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THE CHURCH AS HOLY AND CHARISMATIC

by Howard A. Snyder

"Charismatic" is to the contemporary Charismatic Movement what "Holiness" was to the most lively descendants of John Wesley in the nineteenth century. It is the "key word" and concept which best expresses the organizing center of a movement. Because of this, "charismatic"--like "holiness" and "pentecostal"--quickly becomes a slippery word and begins to take on different meanings for different people. But like so many words with a biblical base, it is too good a word to be abandoned because of differing meanings and connotations. The danger is too great that in banning the word we may inadvertently close the door to an important area of truth or restrict the free operation of the Holy Spirit among us.¹

It is fully appropriate, therefore, that we engage in a dialog with Charismatic Christianity. The term "Charismatic Christianity" in this paper is to be taken as referring to the contemporary Charismatic Movement (in its various forms) and, secondarily, to its Pentecostal antecedents. Despite the increasing awareness of common Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Holiness roots in the Wesleyan Revival, there has so far been little dialog between contemporary Wesleyans and the Charismatic Movement. The assignment of this topic is at least tacit recognition of the fact that we as Wesleyans have something to learn from, as well as to say to, contemporary Charismatics, and that in some way God is at work in the Charismatic Movement today. That recognition is, by the way, a thoroughly Wesleyan attitude.

How does a Wesleyan dialog with Charismatic Christianity? Rather than comparing elements of theology or practice point by point, I have chosen to proceed somewhat indirectly. Rather than discussing or evaluating the contemporary Charismatic or Pentecostal movements, I would like to address the central question which, it seems to me, Charismatic Christianity raises for us: In what sense is Christian experience, and the Church, charismatic? If the Charismatic Movement raises valid biblical questions for us (as I believe it does), then it is more important for us to deal with those questions than to merely catalog the pluses or minuses of the movement.

I will, therefore, first raise the question of the charismatic nature of the

Church. Then we will look at Wesleyanism as a charismatic movement, examining history in the light of Scripture. Finally, I will make some remarks about Wesleyans and Charismatics today and offer some suggestions in the direction of a biblical Wesleyan ecclesiology-since the charismatic emphasis inevitably raises questions of ecclesiology.

I. The Charismatic Nature of the Church

Is the Church, biblically and properly understood, charismatic? W. T. Purkiser affirms, "In the New Testament use of the term, all Christians are charismatic."² But the obvious question becomes, what do we mean by "charismatic"?

The Meanings of Charismatic

In the popular mind "charismatic" is almost universally associated with "tongues." Only in very recent years, as the Charismatic Movement has matured and assumed somewhat varying forms, has that association begun to break down.

There are, of course, other associations to the term. We may distinguish three main meanings in popular usage: the sociological, the religious, and the biblical.³ The sociological meaning traces back to Max Weber and is common today in the sense of the "charismatic leader"-whether political or religious, whose personal qualities are somewhat independent of official status or position. While this meaning distorts the biblical base, it ultimately springs from it. The popular religious meaning is also a distortion of the biblical basis, both because of its almost universal association with tongues and because of the related notion that charismatic gifts are always dramatic and in some sense ecstatic or undisciplined. There is, however, an important biblical basis to what the word "charismatic" denotes. Both the popular sociological and religious meanings make it more difficult, but also more necessary, to go to Scripture with our questions.

The Biblical Meaning

The historical reasons for the close association of "charismatic" with tongues are obvious enough, and will require some comment later. Biblically, it is at least clear that tongues is one of the charismata, however we may understand that gift. But this is not the proper point to begin looking for the biblical meaning of the charismatic emphasis.

We could begin somewhat more broadly, examining the full range of New Testament charisms and discussing their relevance for the personal and corporate experience of believers. But a still broader and more fundamental biblical perspective begins with the very nature of God and His dealings with humankind.

The word "charismatic" derives, of course, from the Greek word *charisma*, "grace gift," and finally from *charis*, "grace." Related is the verb *charidzomai*, "to give freely or graciously as a favor."

With these words we come to the heart of the gospel. "For it is by grace [*charis*] you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).⁴ God is graciously self-giving. His mercy and grace toward us as sinners,

and toward the Church, are the foundation for the life of the Christian community.

This fact comes out clearly in several of the instances of *charidzomai* in the New Testament. For example, Romans 8:32-"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give [*charisetai*] us all things?" God's gift of His own Son is the supreme manifestation of His grace and assures us that in Christ we will be given "all things" necessary to full Christian life and experience.

