreting the fall as having bent human nature toward self-focus, preventing us from fulfilling God’s intention that we be the image of God. Remembering that all Wesleyans, including Wesley himself, have a relational and social definition of the image of God, it follows the isolationism and self-focus are a proper Wesleyan definition of fallen human nature. Sin breaks the wholeness that is God’s ideal for all human relationships, including those between men and women.

I have argued that Wesleyans with the hermeneutic that most emphasizes scriptural primacy tend to consider the sequence of events in the creation narratives a more important theological concept for discerning God’s will in relation to gender and sexuality than do Wesleyans who emphasize the other three sides of the quadrilateral a bit more. Those who emphasize the importance of the order of creation tend to interpret the fall accordingly. Not just creation, but the *order* of creation, has been tainted by sin. Both genetics and behavior have been affected. Thus, even the genetic explanations of homosexuality, for example, do not preclude their definition as sin (or at least as the effect of sin). Sin distorts the goodness of the *imago dei* (which in this view requires both male and female for its fullest expression). If one shares these assumptions, threats to heterosexual marriage, then, are threats against the very image of God itself. Homosexuality, for example, is defined not only in terms of sexual practice or sexual orientation (behavioral and psychological ideas respectively) but as an issue with important theological implications. Christians who decry it as sin often argue that it is against nature, assuming the argument from the order of creation) and against scripture (assuming a certain interpretation of scripture). Even if a genetic explanation for homosexual

⁴⁰*The Works of John Wesley 2, Sermons 2*, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

⁴¹Runyon, 14.

preference is accepted, it is understood to be a tragic genetic defect caused by the fall, a pathological distortion of the originally good (and originally heterosexual) order of creation. Homosexual practices and behavior are explicitly understood as sin.⁴² Christian homosexuals must avoid this sinful practice by remaining celibate. Some reject the notion that Christians could have homosexual orientation, arguing that even homosexual desires are sin.⁴³

Wesleyan perspectives which do not consider the order of creation as central to understanding human nature tend to focus their attention on the effects of the fall on the *imago dei* rather than on a divinely-instituted structure of relations. For these Wesleyan scholars, as for Wesley himself, the fall caused humans to become so utterly godless at birth that divine intervention in the form of prevenient grace is required for us even to come to faith. These scholars favor Wesley's own view that fallen humans suffered a "total loss" of the image of God (specifically "the moral image") and cannot find a way to God without the help of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴ Just as these Wesleyans tend to define the image of God in terms of our relation to God, the fall is defined likewise. For such scholars, issues of sexuality and gender are not the main point God is trying to teach us in Genesis 3. Rather the focus is on the fall of human relations in general and our relationship with God and creation as a whole. Fallen human relationships can become destructive, abusive, exploitive, and transactional. These scholars consistently reject the idea that patriarchy is part of the order of creation, defining it instead as a result of sin. Wesley himself seems to argue this view, rejecting his earlier idea that patriarchy is part of the order of creation, both in his *Old Testament Notes* on Genesis 3:6-8 and 5:2 (1765) and in his 1757 edition of *Doctrine of Original*

⁴²Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Abingdon, 2002; Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethic*. San Francisco: Harper, 1996.

⁴³James Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 38a, Romans 1-8*. Nelson, 1988.

⁴⁴"Original Sin" (1759) and "On the Fall of Man" (1782) in *The Works of John Wesley 2, Sermons 2*, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985, and "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart" (1790). *The Works of John Wesley 4, Sermons 4*. ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987.

Sin.⁴⁵ While these theologians and biblical scholars agree with their more conservative colleagues that homosexuality and Christian responses to it are not merely matters of “lifestyle” choice, they are not as sure that homosexuality is *de facto* necessarily pathological, tragic, or a defect within fallen human nature. Some may not even be sure if homosexuality is not necessarily sin. Because this position doesn’t assume that heterosexuality is part of the “order of creation” it cannot be sure that homosexuality in and of itself is necessarily a fallen sexual condition. These Wesleyans appeal to historical tradition, reason and experience to articulate questions and a lack of certainty about how to interpret scriptural teachings about homosexual practice since “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” as such are not concepts found in the Bible.⁴⁶

Wesleyan Ethics, Gender and Sexuality

Wesley taught that the meaning of human life is to live as the image of God in the world. Because Wesleyans understand the image of God as social and relational and embrace an ethos of service and missions, they tend to agree that redeemed and redeeming human relationships are central to helping restore the *imago dei*’s original goodness and wholeness. Regardless of their views on gender and sexuality, Wesleyan theologians and biblical scholars seem genuinely committed to an ethic of love, though they may disagree about how that love is best expressed with regard to certain divisive issues. Those who struggle with sin, including gender- and sex-related issues, often tend to be seen as broken and hurting. Therefore, the appropriate expression of Christian love into such a person’s life is prayer for their restoration to wholeness. This ethos and praxis of Christ-like love may be the greatest area of agreement among Wesleyan scholars with regard to issues of gender and sexuality. On the other

⁴⁵Randy Maddox, “Wesley Studies in the 21st Century: Controversies, Challenges and Hopes.” The Legacy of John Wesley for the Twenty-First Century. Asbury Theological Seminary. October 3, 2003.

⁴⁶Biblical scholars and theologians who give weighty consideration to reason, tradition, and experience as they attempt to interpret scripture value sources by historians, sociologists, and anthropologists Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*. Columbia University, 1988; Michel Foucault, *Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*. Random House, 1988, and *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vintage, 1990; Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men*. Princeton University, 1994; David Halperin, et. al, eds., *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient World*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1990.

hand, Wesleyan biblical scholars, theologians, and institutions are currently particularly concerned with defining Christian marriage. This issue seems to be one of the most polarizing.

Wesleyan scholars who most emphasize scriptural primacy within the quadrilateral agree with other Wesleyans on the ethos of missions and service in Christian life and practice. All Wesleyans tend to agree with Wesley himself that Christ has called us and the Spirit empowers us to bring Christian grace and love to all situations. From this perspective, the most appropriate response to being affected by the fall with any tragic defect of human nature is a Spirit-empowered life of discipleship that leads toward wholeness. Paul's ethical maxims for the early Christian community in Romans 12:9-13 describe this approach: "Don't just pretend you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. . . . When God's children are in need, be the one to help them out. . . ." ⁴⁷ Based on their interpretation of scripture, however, Wesleyans who emphasize biblical primacy within the quadrilateral tend to view Christian marriage as exclusively heterosexual. Marriage is seen as a theological, biblical, and ecclesiastical concern as well as a civil issue. Those who may entertain the idea that same-sex domestic partnership could be acceptable in some form distinguish it from Christian marriage. Even if recognition of these partnerships is accepted as a civil rights issue, they should not be blessed in a Christian church. Marriage is defined as a church issue, and its sacramental aspect in some traditions may even be invoked.

Those who give greater weight to the other elements of the quadrilateral seem to emphasize the universality of the fallen condition. No human can live a holy life without God's divine intervention, the Spirit empowering the believer. Their deep conviction of the universality of sin may make these Wesleyans less prone to stigmatize one kind of sin over another or to deal with one group of fallen humans in a different way than all the others. Consistent with their tendency to consider historical sources, reason, tradition, and experience in a broader sense and with greater emphasis, they may define marriage as a historical development, not just as a "Christian" issue. A few may even argue that marriage is *always* a civil issue, noting that Wesleyans and other Protestants long ago

⁴⁷*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*. Wheaton IL: Tyndale, 1996.

rejected marriage as a sacramental: only baptism and communion are universally recognized as Christian sacraments.

Debate over this issue is not new. Controversies over “meretricious relations” (the illicit sexual relationship of an unmarried couple) in the 1970s evoked similar arguments. In 1972’s *Ms. Reader*, writer and literary editor Susan Edmiston critiques the civil definition of marriage as a *de facto ménage à trios* with the state as the third party. Civil marriage is a contract in which one agrees to certain rights, obligations, and responsibilities and should not be confused with a vow of eternal love.⁴⁸ As Wesleyans consider various facets of this multi-layered debate, we might consider that Wesley himself valued political structures and order.⁴⁹

Redemption and Sanctification of Gender and Sexuality

Wesley defined salvation and redemption in terms of restoration in the image of God, or entire sanctification.⁵⁰ He understood salvation to include both prayer without ceasing and restoring the human being in the image of God to be what we were created to be.⁵¹ Wesley consistently preached that Jesus Christ restores and renews us in his own image.⁵² Being made holy (sanctification) means being restored in God’s image as a living sacrifice, utter and total surrender of self to God. Perfect holiness is continuous, “every moment” needing and being fully sanctified by Jesus Christ.⁵³ Wesley defines holiness as a recovery of the image of God, renewing the soul to Christlikeness.⁵⁴ By prevenient grace, God initiates this renewal and regeneration (new birth) of the image of God. Sanctification perfects the new creature.⁵⁵ All Wesleyans consider redemption and sanctification to be God’s ultimate response to our concerns about the current state of human

⁴⁸In Klagsbrun, 91.

⁴⁹Runyon, 170-171.

⁵⁰“On the Fall of Man” (1782).

⁵¹1 Thessalonians 5:17.

⁵²“On Working Out Our Own Salvation” (1785). *The Works of John Wesley* 3, *Sermons* 3, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985; “The Image of God” (1730)” and “The One Thing Needful” (1734). *The Works of John Wesley* 4, *Sermons* 4, ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987. “Original Sin” (1759). *The Works of John Wesley* 2.

⁵³“Heavenly Treasure in Earthly Vessels” (1790).

⁵⁴“The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” *Works* 1.

⁵⁵Runyon, 56.

gender and sexuality by selfless love. As Runyon explains, God's goal is transformation of fallen creation to restore health and holiness.⁵⁶ For Wesleyans, as for Wesley himself, redeemed human nature and relationships are characterized by selfless love. According to Wesley, this coming fulfillment can be experienced "in a degree," giving us a glimpse into the reality of biblical promises.⁵⁷ Subtle differences may exist regarding the timing of and human cooperation with God's redeeming work.

Wesleyan scholars who emphasize biblical primacy tend to talk a bit more about the future aspects of redemption—full restoration of the *imago*'s original goodness and wholeness at the consummation of all things. Redeemed human nature will be Christ-like, complete, whole in our relationships with self, others, world, and God. Some of those who hold this position may believe that the completion of God's redemptive work cannot take place until after death. Other Wesleyan scholars, giving more weight to the other elements of the quadrilateral, including experience, tend to follow Wesley's view that redemption through the Spirit's transforming work (including regeneration and sanctification) is a mode of life emergent over time. They may emphasize the central significance of Christian love between all men and women as neighbors, not just the love between a husband and wife in marriage.

Either way, God's intention for human love is modeled in the *imago dei* (understood relationally), the incarnation, and the Trinity. The human and divine work together synergetically in the *imago dei* and the incarnation as two radically different natures interacting in mutually self-giving, self-emptying love.⁵⁸ In this covenant partnership, "the Creator informs, infuses, and inspires the creature with the original goal of human existence."⁵⁹ British Wesleyan historian Reginald Ward argues that this patristic idea of *perichoresis* or co-inherence was enjoying a renaissance not only in Wesley's thought but also among his evangelical contemporaries.⁶⁰ God is in us and we are in God, mutually participating in each

⁵⁶Ibid., 169.

⁵⁷John Wesley. "The Way to the Kingdom. *Sermons I Works* 1. ed., Albert C. Outler. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

⁵⁸Keen, electronic dialogue.

⁵⁹Runyon, 22.