Paul was concerned to underscore the fact that salvation was a gracious gift, not a matter of works or law. So he argues in Galatians 3:18, "For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise, but God in His grace gave [*kecharistai*] it to Abraham through a promise."⁵ Like Abraham, the people of God today are justified and live on the basis of a gracious promise.⁶

It is clear that the Church is in this fundamental sense charismatic. It is constituted and lives by God's grace. It has received the gift of God which is salvation through Jesus Christ. The gift is, in fact, Jesus Christ Himself-and, therefore, the Holy Spirit Himself. Biblically, this is the indispensable foundation for dealing with the question of the charismata.

It is not enough, however, to say only this much-to simply accept the word "charismatic" in this redefined (and more basic) sense without going on to ask how the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in the New Testament relate to the fact of the gift of the Spirit, of salvation by grace through faith. For the Church is also charismatic in the sense that God has apportioned a special measure of grace and giftedness to each believer (Eph. 4:7-8). God promises and gives gifts of the Holy Spirit for the edification of the Church that are consistent with the gracious work of the same Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.

It is not necessary, I think, to deal extensively here with the familiar Pauline passages on the charismata (Rom. 12:4-8; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:7-16), or with such related passages as Hebrews 2:4; 1 Peter 4:10-11; and others. Ephesians 4 clearly indicates that the unity and oneness of the Church (4:3-6) are balanced by the diversity and mutuality of the Church as a gifted, charismatic community (4:7-16). The significant thing is that this understanding of the charismata is basic to Paul's whole concept of the Church as an organism created and sustained by the grace of God.

An examination of Ephesians 3:2-11 underscores this point and shows how closely *charis* and charisma were linked in Paul's thought. Paul says here that his hearers know of the administration or economy (*oikonomia*) of God's grace (*charis*) that had been given him (3:2). Paul had been given a special understanding of God's grace and a special commission to reveal and proclaim this to the Church, and especially to the Gentiles. In verse 7 he says, "I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power." Paul's phrase here is *dorean tes charitos*, literally "gift of the grace" of God, rather than *charisma*. Still, the meaning is clear: Paul himself had received a special charism, a gift of grace, to proclaim the full meaning of the gospel. In verse 8, Paul says "this grace [*charis*] was given me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Here he substitutes the word "grace" for "gift of grace."

For Paul, the *charismata* and God's grace were so intimately associated that he could sometimes use *charis* in the sense of *charisma*.

Paul thus saw his own ministry in charismatic terms. We know that Paul was very conscious of his apostleship, and further that he considered apostleship as one of the *charismata*-in fact, as the pre-eminent charismatic gift (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). His description of his own ministry as "grace" and "gift of grace" underscores the fact that Paul understood his own apostleship in such charismatic terms.

We see here also that Paul uses "grace" in two somewhat different senses. In Ephesians 2:8-9, it is the grace of salvation, God's gift through Christ by which we are saved. But in Ephesians 3:8 and 4:7 "grace" is associated with gifts and ministry so that *charis* becomes almost synonymous with *charisma*. Thus in Ephesians 4:7 Paul says, "to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it," and then goes on to speak of spiritual gifts. This distributing or apportioning of God's grace to individual believers for edification and ministry is basic to the discussion of 1 Corinthians 12, especially verse 4-7, and reminds us of the reference to "distributions of the Holy Spirit" in Hebrews 2:4.

Note the progression of Paul's thought in Ephesians 4:7. You have already been saved by God's grace, and so made one, he says. But within this unity is diversity. Grace has been given not only for your salvation, but also in the form of special endowment to enable each believer to be a useful, functioning member of the Body of Christ. What follows then, logically, is a discussion of the gifts of the Spirit.

Thus the Church is charismatic in these two senses. Fundamentally, it is charismatic in that it is called into being and constituted by God's gracious work of salvation effected by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. Secondly, it is charismatic in that God by His Spirit works graciously in the Church to build up and equip it for ministry through the distribution of a variety of spiritual gifts.

Several things follow from this perspective. For one thing, spiritual gifts are not a peripheral or unimportant aspect of the Church's life but rather are integral to God's gracious action in the events of salvation. Secondly, this perspective underscores the ecclesiological reference of spiritual gifts. Gifts are not given for private spiritual enjoyment only, but for building up the Christian community. Conversely, gifts are not only a matter of the corporate life of the Church but are a very real part of personal Christian experience. In fact, both sanctification and the functioning of spiritual gifts have this in common: Individual Christian experience builds up the Body, and the Church nurtures the lives and ministries of individual believers through the building of a charismatic, sanctifying community. This is the meaning of Ephesians 4:1-16.

From this perspective, therefore, we can affirm that both Christian experience and the Church are charismatic-and that Christian experience is the experience of God in the life of the Christian community.

The Church as Charismatic

The past two decades have seen the emergence of a new awareness that the Church is in some sense charismatic-even though interpretations of just what this means vary widely. The Charismatic Movement has forced

nearly all Christian traditions to re-examine what the Scriptures teach regarding the charismata. From an initially defensive reaction, a number of church bodies have come to at least some degree of recognition of spiritual gifts and some affirmation of the charismatic emphasis, though with important qualifications and safeguards. This has happened in varying degrees within the Holiness Movement ⁷ and particularly in my own denomination, the Free Methodist Church.

It is interesting to observe the re-examination of the charismatic emphasis in the Roman Catholic Church through the double impact of Vatican II and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. One of the finest statements on the charismata has come from Catholic theologian Hans Kung. In an essay entitled "The Charismatic Structure of the Church" Kung argues that "to rediscover the charismata is to rediscover the real ecclesiology of St. Paul."⁸ He rightly suggests that we misunderstand the charismata when we think of them "mainly as extraordinary, miraculous and sensational phenomena," when we limit them to only one kind or category, or when we deny their universal distribution to all believers.⁹ Kung adds, "All this implies . . . that [the charismata] are not a thing of the past (possible and real only in the early Church), but eminently contemporary and actual; they do not hover on the periphery of the Church but are eminently central and essential to it. In this sense one should speak of a charismatic structure of the Church which embraces and goes beyond the structure of its government."¹⁰

As Kung indicates, this emphasis becomes intensely practical when one begins to examine the life and ministry of the Christian community. "Where a Church or a community thrives only on office holders and not on all the members," he wonders "in all seriousness whether the Spirit has not been thrown out with the charismata."¹¹

This perspective obviously raises a number of questions for the Holiness Movement. The fundamental question becomes not exclusively the question of the legitimacy of specific spiritual gifts but the more basic question of whether we are building churches which are charismatic in the full, biblical sense—churches which function not merely on the basis of tradition and ecclesiastical structures but on the basis of the Holy Spirit working through both the individual and corporate life of believers. We need the uninhibited operation of all the gifts the Spirit sovereignly chooses to give us, for both biblical and pragmatic reasons. As James Dunn has written, "The inspiration, the concrete manifestations of Spirit in power, in revelation, in word, in service, all are necessary—for without them grace soon becomes status, gift becomes office, ministry becomes bureaucracy, body of Christ becomes institution, and *koinonia* becomes the extension fund."¹²

If we thus approach the "charismatic question" broadly and biblically, rather than narrowly and apologetically with reference to only one or two gifts, we must affirm that the Church is fundamentally charismatic. This affirmation implies at least four things:

1. The Church exists and lives by grace. It is the special sphere and evidence of God working graciously by His Spirit to convert, sanctify, equip, and minister through believers "to the praise of his glorious grace."

The Church is charismatic because it is fundamentally a grace-endowed organism, not a legal or primarily institutional structure.

2. The Church lives and functions by the action of the Holy Spirit and the distribution of the Spirit's gifts. The charismatic nature of the Church underscores the importance of the Holy Spirit's endowment of believers with His gifts. The work of the Spirit is of course much broader than the distribution of gifts, as Wesleyans are quick to point out, but one cannot omit or downplay the role of spiritual gifts without doing violence to the New Testament.

3. The charismatic emphasis focuses attention on the Church as community. The fact of *koinonia*, of the Church as an intimate community of mutually dependent believers who constitute Christ's Body, is too often a casualty to the seemingly inevitable drift toward institutionalization in all churches, including those in our own tradition. Decline in awareness and use of spiritual gifts and decline in *koinonia* go together. Similarly, recovery of a balanced biblical emphasis on the charismata leads toward a deepening of the awareness and experience of true Christian community. It is no accident that many branches of the Charismatic Movement have led the way in the recovery of a deeper level of Christian community, and it is my observation that many believers who have been attracted to the Charismatic Movement were initially drawn less by the emphasis on tongues or other gifts than by the level of caring, mutual love, and community which they witnessed among "charismatics."