⁶⁰Reginald Ward, "John Wesley and His Evangelical Past." The Legacy of John Wesley for the Twenty-First Century: Wesleyan Tercentennial Conference. Asbury Theological Seminary, October 1, 2003.

other, distinct yet not separate. This synergetic relationship is at the heart of what Runyon cites as one of Wesley's favorite Pauline passages, Philippians 2:12-13. By collaborating with God, we bear spiritual fruit.⁶¹ The redeemed human surrenders utterly to God, absolutely open, for example in Jesus Christ. Godly relationships transform and redeem the behavior of those in them. As we receive Jesus Christ, we take on His nature. In human relationships, this means giving preference and honor to one another, being a servant to each other.⁶² Godly love is unconditional and includes mutual accountability. Humans cannot love as God or Christ loves. The Spirit is the only source that can communicate such love, empowering us to fulfill the Great Commandment. For Wesley, love is the supreme goal of the sanctification process. Christian perfection itself is the perfection of God's love, received from Christ through the Spirit by grace. Perfection is loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. We must then reflect this perfect love in the world to our neighbors and enemies perfectly, as it has been received. Loving our neighbor, for Wesley, means Christ-like service and giving to others.⁶³ However, we can only receive and reflect God's love by participating in it.⁶⁴

Practical Implications for Holy Living, Discipleship, and Community

Why should any of this be important for the church? Three concerns relevant to this study of gender issues and sexuality emerge from sociologist Robert Wuthnow's years of interviews with American evangelicals: Women substantially outnumber men at Christian religious services; gender discrimination and limited opportunities drive some of these women out of the church and even away from Christ altogether, and born-again Christians question the church's teachings on sexuality.⁶⁵ If we are going to drive women away from saving faith in Jesus Christ, we had better make sure that the lack of equality and male language for God that alienates them is really God's will and not just our own poor witness. Further, the issue of God's will for sexual behavior needs to be clarified for and

⁶¹Runyon, 55.

⁶²Romans 12.

⁶³Runyon, 224-225; Galatians 5:6.

⁶⁴Ibid., 228, 226.

⁶⁵Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*. University of California, 2000, 34, 117-120.

upheld by all Christians, not just one small group. Otherwise, we are clearly engaging in hypocrisy and bigotry rather than holiness. Wuthnow's interviews reveal that the majority of evangelical Christians (not just homosexuals) tend to see their sexual behavior as a matter of individual choice. Feelings of romantic love and commitment (emotional desire to marry) are the determining factors for Christian women's decisions about sexual behavior, not obedience to scriptures or the church.⁶⁶

Wesleyans work from an ethos of devoted service in the name of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit and a theological method that integrates Scripture, reason, church traditions, and experience (including and perhaps especially our experiences of relationship with the God). For Wesley, the Spirit's goal in redemption and sanctification was not doctrinal uniformity but human transformation into holiness.⁶⁷ Applying this to issues of gender and sexuality, as with all other matters of Christian life, we must recognize that conversion or justification alone is not the most important aspect of our Wesleyan theological or ethical heritage. The emphasis is on sanctification, a continuing lifetime of renewal and transformation of character and behavior.⁶⁸ This understanding of sanctification emerges as central when this Wesleyan quadrilateral method and ethos of loving service are applied in practice. What then could a Wesleyan view on gender and sex roles mean in central matters of human life? The redemption of human sexuality, liberation from sin, renewal and regeneration of human personhood through salvation, including the entire sanctification of human sexuality and gender before God and in the world. For Wesley himself, practical application of his own understanding of human nature and God's will led him to oppose the denial of civil rights based on gender, race, or class, most notably with reference to the issues of slavery, voting rights, and women's ministry.⁶⁹ Both Wesley and women Methodist preachers he knew agreed that scripture wouldn't contradict itself. Paul's teachings in verses of 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 must not violate his assumptions of the validity women's public role in church worship elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 14 and 11:5. Wesley and the early Methodists recognized scriptures to include

⁶⁶Ibid., 119.

⁶⁷Runyon, 35.

⁶⁸Ibid., 43.

⁶⁹Ibid., 173.

extraordinary calls to women. Wesley appealed to Acts 8:4 to justify lay preaching. He insisted that every Methodist, regardless of gender, had a spiritual vocation in the world, including visiting the sick and caring for others.⁷⁰ He pointed to empirical evidence of the spiritual gift of preaching in women.⁷¹ Experience and evidence convinced him that “God had blessed the work of women leaders” with pragmatic and spiritual effectiveness.⁷²

Sanctified gender roles and identities, sex roles and relationships would affect the way we live as Christians in the world, transforming understandings of family and of role relations between women and men in and out of the home. Paul’s teachings on marital relations point in this direction. Husbands and wives are to live in mutual submission, spiritually and physically, out of reverence for Christ. In 1 Corinthians 7:4, he teaches that husbands and wives have authority over each other’s bodies. In Ephesians 5:21 and Colossians 3:18, he exhorts wives and husbands to be subject to one another and to God or Christ. Both must surrender to God. Mutual submission only works if both the husband and the wife submit to, revere, and love the Lord and only if their relationship with each other flows out of their love for and submission to God, restoring the right balance between them. Redeemed marriage is a covenant commitment like the godly love between humans and God that perfects believers.⁷³ Both parties are sustained by the assurance of their commitment to the covenant’s steadfast endurance.⁷⁴ Our relationships within the church would also be affected, including worship, our life with God. The Spirit would perfect the relation between the worshipping community and couples and male-female relations in church, including ministry roles and understandings of leadership. All of these relationships, including marriage, would be characterized by the same kind of synergy that Wesley ascribes to the *imago dei* and incarnation. The relationship between God and humanity in the economic Trinity and within the Godhead in the immanent Trinity also provide models for godly love and community, even within marriage. Sanctification of gender and sexuality on the indi-

⁷⁰Ibid., 198-199.

⁷¹Ibid., 196.

⁷²Ibid., 197.

⁷³Ibid., 230.

⁷⁴Ibid., 231.

vidual level would also occur, including the perfection of personal piety, the individual's life with God. Rather than being separated and broken, both biological and theological meanings of gender would be made whole. The practical theological implications of sanctified gender and sexuality include spiritual gifting regardless of gender (Galatians 3:28). Because we are used to the current fallen condition of human gender and sexuality, moving with the Spirit toward their sanctification is a faith issue. Godly relationships require belief in something hoped for but never before seen.

Conclusion

A plaque by the chapel door at Asbury College quoting Wesleyan missionary E. Stanley Jones might summarize and guide Wesleyan dialogue and work in this as in other matters: "Here we enter a fellowship; sometimes we will agree to differ; always we will resolve to love, and unite to serve." Though Wesleyans are by no means in perfect agreement on issues of gender and sexuality, our dialogue and service in this area will become more fruitful when we recognize the essential Wesleyan methods, ethos, and doctrines we share and can contribute to wider debate.

First, the debate among Wesleyans about how Wesley himself used scripture and about how Wesleyan theologians today apply the quadrilateral can help other Christians understand that our differences over matters of gender and sexuality in the church may have their roots not in "culture wars" so much as in issues of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics). While this may not resolve our disagreements, it has been my observation that people discussing hermeneutical differences can do so more calmly and take their arguments less personally than those debating cultural and political issues. I believe that addressing the hermeneutical and doctrinal roots of our differences, as outlined above, may allow Christians to dialogue less divisively about these difficult issues. Further, Wesleyans might find it fruitful and consistent with Wesley's own thinking to look toward the patristic era for methods of biblical interpretation that retain scriptural primacy while giving consideration to reason and empirical observation.⁷⁵ Wesley himself asked:

⁷⁵For patristic influences on Wesley's thought, see Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*. Nashville: Kingswood, 1991; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994; Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley*. New York: Oxford University, 1964.

Can any who spend several years in those seats of learning, be excused if they do not add to that reading of the Fathers? The most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture was given. It will be easily perceived, I speak chiefly of those who wrote before the council of Nicea. But who could not likewise desire to have some acquaintance with those that followed them? With St. Chrysostom, Basil, Augustine, and above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephraim Syrus?⁷⁶

These leaders of the ancient church had very different ways of resolving biblical tensions than today's Christians.

Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, for example, both assumed that "the confusing portions of the Genesis account of creation were ordained by God to serve as a map" for navigating to the spiritual reality of the text without "neglecting or dismissing the literal structure of Genesis, . . . the order and sequence of the words."⁷⁷ While some contemporary biblical scholars use literary historical criticism to explain the differences between the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2, for example, suggesting that the two accounts come from different sources (different oral traditions) originally, Gregory of Nyssa saw the differences between the two chapters "as placed [by God] in the text to signal the need for a non-literal, spiritual interpretation. . . . Gregory views the literal obscurities of scripture as an inducement toward the adoption of a theologically grounded view of the human person."⁷⁸ He suggested that "the first story of creation refers to the creation of human nature as such. . . , the creation of the form or the archetype of humanity" (both male and female) in the spiritual likeness of God (Genesis 1:27).

As O'Keefe and Reno point out, "Gregory reads this text against the backdrop of Galatians 3:28. . . . Paul's insistence that, spiritually speaking, there is no male nor female in Christ warrants a similar approach to Genesis 1:27."⁷⁹ Gregory then interprets the second creation account

⁷⁶John Wesley. "Address to Clergy (1756)." In *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* Vol. 10. Thomas Jackson, ed. Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1979, 484-492.

⁷⁷O'Keefe and Reno, 99.

⁷⁸Ibid., 96; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 5. Philip Schaff, ed. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.

⁷⁹Ibid., 97.

(Genesis 2) as addressing God's creation of "the physical reality of our bodies," which does not contradict but can be "harmonized with the first" (Genesis 1) and "establishes the priority of the spiritual nature of human beings over their bodily existence."⁸⁰ While we may not agree with all of Gregory's conclusions, the patristic way of reading these texts assumes the divine authority and inspiration of scriptures (which Wesleyans also affirm) but avoids some of the problems of both limited literal readings and contemporary historical-literary biblical criticism, both of which may miss the deeper spiritual meanings of the text. The early church "fathers believed the literal meaning of scripture had the potential to suggest a further spiritual meaning": Patristic allegorical reading is a way "to go deeper or . . . to 'come higher' (Luke 14:16)" in order to see "the fullness of God's will" in scriptures.⁸¹

Second, gender violence and injustice that secular feminists and womenists have identified are better understood not just as social problems, but as both the cause and result of sin: "fallen" and broken experiences of human sexuality, identity, and relationships. One way of understanding this is to consider that the God in whose image human beings (male and female) are made is Trinitarian, providing a model of both interrelationship and co-equality within the divine being whose likeness we bear. At least since the fourth century, Christians have considered the three persons of the Trinity to be "mutually, interdependently, and equally related to one another" within the immanent Trinity (God's self-relation or "divine inner life").⁸² In the early creeds, Christians affirm that within the immanent Trinity, Creator, Christ, and Spirit are co-equal, explicitly affirmed to combat the heresy that the Spirit was subordinate to the Father and Son or that the Son was subordinate to the Father. There is no subordination in the Trinity. Yet the three persons are distinct—not just three different forms or functions, but three distinct persons with identifying characteristics and consciousness, existing three ways, proper to each and inexchangeable. These three distinct persons are, however, interrelated, sharing a mutual and common life, inseparable, and acting in harmony, perichoretic (as if "dancing around" in unison, in United Church of Christ theologian Ruth Duck's words), a kind of diverse but harmonious community.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 97-98.

⁸¹ Ibid., 100.

⁸² *Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula*. New York: Pilgrim, 1991.

Not only are the three co-equal distinct persons interrelated, but they are in some way essentially a unity—one God (not three gods) of one being and substance.⁸³ Holding scriptures as authoritative, inspired, and primary, might Wesleyans also consider the insights of Trinitarian patristic tradition (as Wesley himself seems to have done) as we seek to understand and apply scriptures? If God, in whose image we are made, is a unity of distinct but interrelated co-equal persons, might that not also be God's original intention for humans, male and female? The deep truth affirmed by the creation accounts is that humans, male and female, are made by God (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7, 22), share a common substance (2:21-24), yet each distinct (1:27, 2:21-24). The deep truth expressed in the Bible is that God created humans (male and female) interdependent, mutually related, to share a common life (1:28, 2:18, 22-24). Sharing all these traits of the Trinitarian God, the human beings made in God's likeness may also share God's co-equality. (1:26, 28-30). The subversion or obscuring of this natural of image of God in men and women is sin, a condition described in Genesis 3, the fall from the original human condition into a way of life and being not in God's own likeness, into relationships of subordination, inequality, a brokenness in the common life and substance we share, a struggle to maintain distinctions (other than subordination and inequality) when we are together.