4. Finally, the charismatic emphasis implies some inevitable tension with institutional expressions of the Church. The tension between Spirit and structure is ever present in the life of the Church (unless all life has vanished!) as the Wesleyan and Holiness movements can well testify.¹³

This does not mean, of course, that every "charismatic" manifestation is necessarily of the Spirit or that institutional structures are wrong. But it does suggest that whenever the Spirit moves in the Church tension between "wine" and "wineskins" will result, and that the very immediacy of the work of the Spirit in human experience produces tensions with established patterns of life and order.

Charismatic and Holy

It should be clear that no conflict or necessary tension exists between the charismatic and holiness themes in Scripture, and in the life of the Church. In the New Testament there is no conflict between the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who sanctifies is the Spirit who gives gifts. The same Jesus Christ who apportions grace-gifts in the Church is the Lord who has become our sanctification. The Church which is biblical will be both holy and charismatic, and all earnest Christians should be concerned that both the holiness and charismatic emphasis are fully biblical.

These two emphases are both necessary and are complementary. Each emphasis needs the other. Certainly this is so in Scripture, and it ought to be so in our personal and corporate Christian experience. The Church needs both the cleansing, sanctifying work of the Spirit and His gracious bestowal of the variety of spiritual gifts taught in Scripture.

The New Testament generally puts the charismatic emphasis in the context of the call for Christians to be God's holy, love-filled people. The

teaching about gifts in Romans 12:4-8 is preceded by a call to holiness and followed by an emphasis on love. Ephesians 4:11-16 shows us how the holy, charismatic Christian community is to function. On the one hand, a variety of equipping charismata is given "to prepare God's people for works of service" so that the body "grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." On the other hand, believers are to attain "the full measure of perfection found in Christ." "Speaking the truth in love," they are "in all things" to "grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." The two emphases go together. The picture here is of believers individually and corporately growing up into the fullness of Christ through the exercise of gifts and through progress in sanctification. And this charismatic theme here underscores something that we in the Holiness Movement have insufficiently emphasized: the "fullness of Christ" which is our goal refers not primarily to individual experience but to the corporate life of the believing community. Sanctification, like the charismata, is for the Body and for each individual in the Body, not for isolated believers. This is, in fact, what John Wesley meant when he said that "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and . . . to turn it into a solitary religion, is to destroy it."¹⁴

II. Wesleyanism as a Charismatic Movement

Reference to John Wesley provides a convenient point of transition to our second consideration. Is Wesleyan Christianity charismatic Christianity in the proper biblical meaning of the term? Is Wesleyanism a charismatic movement? Here it may be helpful to distinguish between the theology of John Wesley himself, the fact of the Wesleyan Revival in England, and the subsequent experience of the Holiness Movement.

John Wesley's Theology

A study of John Wesley's theology in the light of biblical charismatic themes shows that Wesley was charismatic, but that this must be said with certain qualifications. Wesley did not speak in tongues, of course (so far as we know), and in fact did not have to face this issue in the way we do today. He said comparatively little about the charismata-though more than most churchmen of his day. But viewing Christianity as charismatic in the proper biblical sense, we can describe Wesley's theology as charismatic.

1. Wesley's theology is charismatic because it emphasizes God's grace in the life and experience of the Church. Wesley was deeply conscious of the operation of the grace of God in individual experience and in the life of the Church-God's grace "preventing [or coming before], accompanying, and following" every person.¹⁵

Wesley was, if anything, more deeply conscious of God's grace than were the earlier Reformers. He had a deep optimism of grace that formed the foundation of his emphasis on the universal atonement, the witness of the Spirit, and Christian perfection. Here his stress on prevenient grace is especially important. As Colin Williams has observed, Wesley "broke the chain of logical necessity by which the Calvinist doctrine of predestination seems to flow from the doctrine of original sin, by his doctrine of prevenient grace."¹⁶

Thus Wesley argued, "there is no man that is in a state of mere nature there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the

grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed, preventing grace . . . no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath."¹⁷

Wesley saw the whole plan of salvation as dependent upon the grace of God. It follows that the Church exists and lives by God's grace. Although Wesley said little specifically about the Church, as Church, being dependent on grace, this is the clear implication of his view of grace. Whenever he discusses the Church he stresses the spiritual, living meaning of any valid description or definition of it.¹⁸ In this sense, Wesley's view of the Church is charismatic.

2. Wesley's understanding of the Church and Christian experience can be described as charismatic because of the place of the Holy Spirit in his theology and because of his openness to the gifts of the Spirit.