Finally, in Christ, human sexuality and gender (like all other aspects of human personhood) are now and can continue to be redeemed, regenerated and sanctified, restored to the perfection of God's original intention. Linking justification (renewal of relation with God made possible by Jesus Christ and empowered and sustained by the Spirit) with sanctification (living out and being transformed by the renewed relationship with God) is one of Wesley's distinctive contributions to contemporary evangelical Protestant theology. This Wesleyan idea, entire sanctification, affirms the biblical promise of the renewal of the believer's mind by the Holy Spirit, a "perfection of *intention*, focusing and purifying dedication and commitment."⁸⁴ Though Christian perfection is limited by "human finitude" so that the perfect renewed mind still produced imperfect results, Wesley believed that the believer's will could be completely dedicated to God.⁸⁵ One of the implications of this idea might be that the

⁸³Ibid., 145-150.

⁸⁴Runyon, 223.

⁸⁵Ibid., 225.

imperfections we continue to experience in male-female relationships and as sexual beings might not be a fair indication of the believer's spiritual condition, as is now so often assumed. Even Wesley, in spite of his belief in Christian perfection, acknowledged that human finitude caused the transformed, perfected mind, will and intention to fall short, to produce imperfect results. Were we to embrace this idea fully, perhaps we might show more grace and love to one another and ourselves. Perhaps we would be less sure that we could judge the state of a person's soul by their sexual behavior. Such an attitude of humility would be helpful in slowing, if not preventing, the division of congregations and even the global Christian community over matters of sexuality and gender.

THE CHURCH AN ICON OF THE HOLY TRINITY? A SPIRIT-CHRISTOLOGY AS NECESSARY PROLEGOMENA OF ECCLESIOLOGY

by

K. Steve McCormick

What *is* the Church? What is the Church *for*? These two questions are essential to any ecclesiology, and yet, they cannot be properly answered without a full explication of who God is by means of the “fullness” of God’s revelation through the sending of God’s Son by the energy of God’s Spirit. In other words, to put this in terms of the gospel message, the Church cannot understand her *being* and *mission* until she “finishes” her task of confessing who God is by “fully” responding to Jesus’ question to the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”¹

And yet, all through the gospel message, one quickly sees that this question cannot be answered without the Holy Spirit. After all, it is only by the Spirit that we can call God “Father,” and it is only by the Spirit that we can confess that Jesus is Lord, and it is only by the Spirit that we can know this love of God that has come to us through the incarnate Word and now united us to Christ and His Church on the Day of Pentecost.

¹This is basically Robert W. Jenson’s argument in *Unbaptized God The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). The late Colin E. Gunton made a similar argument one year earlier in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), cf. chapter 4, “The Community: The Trinity and the Being of the Church,” 58-85.

A Shared Flaw in the Marks of Ecclesial Impasse

Our relation to the Church as disciples of Christ continues to call us back to that most basic question of Christian discipleship: “Who do you say that I am?” Perhaps a reminder from Friedrich Schleiermacher’s notorious caricature of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism will help us see the ecumenical impasse that we have created by the way we respond to that question. “Protestantism,” says Schleiermacher “makes the individual’s relation to the Church dependent on his relation to Christ,” while Catholicism “makes the individual’s relation to Christ dependent on his relation to the Church.”² Whether one agrees with the theological distinction or historical accuracy of Schleiermacher’s paradox, one must admit that he has aptly put his finger on a nerve in probing the relationship between Christ and His Church.³ Moreover, this caricature underscores a shared christomonistic tendency that, because of its imbalanced Trinitarian theology, either marks Christ with the Church as an institution with authority given directly to the hierarchy of the Church, or it refers to a spiritualized and docetic relationship with Christ through personal faith so that Christ is present both outside of and beyond the Church as an institution.⁴

Nikos A. Nissiotis, an Orthodox ecumenist, has argued that the church traditions of the West, on the one hand, have approached ecclesiology in a christocentric manner. The rapprochement, on the other hand, is that they have not sufficiently grasped the “presupposition of ecclesiology,” namely, a Spirit-Christology.⁵ Perhaps this critique, made repeatedly by the Orthodox, will help clarify the problem and may deepen the possibilities not only for what is required in a healthy ecclesiology, but for a renewed ecumenism that will bring the Church back to the *notae*

²Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 103.

³Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002). Karkkainen has rightly called into question Schleiermacher’s caricature and has provided the Church with a variety of ecclesiologies that steer clear of this false paradox set forth by Schleiermacher.

⁴Nikos A. Nissiotis, “Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology,” in *Oecumenica: An Annual Symposium of Ecumenical Research* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967), 235-252, especially, 235-236, 238-239, 242-244.

⁵Nikos A. Nissiotis, “Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology.”

ecclesiae (marks of the church) that have long since been confessed by the Church, even though these *marks* continue to be the very marks of impasse.

Robert Jenson gives his nod of approval to the Orthodox critique in a way that succinctly “identifies” not only the basic problem of ecclesiology, but probes deeper into ecumenism’s “shared flaw,” namely, an “unbaptized God” which is essentially an incomplete concept of the Trinitarian God.⁶ Says Jenson:

Orthodoxy’s reproach has most frequently been made concrete as a reproach to the West’s feeble apprehension of the church: because we—Catholic or Protestant—do not perceive Pentecost as a new step of salvation history, we perceive the church as fundamentally a social reality of this world governed by the same rules and problems as other social realities of the world. Whether we then misconstrue the church in institutionalist or individualist fashion is of secondary importance.⁷

Pentecost, that radically new Day in history key to “making all things new,” is the result of the Father sending the Son to do the work of the Cross and Resurrection on earth, in time, in history, by the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Spirit on that radically new Day “constitutes” Christ and His Church, and gives us a “radically new way” of participating in the life of the Triune God on earth, in time, and in history. The Spirit “gives” us a new ecclesial communion on the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church.

⁶Robert W. Jenson, “*Unbaptized God The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology*.” Although Jenson agrees with Nissiotis on this point, he levels a similar charge against the Orthodox: “But Orthodoxy’s great demonstrated ecumenical disability is churchly immobility, a simple incapacity to acknowledge past historical change or to consider the possible necessity of future historical change. . . . I can quickly show that Orthodoxy also has its hiding place for an unbaptized Hellenic interpretation of God.” Jenson takes issue with Gregory Palamas’ contention that “God himself neither becomes nor suffers, so far as concerns his *ousia*.” This teaching of Palamas, according to Jenson, is committed to Alexandrian Christology whereby, “Orthodoxy’s evocation of the church’s Spirit-evoked temporal life may become the evocation of a sort of moving picture of God and his community rather than of an actual history of God and his community,” 142-143.

⁷Robert W. Jenson, “What is the Point of Trinitarian Theology?” in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, edited by Christoph Schwobel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 42.

A healthy understanding of Christ and His church cannot be forged in the absence of the Paraclete. The Holy Spirit, therefore, can no longer be an addendum to Christ and His Church. A Spirit-Christology, therefore, which is necessarily Trinitarian, is what is required for an ecclesiology whose *being* and *mission* is grounded in the Triune God. Nissiotis best sums up this necessary presupposition of pneumatological ecclesiology and deems the Church as:

. . . the continuously renewed event of the Spirit and also as an established historical reality. If the act of the Spirit is recognized as the second personal revelation of God in history, if Pentecost signifies a new and decisive epiphany of the Trinitarian God in time, which is as important as the first one in Christ and which is inseparable from it, then the Church is God's permanent gift to men, given in Christ.⁸

To consider all the twists and turns that this predicament has taken historically, and all the theological distinctions and nuances that this has entailed, effectively bringing the Church to a stubborn deadlock, often disconnecting the Head from the Body, would demand more space than is afforded in this paper. And yet, I merely use the paradox to *begin* to identify the most basic assumption of a necessary Spirit-Christology that has been mostly overlooked or not fully implemented into the *being* and *mission* of the Church. This "missing link" has prevented the church from developing a robust ecclesiology that is thoroughly grounded in the very being of the Triune God.

In summary, the marks of the church have been the marks of impasse because of an imbalanced concept of the Trinitarian God. The "shared flaw" of ecumenism in the "marks of schism" goes much deeper than the false assumptions in describing one's relation to the Church by one's relation to Christ, or one's relation to Christ by one's relation to the Church. The marks of the Church are often the marks of schism because the relation of Christ and the Spirit to the Church are not always held together, or if they are, the "proper" relation of the Incarnation to Pentecost is not always "rightly" understood. Perhaps it could be said that the "silent orthodoxies" inherent in the *notae ecclesiae*, bearing the marks of God's name and nature, could not be properly heard until the "missing link" of a Spirit-Christology is in place.

⁸Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology," 249-250.

The Marks of the Church Are the Marks of Triune Love⁹

As “the whole Trinity” descends, the Holy Spirit gathers up the people of God into the body of Christ and inscribes upon their hearts the vestiges of the Holy Trinity. In that “moment” of condescending love, on the Day of Pentecost, the Church is “marked” in the *oikodome* of God with the marks of triune love. The Church “becomes by grace what God is by nature,”¹⁰ namely, *one*, *holy*, *catholic* and *apostolic*. God whose “name and nature is Love,”¹¹ is the Holy Trinity: the One who is the *One* God, the One who is *holy* in nature, the One who is *catholic* in presence, and the One who is *apostolic* in constant witness and identity. This is the “Three-One God” who was, who is, and who will be, forever and ever Triune Love. As a result, the Church gathered up by the Spirit into the life of God and marked by Triune love can only be *one* by her love, *holy* by her love, *catholic* by her love, and *apostolic* by her love.

So, as we move in the direction of a Trinitarian ecclesiology, I will attempt to demonstrate that the *being* and *mission* of the Church as depicted in the *notae Ecclesiae* is “one” in the Spirit, “holy” in the Spirit, “catholic” in the Spirit, and “apostolic” in the Spirit.¹² As a result, the

⁹My claim that the *notae Ecclesiae* are essentially the marks of Triune love was initially made in my Presidential Address to the Wesleyan Theological Society in March, 2001. This argument is taken up again and further probed and advanced in the thesis of this paper.

¹⁰Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), 65. Lossky depicts a vision of salvation as consisting in grace and glory, a share in communion with the Holy Trinity: “The goal of orthodox spirituality, the blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven, is not the vision of the essence, but above all, a participation in the divine life of the Holy Trinity; the deified state of the co-heirs of the divine nature, gods created after the uncreated God, possessing by grace all that the Holy Trinity possesses by nature.”

¹¹BE 7:250-252. This phrase, “Thy nature, and thy name, is LOVE,” is taken from Charles Wesley’s hymn entitled “Wrestling Jacob.”

¹²I owe a great deal to the ecumenical vision of Albert C. Outler in helping me to think about the *notae ecclesiae*. Cf. Albert C. Outler, “Methodism in the World Christian Community,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, edited by Thomas C. Oden, Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 241-250. Cf. also the following chapters on Outler’s vision for Methodism: “Visions and Dreams, the Unfinished Business of an Unfinished Church,” 253-262; “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?,” 211-226; “The Mingling of Ministries,” 227-239.

Church that is truly an icon of the Holy Trinity is indeed marked with the very marks of triune love. Thus, the Church's *being* and *mission* as *constituted* by the Spirit and *instituted* by Christ "must" iconically reflect the Holy Trinity with the marks of triune love. Consequently, these marks of the Church will serve as "*markers*" for how the "heresies of schism" are essentially "heresies of love."

Some of Wesley's harshest words on Church schism insist that any breach of unity is a "breach of the law of love." And although "the pretenses for separation may be innumerable," the "want of love is always the real cause."¹³ When the Church moves in the direction of ecclesial monism or particular distinctiveness, she reveals that she has not fully learned the lessons taught by these heresies of love, and therefore, the Church cannot love as God is love. The *heresies of love* underscore that "missing link"—*Spirit-Christology*—as necessary prolegomena to ecclesiology if the Church is to be truly an icon of the Holy Trinity.

If we begin with the premise that all the Church's doctrine arises out of "gathered hearts" full of the love of God, then we must rethink how the heresies and the schisms of the Church have been understood and used. If the doctrine of the Church is essentially the language of love, then all the heresies of the Church are essentially heresies of love.¹⁴ The cruelty of heresy is multifaceted: it is cruel because it ultimately leads to schism, a "breach of love;" and it is cruel not only for how it demonizes the person for whom we subsequently tag the heresy, but it is equally malicious in the way it belies the much needed truth that is ignored in the heresy. Not only do the heresies of the Church lead to schism and error, but they teach us why the Church cannot love or receive love and thus cannot exist in being and mission as an icon of the Holy Trinity.

What *is* the Church? What is the Church *for*? We would do well to allow Irenaeus' expression "two hands of God" to instruct us here: *Ubi Spiritus Sanctus, ibi ecclesia Christi* ("Where the Holy Spirit is, there is the Church of Christ). Thus, according to ecumenical consent, by the "two hands of God" the Son *institutes* in the Incarnation and the Spirit

¹³BE 3:64.

¹⁴Particularly helpful along the lines I am arguing is C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy: An Affirmation of Christian Orthodoxy*, (Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1994). Cf. also Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy & Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, (Pennsylvania: Sigler Press, 1996).

constitutes the Church on Pentecost.¹⁵ And therein, a similar problem emerges that is closely akin to that already described in Schleiermacher's paradox. Instead of asking, What is the believer's relationship to Christ and His Church?, the question becomes, What is the relationship of Christ and the Spirit to the Church? Once again, through the multivalent complexity of issues raised by the fusion and thus confusion of Christ and the Spirit in the Church, or the eclipse and eventual separation of Christ and the Spirit in the Church, this quandary sharply identifies a major source of ecclesial impasse. It is that the Incarnation has either eclipsed Pentecost or the new Day of Pentecost has a confused notion of the Incarnate Word. The Head is severed from the Body. If the Church is only one, holy, catholic and apostolic in the Spirit, then the Church is only one in the Body of Christ, only holy in conformity to Christ, only catholic in its redemption for all the world in Christ, and only apostolic in continued faithful witness to the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

More often than not, the relation of Christ to the Church has been construed in such a way as to obscure the constituting mission of the Spirit in the Church, so that a premature universalizing of the Church as an institution is established with authority and power given immediately and directly to the hierarchy. When this happens, the Church no longer lives in anticipation of the new creation. The Church on earth no longer lives as Christ lived on earth, i.e., in complete dependence on the power and energy of the Spirit to overcome the very bounds of history.¹⁶ Instead, the church lives backwards in history, where the new creation for all practical purposes, is "functionally" realized by the way it has prematurely

¹⁵I have found extremely insightful and helpful to my argument the work of Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Cf. especially chapter 1, "'The Two Hands of God:' Pneumatological Christology in the Orthodox Tradition," 8-33.

¹⁶John David Zizioulas, *Being As Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 130. Zizioulas writes: "Now if *becoming* history is the particularity of the Son in the economy, what is the contribution of the Spirit? Well, precisely the opposite: it is to liberate the Son and the economy from the bondage of history. If the Son dies on the cross, thus succumbing to the bondage of historical existence, it is the Spirit that raises him from the dead. The Spirit is the *beyond* history, and, when acting in history, the Spirit does so in order to bring into history the last days, the *eschaton*. Hence, the first fundamental particularity of pneumatology is its eschatological character. The Spirit makes of Christ an eschatological being, the "last Adam."

universalized the institution with all of the power and authority that was vested in Christ. In this Apollinarian and docetic “tendency,” the Incarnation has effectively eclipsed Pentecost. And yet, if the Day of Pentecost teaches us anything, it teaches us that, according to Colin Gunton, “it is only through the Spirit that the human actions of Jesus become ever and again the acts of God. Has the historical church made the mistake of claiming a premature universality for her works and words instead of praying for the Spirit and leaving the outcome to God?”¹⁷ Pentecost means that what the Spirit did for Christ in the mission of the Incarnation the Spirit will do for the church on earth.

Conversely, the relation of the Spirit to the church is often misconstrued to eclipse the church-instituting mission of Christ, thereby yielding a particularizing mission of the Spirit that capitalizes on distinctive difference, newness, and even novelty. In this misconstrued relation of Pentecost to the Incarnation, the church no longer looks to the apostolic witness of the past for identity and mission; instead, the church thrives on the freedom and unpredictable responsiveness that comes from the Spirit who brings the openness of the future to the church. Here the opposite effect is achieved: the instituting mission of Christ in the Incarnation is eclipsed by the constituting mission of Pentecost. The church, consequently, becomes marked more by her particularity and novelty, her difference and freedom, than by her apostolic memory and continuity. When the church loses her apostolic memory, she loses her apostolic identity. And when the church is no longer apostolic in identity, she cannot be catholic in presence.¹⁸

This “missing link” of a Spirit-Christology is perhaps why ecumenism has persisted in deficient understandings of power and authority, freedom, novelty, and personhood. For example, what is most noticeable in the “universalizing tendency” of the Church is an uncanny repeat of the false notion of power and authority that was expressed in the erroneous *Word-flesh* or *Word-human* christologies of Alexandria and Antioch. Likewise, many of the early “unbaptized” notions of God’s being as “one and many” are taken up in the “particularizing tendency” of the Church to speak of novelty, personhood, and freedom.

¹⁷Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 68.

¹⁸For further reflection on this problem of the “constituting” and “instituting” mission of Christ and the Spirit, cf. my Wesleyan Theological Society presidential address: “The Heresies of Love: Toward a Spirit-Christ Ecclesiology of Triune Love,” in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Volume 37, Number 1, Spring, 2002, 35-47, especially 39-41, 45-46.

This ongoing drive for ecclesial monism in the premature universalistic identity of the Church as an institution, in tension with the opposite drive for distinctive difference and novelty, continues to target the basis of ecclesial standoff. The real confusion, once again, rests in either the “fusion” of the hypostatic presence of Christ in the Incarnation with the hypostatic presence of the Spirit at Pentecost, or in the “eclipse” of the hypostatic presences. Admittedly, what is missing is a Spirit-Christology where both “presences” are deemed necessary to the constituting work of the Spirit at Pentecost and the instituting work of Christ through the Incarnation.¹⁹ Finally, what is most needed in such a Trinitarian ecclesiology is, according to Colin Gunton, “a reconsideration of the relation of pneumatology and christology, with a consequent reduction of stress on the church’s institution by Christ and a greater emphasis on its constitution by the Spirit.”²⁰

The Heresies of Schism Are the Heresies of Love

Not only do the “two hands of God” exegete the Holy Trinity for us,²¹ but they show us how to love as God is love. If the marks of the Church really are the marks of Triune Love, then, as the Church is gathered up into the life of God, the congregation of the faithful is marked with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic love of God. In that strange *mystery* of Triune Love, Christ and the Spirit iconically open for the church, a window into the *oikodome* of God, and thereby, pattern, model, and structure for the ecclesial communion a “way of *being*” in the world with a *mission* that is reflective of “how” the Triune God exists “for us and our salvation.”

The basis of a Spirit-Christ ecclesiology, and our adoption into the family of God, always rests on God sending the Spirit of God’s Son into our hearts, enabling us to cry “Abba!” “Father!” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). This love poured into our hearts (Rom. 5:5), to change metaphors, is like a *parabola* in that it is always “thrown out.” Triune love originates “from

¹⁹Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, 28-29. “Spirit-Christology is after all a model that exegetes the divine economy. The risen Christ cannot be understood to be the ‘sender’ of the Spirit if the incarnate Christ is not already the ‘bearer’ of the Spirit” (29).

²⁰Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 69.

²¹Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, 28.

the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is effected in the Spirit.” In the continued sweep of God’s love, the Spirit gathers up the body of Christ and, with renewed and grateful hearts, the people of God respond in love, by the energy of the Spirit, through conformity to the Son, and back to the Father. So, by the energy of the Spirit, in this ecclesial movement of gathering, “the whole Trinity descends into our faithful hearts” and we are “filled with the energy of love.” Here God’s love, like that of a *parabola*, is always open-ended “for us and our salvation.” And God’s love is always open because it always gives and receives. And finally, Triune love is forever open because it must always be returned. Therein is a Trinitarian description of the *being* and *mission* of the Church. As the Church is “gathered” up into the life of the Triune God, her mission, in that continued sweep of triune love, is to “gather” up by the Spirit the whole creation into the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic *oikodome* of God. The Church participates in the house of God in “making all things new.”

This receiving and returning of Triune love not only contains the hermeneutical key to understanding the goal of the Christian life as in the writings of both John and Charles Wesley, but it occupies the central concern of Wesleyan ecclesiology.²² For example, at the center of the Christian life, for both the Wesley brothers, was this unshakable conviction that to be created in the image of God meant that we were made “capable of God;” we were made to “know” and “obey” and “love” God.²³ “Knowledge,” “obedience,” and “love” of the “Three-One God” was so thoroughly “interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion,”²⁴ that when the Spirit of the “Three-One God” is poured into our hearts, both brothers were convinced that we will come to know, obey, and love

²²Cf. Wesley’s Sermons, “Of the Church,” BE 3:45-57; “On Schism,” BE 3:58-69. Cf. also “Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England,” *Works* (Jackson) 13:225-231, and “Of Separation from the Church,” *Works* (Jackson) 13:255-257.

²³BE 7:398. Hymn 256: “O all-creating God,/At whose supreme decree/Our body rose, a breathing clod, Our souls sprang forth from thee./For this thou has designed,/And formed us man for this, To know, and love thyself, and find/In thee our endless bliss.” Cf. also BE 2:439, “The General Deliverance.”

²⁴BE 2:373-386. I express my deepest gratitude and indebtedness to Geoffrey Wainwright who first helped me see the “deliberate trinitarianism” in John Wesley. Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, “Why Wesley Was A Trinitarian,” in *The Drew Gateway*, volume 59, Number 2, (Spring 1990), 26-43.

the God whose “name and nature is love.” This was the constant refrain of the Wesleyan hymns and sermons alike, shaping at the deepest level of faith their understanding of the *being* and *mission* of the Church. Finally, then, for John Wesley, it is by the Holy Spirit, “the immediate cause of all holiness in us,”²⁵ who gathers us together into the body of Christ, inscribing upon our hearts the vestiges of triune Love, that we “become by grace what God is by nature,” namely, “transcripts of the Holy Trinity,”²⁶ marked by the Spirit as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in love.

My final argument in establishing the “missing link” of a Spirit-Christology as necessary prolegomena to a robust ecclesiology that truly reflects the image of the Holy trinity is to be found, ironically, in the way that the heresies of schism underscore not only *why* the Church’s unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity are impugned, but *why* the Church cannot truly be an icon of the Holy Trinity.

Ecumenism’s shared flaw can be seen in how the “silent orthodoxies” contained in the Trinitarian and Christological heresies and orthodoxies have not been fully appropriated into the *being* and *mission* of the Church. Oddly enough, the instructive wisdom found in these heresies of schism is demonstrated through the ability or inability of the Church to *receive* the marks of Triune love and *return* those very marks. Perhaps a return to the very stumbling blocks that have caused the ecclesial impasse will help us better understand the ironic wisdom of how the orthodoxies and *heresies of schism*—the *heresies of love*—teach the church why the missing link of a Spirit-Christology is not in place. Once again, in our ecclesial stumbling, we are forced back to the most basic question of Christian discipleship, as we reflect on the two traditions of Alexandria and Antioch. And yet again, there is much wisdom to be gleaned for ecclesiology as we reconsider how the false assumptions of Christology have often been “assumed” into the Church and have silenced the orthodoxies of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Apollinarius. Take Apollinarius as a case in point. Unfortunately, his brilliant contribution to the church’s faith is almost never mentioned because of his glaring errors of divine application to the humanity of Christ.

²⁵John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd edition (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978), “A Letter to a Roman Catholic,” 82. 10:80-86.

²⁶BE 7:88.

For example, Apollinarius follows Athanasius and the Nicene Creed with such logic and skilled precision that he gave us an incredible picture of an indissoluble unity of the Word in Jesus that safeguards against any hint of a dualism that gives us two persons in Jesus. When pushed to the conclusion of his logic, however, the humanity of Jesus could not have a “mind” and “will” like the rest of humanity and, therefore, Jesus could not face God as we do. Unfortunately, “only” the end of Apollinarius’ logic is remembered and the brilliant contribution of the Son’s unity with the Father is long forgotten. Understandably, the application of Apollinarius’ teaching must be rejected for how it negates the church’s doctrine of salvation. Apollinarius “rightly” argues that, without all of Christ’s oneness with the Father, there will be no salvation, but what was missing was the celebrated argument of Gregory Nazianzen: If the Son of God does not assume *all* of human nature, then the Son of God cannot “heal” *all* of human nature.²⁷

The ironic wisdom of Apollinarius’ heresy, however, is discovered in how it unwittingly taught the Church why she must face God and depend on God by the same Spirit that Christ relied on in doing the will of his Father. And yet, the Church has not always “faced God” by the Spirit with the same faith as was evident in Christ. Once again, in her drive for ecclesial monism, she has prematurely universalized the institution of the Church without a reliance on the Spirit to bring the openness of the future in the new creation. This is evidenced in the way the “structures” are rigid and do not allow for “new” ways, even “novel” ways to re-structure the institutional power and authority of the Church.

The “unwitting” insight of Apollinarius’ heresy was that the Word “must” not dwell immediately or directly in the humanity of Jesus. Otherwise, Jesus would not be able to “face God” in the same way that all humankind must.²⁸ In other words, Jesus was able to do the will of his

²⁷In Gregory Nazianzen’s letter “To Cledonius the Priest against Apollinarius,” Gregory writes: “If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved.” *Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), second series, vol. 7, 440.

²⁸I have long been intrigued by the corrective notion that a Spirit-Christology brings to the Incarnate Word. Accordingly, the Word is not some sort of power or being that is animating, or acting directly on the humanity of Jesus. This thesis is perceptively demonstrated in the work of Alan Spence, “Christ’s Humanity and Ours: John Owen,” in *Persons Divine And Human*, edited by Christoph Schwobel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 74-97.

Father not because he “possessed the Word,” but because of his complete dependence on the Spirit. “Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered . . . and became perfect” (Heb. 5:8-9). All too often, the Church has moved in the same christomonistic direction as is found in Apollinarius and, thus, she assumes the Church possesses the Word in the same way that Apollinarius had erroneously envisioned.

Nicea. Another worthwhile place to visit is along the road to Nicea. If we revisit again the Trinitarian heresies of love and how they spoke of the being of God, we may be able to find a way out of the church’s impasse expressed in the opposing tendencies toward ecclesial monism or particular denominational distinctiveness. Sometimes these tendencies are expressed in the paradoxical caricature as already described by Schleiermacher.

Take for example, the modalistic notion of God that is “static” in being, a God who is “*stasis*” and not “*ek-stasis*.”²⁹ The driving passion of Sabellius to protect a monotheistic faith in One God came at a price that continues to plague the church. For example, the blurred distinction between the Father and the Son—“Father-Son”—with the accompanying claim that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not persons ontologically, but roles or modes of the one “static” God, naturally lends itself to the kind of ecclesial rationale that has prematurely universalized the institution of the Church in a way similar to that of Apollinarius. A modalistic ecclesiology will always compromise the creative diversity and particularity of the Church for the sake of monistic unity.

The most obvious place to look for the particularizing of a denominational distinctiveness with radical notions of freedom, novelty, and personhood can be found in the tritheistic penchant that does not take seriously the notion of oneness or unity in God’s being. And yet, the not so obvious place in the context of Nicea is found in the Arian notions of God’s being. Here both drives, toward unity or diversity, are compromised and eventually dissolved in the direction of Arius because Christ is finally “suspended between man and God, identical with neither but

²⁹G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK 1936), 113f. Cf. also John D. Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, edited by Christoph Schwobel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 44-60. Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 401-447.

related to both.”³⁰ When the Church moves in the direction of Arius, the Church becomes “suspended” as a “place” between God and humankind, related to both but essentially identical to neither. According to Arius’ logic, when such notions of being are applied to ecclesiology, the church cannot be after the likeness of the Holy Trinity in *being* and *mission* because to participate in a God who is “*stasis*” rather than “*ek-stasis*” in being is to participate in a God who cannot exist in the body of Christ, the Church.

Finally, what seems to be absent in the Trinitarian heresies of love is a Spirit-Christology that not only exegetes the Holy Trinity for the Church, but illumines for the Church a way of being one in *koinonia*, holy in ecstatic love, catholic in communion—“anywhere” and “everywhere”—and apostolic in identity and memory with all the people of God, in anticipation of the eschatological gathering in the new creation. Both the constituting and instituting Presences of Christ and the Spirit will do for the Church on earth, in anticipation of the new creation, what the Spirit did for Christ in the mission of the incarnation. On the Day of Pentecost, the “unerring Spirit” of Triune love has gathered up the people of God and marked them to be one in love, holy in love, catholic in love and apostolic in love. By that love, the Church is to love as God is love in the world and gather up by the Spirit the whole creation into the *oikodome* of God.

Concluding Prolegomena: Assumptions of Spirit-Christology

By way of conclusion, allow me to offer a handful of assumptions and a few brief reflections that have driven this argument of a Spirit-Christology as the necessary prolegomena of ecclesiology.

- 1) The Incarnation and Pentecost cannot be separated. Christ and the Spirit are the “two hands of God” and reveal the “fullness” of God. In the “fullness” of time, Christ and the Spirit give us in history a new way of being in God, in the world. Just as the Incarnation cannot eclipse Pentecost, neither can Pentecost distance itself from the Incarnation. Otherwise, the Church will persist in a false drive for a premature universality that refuses to structure power and authority around the “openness of the future” that the Spirit promises to bring in the new creation, or the church will carry on in a false push for radical, novel particular-

³⁰Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 198.

ity and freedom that wrongly assumes relation with Christ beyond and outside of the Church.

- 2) Pentecost is the “new and decisive epiphany of the Trinitarian God in time.”³¹ The Church becomes a radically new and permanent gift of the resurrected Son, enlivened by the power and energy of the Spirit. The energy of the Church that gives life in the resurrected Son is none other than the energy of love. This Day of Pentecost really is a new world order, “a radical new step of salvation history,”³² whereby the instituting work of Christ in the Incarnation is constituted by the energy of the Spirit on Pentecost. The gift of this new orientation means that the Church no longer lives “simply” in the old order of the Incarnation as was bound by history. Instead, the Church lives in this new order by trusting in the Spirit to bring the openness of the future in the same way that Jesus trusted the Spirit to raise Him from the dead and thus overcome the bounds of history.
- 3) Christ and the Spirit exegete for us not only the name and nature of God, but God’s “two hands” model, image, pattern, and structure for the Church, a *mission*, a “way” of gathering the whole creation into the family of God.
- 4) Reverberating throughout the Story in Word and Event, Christ and the Spirit reveal that the character of God is identical to the will of God. God’s presence of character makes identifiably clear the will of God. The Church shall become, by the energy of Triune love, emptied into our hearts, what God is by nature. It is the will of God that a holy church live “after the likeness of the Holy Trinity.”
- 5) Trinitarian description defines the content of our Trinitarian participation. “Love,” according to Zizioulas, “is the supreme ontological predicate.”³² The Church marked with the marks of Triune love becomes One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic in being and mission by the Spirit, by the energy of Triune love.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

³¹Nikos A. Nissiotis, “Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology,” 249-250.

³²Robert W. Jenson, “What is the Point of Trinitarian Theology?” 42.

A WESLEYAN NEEDLE IN A CINEMATIC HAYSTACK: SEEKING SANCTIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY FILMS

by

Thomas E. Phillips

The medium of film has long been recognized as an excellent means of engaging in cultural critique. The church, as a leading institution of Western culture, has never been immune to such critique. Cinematic critique of the church reached previously unparalleled heights in 1960 when Stanley Kramer's legal drama, *Inherit the Wind*, and Richard Brooks' satire, *Elmer Gantry*, both highlighted the church's bigotry, hypocrisy, and anti-intellectualism. Both films garnered well-deserved Oscars for their achievements. Such critiques are not necessarily detrimental (or even hostile) to the church. In fact, they often have the potential of serving as a prophetic voice to a complacent church. Such cinematic voices, however, often are irreconcilable with a Wesleyan view of the church and soteriology.

A cinematic critique, to be theologically adequate from a Wesleyan viewpoint, must be consistent with Wesley's insistence that post-conversion "repentance and faith are full as necessary, in order to our *continuance* and *growth* in grace, as the former faith and repentance were, in order to our *entering* into the kingdom of God."¹ It also must be consistent with Wesley's equally strong insistence that love "is essential to the child of God."²

¹See Wesley's sermon "Repentance in Believers," in *John Wesley's Fifty-Three Sermons* (ed. Edward H. Sugden; Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 674, emphasis in original.

²See Wesley's sermon "The Circumcision of the Heart," in *John Wesley's Fifty-Sermons*, 196.

In my understanding of Wesleyan soteriology, repentance—including particularly post-conversion repentance—opens one’s life to the possibility of human moral transformation. Genuine repentance, a human act of response to divine initiatives of grace, frees the believer from the domination of sin and opens the believer to the love God and neighbor—freely, sincerely, and consistently. As I understand the Wesleyan/Holiness message, any critique of the church that does not hold high the possibility of genuine moral renewal as a result of repentance is inadequate. Such critiques are inadequately Wesleyan.

After several years of crass and swallow cinematic critiques of the church (e.g., *Dogma*, *Stigmata*), we are currently experiencing a wealth of sophisticated critiques. In recent years (1999-2004), several films have appeared which rival the 1960 masterpieces. Here we examine three films that are representative of contemporary cinematic critiques of the church. All three are well-crafted and stingingly powerful in their critiques of the church. While I enjoy a healthy dose of theologically responsible self-criticism, I find the first two films wanting—not because they critique the church, but because they do so from a distinctly non-Wesleyan point of view. I will explain how the criticisms of the church in the very popular *Saved!* and *Mystic River* assume Lutheran and Reformed doctrines of sanctification respectively. In contrast to these commercially successful films, the little known film *Big Kahuna* offers a rare Wesleyan critique of the church.

***Saved!:* A Lutheran Comedy**

Just after Mel Gibson’s sadistic *Passion of the Christ* (2004) wowed guilt-ridden Evangelical audiences *en masse*, Brian Dannelly’s *Saved!* (2004) offered a satirical look at the dysfunctional American Eagle Christian High School. The plot revolves around the experiences of Mary (Jena Malone) and her failed attempt to “cure” her gay boyfriend, Dean (Chad Faust). With all the mixed motives of early adolescence, Mary sneaks into her beau’s bedroom and engages him in the delights of her feminine wiles. To her horror, not only does this mid-afternoon tryst not cure Dean of his homosexual impulses, it leaves Mary with morning sickness. To make matters worse, Dean’s parents discover some of his homoerotic pornography and send him to “Mercy House” where Christian counselors have the supposed ability to cure people with Dean’s “spiritually toxic affliction.”

As Mary's ill-fated scheme unravels and she progresses through the increasingly obvious signs of pregnancy, knowledge of her shame becomes the plot device which separates the sheep from the goats. What unfolds is a sometimes hilarious critique of the church's failures and foibles. Some of the one liners are delightful—in a hilarious and impious sort of way.

Some of the scenes reflect the kind of teen camp spirituality all too often found at Christian high schools (and colleges). For example, when two of the students, Roland (Macaulay Culkin) and Cassandra (Eva Amurri) observe Mary entering the offices of Planned Parenthood, Cassandra snickers and insists that "good Christian girls" only visit Planned Parenthood for "one reason." Roland immediately looks alarmed and asks if Cassandra really thinks that Mary is going "to plant a pipe bomb." In another unforgettable sequence, Mary learns that any number of ailments, including cancer, could cause the present interruption of her monthly cycle; the next scene cuts to Mary on the way home from the drugstore with a pregnancy kit in tow. She is desperately praying, "Please let it be cancer! Please let it be cancer! Please let it be cancer!" And who could help but laugh when Mary's mother finally wins the honor of "Christian Interior Decorator of the Year"? Such moments of surreal humor abound; their cumulative effect is to provide the viewer with the satirical sensation of only slightly exaggerated reality.

As a Wesleyan reared in the grand holiness tradition that spelled cinema with an "s" (*SINema*),³ it would be easy to view this film as a hedonist attack upon righteousness. Admittedly, the film sometimes does go over the top and even I was a bit dismayed that none of the film's truly benevolent characters identified with the church and its message. My disappointment may have some roots in my inherited prudishness (perhaps we "holiness" folk are still a full generation away from truly guilt-free enjoyment of the *SINema*), but I suspect that my uneasiness has a deeper, more theological origin.

To be clear, I do not believe that the film's often biting critique of the church is anti-Christian, as some conservative reviewers have supposed. I do, however, believe that the film's soteriology is non-Wesleyan; it is Lutheran. The film does not make me uncomfortable as a Christian; it makes me uncomfortable as a Wesleyan.

³See Byran P. Stone, *Faith and Film: Theological Themes at the Cinema* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 5.

As Mary's life unravels in the wake of her teen pregnancy, only the film's explicitly non-Christian characters offer her any help. Cassandra is a Jewish girl who exhibits hostility toward the shallow Christian spirituality around her. Roland candidly admits, "I'm not a Christian." For both Cassandra and Roland, all of their self-designations are non-Christian, yet all of their actions are compassionate—that is, Christian. These two non-Christian characters embody the classic Lutheran formula "sinner and saint simultaneously." Let me explain.

Cassandra is portrayed as the queen of vice. From her first scene, she is a cigarette-sucking, sexually seductive and foul-mouthed unbeliever. She explicitly identifies herself as "a sinner." After pretending to give her life to Jesus, she chides her would-be spiritual mentor by saying, "I've decided to devote my life to Satan instead [of Jesus]." For his part, Roland is Cassandra's cigarette-smoking sex partner. Appropriately enough, they establish their initial relationship while skipping chapel.

In contrast to this pair of self-designated "sinners" stand Hillary Faye (Mandy Moore) and Pastor Skip (Martin Donovan). Pastor Skip admonishes the students with pep-session style homilies, while ignoring his own emotional (if not physical) unfaithfulness to his wife. In one scene, Pastor Skip exhorts the students with powerful messages like: "Give it up; the Lord Jesus is in the house! Let's get our Christ on! . . . The ultimate CEO . . . the biggest celebrity of them all . . . who's down with G-O-D? Jesus rules! Jesus rules! Jesus rules! Jesus rules." In the next scene, he is making excuses to meet with attractive young divorcees, who receive his supposedly innocent caresses and kisses on a regular basis.

Although Pastor Skip is entertaining—he even performs a flip at the beginning of one sermon, Hillary Faye is the saintly antagonist to the sinful Cassandra. Hillary Faye interprets Cassandra's rebellion as a "cry for help" and takes it upon herself to get Cassandra "saved." In fact, all of Hillary's actions, from leading prayer meetings to sculpting a bigger than life Jesus, model righteousness. In reflecting upon her life, without the slightest fear of rebuke, Hillary Faye insists: "The Christian thing, I've been doing the Christian thing my entire life." By standards of American Eagle Christian High School, Hillary Faye could pray for the best senior year ever and confidently remind God that "I so deserve it." On closer examination, however, Hillary Faye's sainthood is problematic. For example, she may proclaim, "I am filled with Christ's love," but such claims are rendered absurd by the fact that, even as she utters the words, she is flinging her Bible at the salvation-resistant Mary.

In juxtaposition to Hillary Faye stands Cassandra who says all the wrong things, but does all the right things. Cassandra, who mockingly described herself as a “stripper,” “Satanist,” and “sinner” in turn, is the first person to come to Mary’s aid during her pregnancy, is the first person in the movie to express sorrow (pointedly telling her boyfriend, Roland, “I’m really sorry”), and is the first person to befriend the desperate Hillary Faye in the final scene after Hillary’s former admirers have abandoned her as “a big fake.” Roland, although a minor character who resides in Cassandra’s shadow, participates in most of Cassandra’s acts of kindness. Cassandra and Roland, the self-described sinners, become simultaneously the real saints.

Still, Hillary Faye finds a true salvation of her own. In the final sequence, her brother Roland proves that Hillary Faye has vandalized the school and framed Cassandra for the crime. When confronted with undeniable evidence of her guilt, Hillary Faye attempts to flee in her van, only to crash into the bigger-than-life cardboard Jesus that she had previously constructed on the school’s front lawn. The crash knocks off Jesus’ head, which providentially lands on the windshield of her vehicle, leaving her face to face with Jesus. With Jesus staring through the windshield at her, Hillary Faye experiences a spiritual awakening. Coming to see her true condition, she bursts out, “I crashed my van into Jesus. I have a pimple the size of Jupiter. I am not OK. . . . I’m so sorry. . . .”

In the world of *Saved!*, soteriology begins and ends with the simple recognition that “I am not OK.” The saint who emerges from this confession also remains—in typical Lutheran fashion—a sinner. This movie criticizes the church’s hypocrisy, but replaces that hypocrisy with no genuine righteousness. Thus, Mary’s final words to Pastor Skip summarize the film’s Lutheran soteriology. Mary insists: “It’s just all too much to live up to. No one fits in 100% of the time . . . not even you.” One admits one’s sin and failure and then just lives in that sin and failure—not a very Wesleyan perspective.

As a Wesleyan, I recognize that the Christian life must always be characterized by genuine repentance, but I also believe that God’s grace is able to transform lives and to produce hearts that can—by the grace of God—“live up to” the claims of the gospel. As a Wesleyan, I desire a greater optimism of grace and a more positive doctrine of sanctification than I find in *Saved!*.

***Mystic River*: A Calvinist Drama**

Clint Eastwood's Oscar winning *Mystic River* (2003) offers another powerful critique of the church as the central characters struggle to live a good life in spite of the lasting wounds inflicted upon them by the church during their youth. The three main characters, Jimmy (Sean Penn), Dave (Tim Robbins) and Sean (Kevin Bacon), are boyhood friends in the Catholic neighborhoods of south Boston. While playing in the street, Dave is spirited away in a car by two men claiming to be police officers. The men wear rings and necklaces emboldened with a cross; these abductors are symbols of the church—and remember that this movie is set in Boston where church-related sex abuse scandals were once common.

The film, therefore, develops a powerful subplot around how the church has scarred these three young men for life. In spite of the group's scars, the central character, Sean, is portrayed as a guy who wants to share in the church's communion and to do what is right. For example, in the key scene just before he learns that his 19-year-old daughter has been murdered, Sean is busy preparing for his youngest daughter's first communion. He becomes aware of his oldest daughter's murder as he is leaving the church. In understandable outrage, Sean proceeds with an investigation into his daughter's death, finding the evidence to increasingly point toward his childhood buddy, Dave.

Sean learns that Dave had been in the same bar with his murdered daughter on the night of the murder—and even more ominous, Dave had returned home that night covered in blood. Upon reflection, even Dave's wife comes to disbelieve her husband's cover story about an attempted mugging. In spite of this evidence—and the unstated assumption that Dave's childhood molestation has turned him into a predator, Sean demonstrates amazing restraint through his willingness to grant Dave even the smallest benefit of the doubt. Sean refuses to assume Dave's guilt even after Dave's wife has warned Sean of Dave's probable guilt.

Finally, however, Sean takes Dave to the Charles River and coerces a confession out of the mentally unstable Dave. In the wake of Dave's confession, Sean thrust a knife into Dave's belly and dispatches him with a bullet to the head. The body is dumped in the river. Even as this violence unfolds, the audience learns that Sean had murdered another man years earlier. However, Sean seems to recognize the horror of his previous sin. Over the decades which have passed since his crime, Sean has anonymously provided financial support to the murdered man's family.

As a repeated tragedy, shortly after murdering Dave, Sean learns that Dave was not guilty of his daughter's murder. In fact, Dave had attacked a child molester on the night in question, thus accounting for his bloodied appearance. Sean, the tragic hero, must bear the guilty of yet another senseless murder.

The key scene for understanding the doctrine of sanctification in this movie appears after Sean has learned of Dave's innocence. Sean's wife walks into his bedroom where his back is literally covered by a large tattoo of the cross. In hushed and loving tones, she then begins assuring Sean of his basic goodness—in spite of his tearful admission: "I killed Dave." As she caresses his muscular frame, Sean's wife explained that she told his remaining daughters that their daddy "could never be wrong, no matter what their daddy had to do." She whispers, "Their daddy is a king and a king knows what to do and does it."

As a Wesleyan, I have no problem acknowledging that the church sometime scars us and even forces us to engage in evils that God finds morally reprehensible. As a Wesleyan, I don't mind the critique of the church in *Mystic River*, but I remain uncomfortable with the righteousness imputed to Sean in the wake of Dave's murder. Sean can—and did!—do wrong. He is not a "king;" he is a killer. As a Wesleyan, I am dissatisfied with any righteousness which is merely imputed in spite of all evidence to the contrary. I want genuine righteousness, created and sustained by the transforming grace of God through Christ.

The Big Kahuna: A Wesleyan Chatroom

A few months ago, I was asked to list for a university publication my five favorite films. At the top of the list stood John Swanbeck's barely noticed *The Big Kahuna* (1999). This film stands out from the typical Hollywood fare for several reasons. First, it has no violence, nudity, sex, or slow motion explosions. Second, it focuses upon only three characters. Phil Cooper (Danny Devito), Bob Walker (Peter Facinelli), and Larry Mann (Kevin Spacey), and their largely cerebral conversations in a cheesy hotel room. The film is almost devoid of action. In these ways, this film is decidedly not typical Hollywood. In another significant way, the film is also not Hollywood. The film offers a Wesleyan critique of the church and a Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification. Let me explain.

Throughout the film Bob is the self-identified, but entirely unreflective Christian. He promotes his Baptist faith and seeks to live up to its

ideals through zealous evangelism. Bob plausibly claims that he has never smoked a cigarette or touched hard liquor in his life, although he “drinks a beer every now and then.” Consistent with his sincere faith, Bob sits caressing a Bible while talking to Larry about Phil’s divorce. Bob has earlier reminded Phil that his wife was given to him for a “helpmate.” In keeping with Bob’s piety, when Larry teases Bob about going into a strip club, Bob insists that he has “never even been near a place like that.” Larry eventually even teases Bob that he should become a saint because he “wouldn’t think about lusting after a woman.”

At first glance, Bob’s colleagues, his partners in the business of selling industrial lubricants, are less noble. When Phil is introduced, he is a chain-smoker lying on the couch “expanding his mind” with a copy of *Penthouse* magazine. Bob honestly notes, “I don’t read magazines like that.” For his part, Larry’s first actions are to drop a wad of slobbery gum in his competitor’s shrimp cocktail and then to fill the air with profanity over the inadequacy of the suite which Phil has secured. On the surface, these guys are not the exemplars of moral rectitude that Bob is.

It is Bob’s character that introduces the movie’s most important theme for our purposes. In conversation with Phil, Bob muses: “I wonder how a person attains character. You know, whether it’s something that you’re born with and it kind of reveals itself over time or whether you have to go through certain things.” After introducing this weighty theme, however, the film shifts focus toward its primary plot device—this trio’s need to meet the “Big Kahuna,” the president of a major company whose business is essential to their own financial well-being. Their plan is simple. They will host a cocktail party and Bob will tend bar while Larry and Phil search the crowd for the “Big Kahuna.” After they identify their target, the two will get him to commit to buying their lubricants and all will be well.

Their plan initially appears to fail when the entire evening has passed without either Larry or Phil ever identifying their intended target. As they commiserate, however, Bob is amazed to discover that the “Big Kahuna” is Dick Fuller, the very man with whom Bob has spent much of the evening talking “about religion.” Bob, ever the evangelist, reminds Larry and Phil that “it’s important to let people know what you believe.” As Larry and Phil are mourning the loss of their big account, Bob informs them that Mr. Fuller invited him to another party just down the street. Suddenly, their prospects again rise. After a brief coaching session, Larry and Phil send Bob to meet Fuller and to set up a business meeting for the next morning.

While Bob is gone, Larry and Phil begin theologizing. Phil notes: "I've been thinking about God lately." After some typically sarcastic remarks from Larry ("What you too?"), Phil relates his childhood dream about God:

I dreamed that I found him hiding in a closet in the middle of a burnt-out city. This city was destroyed by a fire or some kind of explosion and there in the middle of it was a coat closet standing there all by itself and I walked up to the closet and opened the door and inside was God, hiding. I remember that he had a big lion head, but I knew it wasn't a lion. It was God and he was afraid. And I reached out my hand to lead him out of the closet and I said, "Don't be afraid, God. I'm on your side." We stood there, the two of us, holding hands, looking out over the destruction.

After their moments of theological reflection, Larry and Phil are again joined by Bob, who has met and talked with the "Big Kahuna," Dick Fuller. Yet, much to their chagrin, Phil and Larry learn that Bob didn't talk to Fuller about industrial lubricants. He had talked "about Christ." Bob insists: "The nature of the conversation steered itself away from that [lubricants]." After all, according to Bob, "It's very important to me that people hear about Jesus." Larry is outraged! He and Bob engage in a shouting match and eventually a brief brawl. As Phil pulls the combatants apart, Larry opines: "Forgive me, Bob" and leaves the room. Phil then preaches a holiness sermon to Bob:

There's something I want to say to you and I want you to listen very closely, because it's very important. . . . Somewhere down deep inside of you is something that strives to be honest. The question that you have to ask yourself is "has it touched the whole of my life?" . . . That means that you preaching Jesus is no different than Larry or anybody else preaching lubricants. It doesn't matter whether you're selling Jesus, or Buddha, or civil rights, or how to make money in real estate with no money down. That doesn't make you a human being. It makes you a marketing rep. . . . As soon as you lay your hands on a conversation to steer it, it's not a conversation. It's a pitch . . . the question is "do you have any character at all?" If you want my honest opinion, Bob, you do not for the simple reason that you don't regret anything yet.

Upon hearing these words, Bob is initially defensive. He protests: “You’re saying I won’t have any character unless I do something that I regret.” Phil quietly responds: “No, Bob, I’m saying you’ve already done plenty of things to regret.” Bob leaves the room and the phone rings. Phil answers and the viewer hears one side of a conversation: “Hello . . . no, you just missed him. What’s that? I love you, too.”

Finally, here is a Wesleyan critique of the church, a critique that chastises the church for replacing genuine love with manipulation, for failing to participate in the broken heartedness of God, and for reducing the gospel to a mere “pitch.” Finally, in this extraordinary film, we find a Wesleyan understanding of sanctification, an understanding in which genuine repentance (regret) brings genuine moral transformation (love). Rather than having confession as an end unto itself (as in the Lutheran *Saved!*) or confession as a prelude to the fiction of imputed righteousness (as in the Reformed *Mystic River*), *The Big Kahuna* gives us a theology in which confession is followed by genuine moral transformation and a life of love.

It may be rare to find a film with a Wesleyan theological orientation, but in *The Big Kahuna* we have found that rare Wesleyan needle in the cinematic haystack.

BOOK REVIEWS

Kenneth J. Collins, *The Evangelical Moment: The Promise of an American Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 2005). 288 pp. \$22.99.

Reviewed by R. Keelan Downton, Faith and Order Postdoctoral Fellow, National Council of Churches USA, Washington, D. C.

Kenneth Collins, professor of historical theology and Wesley studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, offers a provocative, incisive, and at times inspiring account of evangelicalism in the United States. Throughout the book he employs language of “narrative” and “dialogue” to depict evangelicalism as a collection of conversations. By doing so, he avoids simply reproducing earlier attempts to define the term.

The first chapter catalogues evangelicalism in terms of a series of historical movements, including historical, reformational, puritan/pietistic, awakening, revivalistic, charismatic, and fundamentalist/neo versions, while the second classifies evangelicals in terms of distinctive concerns, including scripture, the atonement, conversion, and evangelism. Together, these chapters provide an excellent beginning by succinctly summarizing the two dominant ways scholars have attempted to define evangelical identity. By combining analysis of historical roots and focus on the content of beliefs in this fluid way, Collins offers a comprehensive picture without imposing artificial boundaries that do not square with evangelical experience.

A full chapter depicts the holiness traditions “leavening” evangelicalism with soteriological emphasis that pressed beyond the earlier epistemological emphasis of the tradition. Collins’ argument that evangelicals must stop using a pessimistic assessment of regenerate life as an excuse to continue in cycles of sin will prove a helpful tool for challenging undergraduates who dismiss ethical questions on the grounds that Christians will

always be sinners. His concluding call for consideration of the scandal of the evangelical soul suggests connections with Ron Sider's recent reflection on evangelical conscience.

Having made this introduction, Collins analyzes dialogue in the areas of theology, politics, gender issues, and ecumenism and suggests potential contributions evangelicals may offer in each. These chapters include many summaries and distinctions that help both those inside and outside the tradition to understand the essential issues. The chapter on theology urges a distinction between caricatures of evangelicals as individualistic and focused on feelings and a more accurate understanding of evangelical interest in personal "conversional piety" and sustained "dispositions" of the heart. It summarizes the differences between foundationalism and nonfoundationalist alternatives and suggests that further work is required in this area.

The chapter on politics characterizes the right in terms of concern for economic freedom, in contrast to the left's concern for social freedom. It suggests that evangelicals have a place in helping Americans think about "real liberty" (*freedom from* rather than mere *freedom to*), working for equality that protects the rights of everyone, and readiness to address both the social and structural causes of poverty. The chapter on feminism summarizes four basic positions concerning women's roles and critiques opposition to the ordination of women. Collins proposes Gen. 1:26-27 and Gal. 3:26-28 as the hermeneutic center for understanding gender issues and concludes by applying this approach to 1 Tim. 2:12-14. The chapter on ecumenism debunks the idea that evangelical and ecumenical interests are at odds and depicts contemporary ecumenism in terms of dual dialogues with theological liberalism and Roman Catholicism.

The eighth chapter breaks slightly from this pattern to address ecclesiology and doctrine within the context of evangelical "defections" to liturgical traditions. By attributing this phenomenon to evangelical preoccupation with the objective language of apologetics that fails to speak to the whole life of faith, Collins offers an account far superior to dismissive readings of such denominational shifts as a misplaced desire for certainty. His cogent analysis of different understandings of tradition gives rise to his most pointed criticism: Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox "lack critical perspective as well as the institutional procedures necessary to discern when tradition has indeed departed from Scripture and the graciousness of the *kerygma*" because they ignore the role of fallible humans in its development.

Collins' work has two major weaknesses. First, there are several moments when the optimism that gives his writing such an inspiring tone may degenerate into wishful thinking. While it is helpful to consider both the challenges and opportunities presented by postmodern ways of thinking, his description of postmodern listeners hearing the gospel as the greatest of all stories, despite their repudiation of meta-narratives, seems to require qualification. While it is true that there is increased concern among evangelicals at a national level for addressing social and structural causes of poverty, many who develop such convictions at evangelical colleges and universities continue to experience alienation when they return to home congregations as a result.

Second, there is an uncharacteristic vagueness in his closing "modest proposal." After piecing several statements together, readers may be disappointed with the rather banal suggestion that Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants should focus on the shared roots of scripture, early creeds, and four great councils in first five centuries. He continues to tantalize by suggesting that his proposal is not merely ecumenical but didactic and soteriological, but he focuses on its usefulness for combating doctrinal dissolution and individualism without describing its value in terms of positive content.

Despite these criticisms, Collins provides an unparalleled introduction to the complexities of contemporary American evangelicalism. Though his optimism may overreach at times, it serves to frame his penetrating assessment of the many challenges evangelicals face in terms of opportunities for transformation rather than occasions of despair.

Giroud, Sabri. *Palestine & Palestinians: Guidebook*. Translated by Carol Scheller-Doyle and Walid Shomali. Ramallah, Palestine: Alternative Tourism Group, 2005. 435 pp., \$15, ISBN 9950319013.

Reviewed by Thomas E. Phillips, Associate Professor of Religion New Testament & Early Christian Studies, Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California

As a professor of New Testament, I face constant frustrations over what textbooks to choose for my introductory classes. Some are too simplistic; some too advanced. Others are ridiculously overpriced or just plain boring. However, the textbook frustrations associated with New Testament classes are nothing compared with the frustrations (or, perhaps I should say, outrage) that I experience when I try to find a guidebook for my occasional trips to the Holy Land.

Since the turn of the millennium, I have been privileged to lead several groups on pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Many of those who have traveled with me have sought my recommendations for pre-trip reading. Their requests seem simple enough. They want a book that will introduce the history, culture, and holy sites of Israel and Palestine. In essence, they want me to recommend a guidebook for them. That's where things get difficult.

It is not that there is a shortage of such guidebooks, both secular and religious. Solomon might say that there is no end to the writing of such books. The problem is quality, not quantity. Most guidebooks fall into easily recognizable categories. Many of the most popular volumes fall into the *pious, but uninformed*, category. Some barely comprehend the difference between the first temple of Solomon's time and the second temple of Jesus' time. Some of the other popular books reside in the *Zionist and dispensational* category. Far too many guidebooks privilege the aggressive, war-making agenda of militaristic Zionism and ignore the reality that most traditional holy sites are in Palestine, not Israel. A few of the remaining guidebooks fit into the *so secular that they forget that this is the holy land* category. People travel to Israel and Palestine because that land is holy, and they need a guidebook that clarifies the religious and biblical significance of the various lands.

This guidebook by the Alternative Tourism Group is the gift that I have been looking for! With over 400 pages of carefully written descriptions, accurately drawn maps, up-to-date information on prices and hours

of operation, detailed indices, and crisp photos (both in black-and-white and in color), this guidebook easily passes the pragmatic test of usability. Even the most harried and confused pilgrim will find this volume a reliable source for the quick retrieval of information. But my enthusiasm for this volume does not stem just from its utility in what is admittedly a utilitarian genre. I am excited to own and recommend this volume because it possesses two characteristics that cannot be found in any comparable guidebook. It is comprehensive and inclusive.

Most popular guidebooks are comprehensive neither in terms of history nor geography. The most widely read guidebooks usually begin their historical survey in prehistoric times (about 100,000 BCE) and progress to the second Jewish revolt (135 CE). Then they typically skim (or even skip) to the nineteenth century and the rise of Zionism. By presenting history in this fashion, the guidebooks are suggesting that only Jewish and early Christian history really matters in this land. Such revisionist (and politically motivated) history effectively denies the identity, rights, and culture of the Palestinians, including the Palestinian Christians. In these skewed accounts, the indigenous people of the middle ages typically enter the narrative only as they interact with those who enter the Holy Lands from Europe. In other words, the Palestinians are given a role in their own history only when they “resist” the Crusaders in the Middle Ages or the Zionists in the twentieth century.

The present volume is refreshing as an account of Palestinian history on its own terms. Both the historical introduction to the book and the smaller introductions to the various sites give accurate reviews of the sites throughout their entire history from ancient times to the present. For example, the typical guidebook explains what and where “Rachel’s Tomb” is. While that is useful information, this volume supplements that information with an explanation of when the site was first venerated and how custody over the site migrated into Israeli hands. That’s fascinating information!

Most of the political problems in the Holy Land are either caused, or at least, worsened by economic pressures. Most guidebooks participate in Palestine’s economic collapse by ignoring the shops, hotels, and restaurants around the holy sites in Palestine. For example, a typical guidebook would discuss the major holy sites in Palestine (e.g., manger square in Bethlehem), but would ignore the local businesses around that Palestinian site. However, when considering a similar holy site in Israel proper (e.g., the Sea of Galilee), the same guidebooks typically discuss a wide range of

businesses in the area. Such implied endorsements of Israeli businesses and implied non-endorsements of Palestinian businesses amount to complicity in the economic strangulation of Palestine.

Additionally, most popular guidebooks are exclusive both in the sites which they discuss and in their analysis of those sites. Such volumes typically consider only Christian and Jewish sites and explain the significance and history of the sites only in terms of interest to contemporary western Christians. This book not only discusses Islamic sites but, more importantly for my audience, often includes discussions of how the sites remain significant for contemporary Palestinians. A careful reading of this volume should teach the perceptive reader several things, not the least of which is how contemporary tourism in the Holy Land can actually harm Palestinian life and culture.

This volume is important because it allows non-Zionist, non-American, and non-European voices to speak about the Holy Land. The volume is worth reading just for the insights contained within the brief quotations and commentaries by contemporary Palestinian poets, politicians, and peasants. For example, after reading this book, I now understand why Naji al-Ali's Palestinian cartoons (which every traveler is bound to encounter) always show a Palestinian man with his arms crossed and his back to the viewer. Throughout this volume, one finds many such insights into the Palestinian heritage and culture. Such insight is consistently—often consciously—suppressed in the more widely distributed guidebooks.

What can I say to conclude? If I were to recommend only one guidebook to the Holy Land, it would be this one. This volume omits nothing that I want to find in a guidebook, and it includes so much that I cannot easily find elsewhere. This volume introduces the Holy Land from the perspective of the oppressed Palestinians, and it invites me to visit them in their holy sites.

If a central feature of holiness is the willingness to live in unity with the marginalized, the oppressed, and the victim, then what could be better than a guidebook to the Holy Land that allows us to live a more holy life when we visit the Holy Land? If you want to visit the Holy Land, or if you just want to understand that land and its people better, read this book. Unfortunately, since the book is published in Palestine, it may take a little extra effort (but not extra cash) to acquire. You may have to get a copy directly from the publisher's website, but even then, you'll be helping the struggling Palestinian economy.

Roger J. Green, Roger J. *The Life and Ministry of William Booth: Founder of The Salvation Army*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006. xvi + 287 pp., \$11, ISBN 0-687-05273-4.

Reviewed by R. David Rightmire, Professor of Theology, Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky

Although other accounts of the origins of the Salvation Army and its founder exist, ranging from traditional hagiographical accounts to more recent critical interpretations, Roger Green has provided a balanced, theologically sensitive account of the life and ministry of William Booth (1829-1912). The author locates Booth not only within the context of Victorian England, but also within the theological contours of the Methodist tradition, as mediated through nineteenth-century Wesleyan-holiness revivalism.

The opening chapters trace the life of William Booth from birth to marriage. Green highlights the socio-economic condition of Booth's Nottingham childhood home as a child, with special emphasis on how this experience influenced William's understanding of the effects of poverty. The author reportstraces the influences of these early contacts with Methodism on Booth's emerging interest in evangelism and concern for the poor. Of special note is the assessment of trans-Atlantic revivalism and the influence of James Caughey on the formation of William's Booth's growing theological vision.

Booth's association with Methodism is evaluated in the light of the affinities between his thought and the teaching of John Wesley. This theological indebtedness, which is either overlooked or discounted by other Booth biographers, is one of the more important contributions this work makes to the historiography of the early Salvation Army. Booth's formative period of theological development is viewed not only as part of the broader evangelical tradition of nineteenth-century British revivalism, but also as squarely within the Wesleyan-holiness camp.

Green treats the developing relationship between William Booth and Catherine Mumford (eventuating in their marriage in 1855), in light of their interaction with the Methodist structures of their day. Growing dissatisfaction with the polity of Wesleyan Methodism led to ttheir alignment themselves with the Methodist Reformers, who called for the democratization of Methodism. However, due to their recognition of the drawbacks of a decentralized form of church governance, William and Catherine

eventually would reject the Reformers' polity and be drawn together by their mutual dissent to structures that impeded their freedom to minister in the ways they saw fit.

The Booths' growing dissatisfaction with the existing denominational options open to them led to their decision to start an independent mission. The author explores the dynamics of this decision, tracing William's identification with the Wesleyan Reformers, then briefly with Congregationalism, and finally with New Connexion Methodism. The insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Booth's vocational decision-making process are illuminating, evidencing Green's critically-reflective use of primary source material. Booth's ministry within New Connexion Methodism (1854-61), and his departure from the same are assessed with helpful analysis of the ultimate issues involved in Booth's decision to abandon denominational affiliation. Contrary to popular understanding, his decision to leave the New Connexion was motivated less by desire to minister to the poor and more by his ambition to be an independent evangelist, free from institutional control. The author demonstrates that justification for this decision was grounded in Booth's privatistic understanding of calling.

Finding his destiny in London's East End among the poor, William Booth joined a mission movement that was already at work in this impoverished environment. Placing his emphasis on evangelistic preaching, Booth could not ignore the social ills of those to whom he ministered. Green, however, rightly emphasizes the theological priority of Booth's mission, established as The East London Christian Revival Society in 1865 and renamed The Christian Mission in 1869. The author assesses the relative success of this ministry from its inception until 1877, giving attention not only to quantitative growth but also to the development of formal structures of governance and doctrine (with special emphasis on holiness as the motive force of ministry). The transition from mission to "army" would take place in 1878, with Booth's establishment of an autocratic form of church government and the renaming of the Christian Mission as The Salvation Army.

The author explores three issues that the Army addressed in its relation to Victorian society in general, and the larger Christian community in particular. The first issue, was whether or not the Army should enter into union with the Church of England. Having identified his movement as a "mission" and not a "church," Booth was in the position to respond favor-

ably to Anglican invitations to unite. Although there were practical difficulties with this idea (e.g., the place of women officers in the new arrangement), Green astutely observes that the chief obstacle to union was Booth's concern to maintain independence from any ecclesial authority. While the decision to maintain its sectarian independence should have forced the Army to deal with its ecclesiological self-understanding, the author points out that, unfortunately, Booth failed to recognize the need to develop an ecclesiology that would provide structures to nurture growth among the converts of his mission. The second issue addressed is the Army's sacramental theology. Booth's decision to abandon sacramental practice in 1883 is discussed in light of both practical and theological concerns. Green makes an important distinction between the Army's sacramental theology and its non-observance of the sacraments, and groundsgrounding the latter in the movement's ecclesiological self-understanding and pneumatological priorities.

The third issue dealt with that the author assesses was the Army's involvement in the Purity Crusade of 1885. Green describes the growth of the white slave trade in Victorian England and the Army's involvement in opposing this social evil, not only providing rescue homes for those who desired to escape a life of prostitution, but also using the press to put pressure on the government to bring about social reform. A by-product of this involvement was Booth's gradual recognition of the need for an organized social ministry in the Army, as well as a theological justification for the same. This led to what Green considers one of the most significant turning points in the life of the denomination, the development of the Army's "social scheme." Although social work had played an important, albeit subordinate role in the organization's early days of the organization, by 1890 a Social Reform Wing was formed. The author explains the reasons for this development, focusing on Booth's gradual awareness of the dual redemptive mission of his Army, which included a balanced emphasis on personal and social salvation, and which was grounded in his postmillennial eschatology.

An interesting aspect of this biography is its exploration of the Booth family legacy, including a candid look at the relationship of William Booth with his children. The author's account sensitively reveals a degree of family dysfunctionality and misplaced priorities, which would lead to dynastic squabbles and eventually the defection of three of his children from the ranks of the Salvation Army. Despite these problems, the Army experi-

enced relative success in its early years. Green credits the concentration of women in ministry as a major factor in the movement's growth, although he recognizes the realistic limitations faced by women Salvationists in Victorian society. An equally significant factor in the Army's success, according to the author, was the role played by Booth's pneumatology, which not only emphasized the need for personal sanctification but also stressed corporate dimensions of holiness as essential for the dual redemptive mission of the Army.

Roger Green's presentation evidences in-depth primary source research, as reflected in numerous citations and explanatory endnotes. This most recent interpretation of William Booth's life and ministry also engages a wide range of contemporary scholarship on early Salvation Army history and provides a helpful corrective to recent reductionistic portrayals of the same. In addition to an extensive index, the work includes eight pages of photographs.

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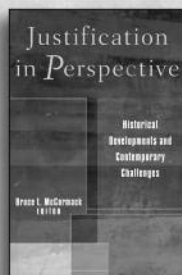
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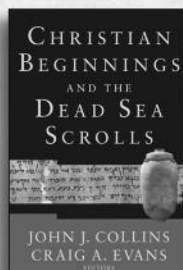
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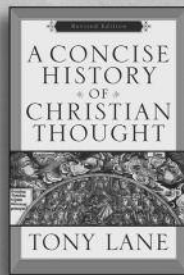
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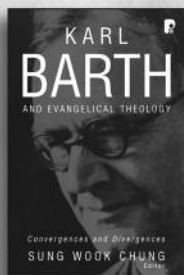
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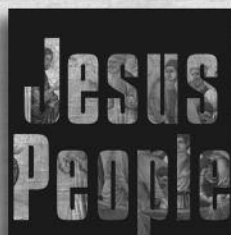
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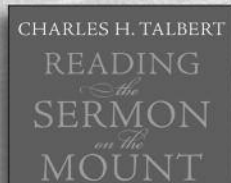
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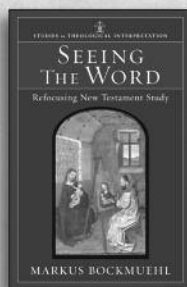
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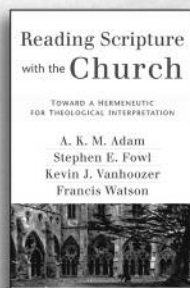
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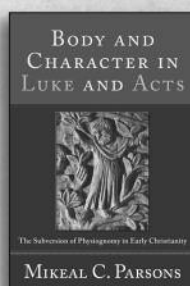
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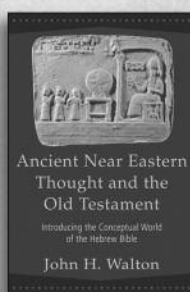
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