Without entering into the complex debate as to the precise role of the Holy Spirit in Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification or the appropriateness of terminology which emphasizes the role of the Spirit, one can at least affirm that the Holy Spirit played a significant role in Wesley's thought. It seems to me that Wesley was biblical in understanding salvation in strongly christological rather than primarily pneumatological terms, but in stressing the role of the Spirit in testifying to Christ and making Him real to us in present experience. The "more excellent purpose" for which the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost was "to give them . . . the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit, which whosoever hath not, is none of His."¹⁹

Wesley did not elaborate a complete doctrine of the gifts of the Spirit, but did say enough (mainly in response to charges that he himself pretended extraordinary gifts or inspirations) for us to understand his general perspective.

To interpret Wesley's view is complicated by the fact that he distinguished between extraordinary and ordinary gifts in a way that is not precisely biblical. Among the "extraordinary gifts" he included healing, miracles, prophecy (in the sense of foretelling), discernment of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues, and he describes apostles, prophets, and evangelists as "extraordinary officers." The "ordinary gifts" include "convincing speech," persuasion, knowledge, faith, "easy elocution," and pastors and teachers as "ordinary officers."²⁰ The problem for interpretation is that Wesley seems to include more than the usually identified charismata under "ordinary gifts" and he makes a distinction in 1 Corinthians 12 between gifts which are "extraordinary" or "miraculous" and others which are not.²¹

Wesley felt the ordinary gifts were operative in the Church in all ages and should appropriately be desired by Christians-though, of course, governed by love.²² All the gifts, including the extraordinary ones, had been part of the experience of the Church during the first three centuries, he believed, but "even in the infancy of the church, God divided them with a sparing hand," and principally to those in leadership.²³

Did Wesley believe the extraordinary gifts could be expected in the Church in his day? This, of course, is an important question for our dialog with contemporary charismatic Christianity. Wesley writes:

It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian, and from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honour upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, . . . "because there was no more occasion for them." . . . The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, was "waxed cold." . . . This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church.²⁴

The "grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn," he writes, "was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture."²⁵

Wesley believed in the fall of the Church at the time of Constantine. But this did not mean all was hopeless in the present. God was doing a renewing work through Methodism in his own day, Wesley believed. Thus he nowhere rules out the possibility of new manifestations of the extraordinary gifts. He felt such gifts either "were designed to remain in the church throughout all ages" or else "they will be restored at the nearer approach of the 'restitution of all things.'"²⁶ Wesley had a fundamental, although somewhat hidden, optimism regarding such gifts. He advises Christians that the best gifts "are worth your pursuit, though but few of you can attain them."²⁷ "Perfecting the saints" in Ephesians 4:12 involves "the completing them both in number and their various gifts and graces." Gifts are given for their usefulness, by which "alone are we to estimate all our gifts and talents."²⁸

Wesley thus believed that if the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were in little evidence in his day, this was because of the fallen state of the Church and represented a less than ideal situation. In fact God's power was still at work, though hindered by the general coldness and deadness of the church. Wesley certainly did not disparage the gifts, and despite his reticence concerning so-called extraordinary gifts, he valued all gifts and felt that in a fully restored, spiritual Church, all the gifts would be in evidence.

It was in this context that Wesley understood the gift of tongues. He wrote, "It seems 'the gift of tongues' was an instantaneous knowledge of a tongue till then unknown, which he that received it could afterwards speak when he thought fit, without any new miracle."²⁹ He understood tongues as the miraculous ability to speak an actual language, whether previously known or unknown. Because tongues is a gift of language, God might well not give it "where it would be of no use; as in a Church where all are of one mind, and all speak the same language."³⁰ But if one possesses the gift of tongues he should "not act so absurdly, as to utter in a congregation what

can edify none but" himself. Rather he should speak "that tongue, if he find it profitable to himself in his private devotions."³¹

One cannot logically conclude from this, however, that Wesley would necessarily have opposed the modern phenomenon of glossolalia, for several reasons. First, Wesley never had to face precisely this question.³² Secondly, Wesley was an experimentalist, keenly interested in religious experience. Considering his reticence either to endorse or condemn rather unusual and emotional manifestations in his own meetings, one may conjecture that he would have taken a similarly moderate attitude regarding glossolalia.

Thirdly, Wesley's strong emphasis on the rational nature of faith does not permit one to say that he would have opposed glossolalia as irrational, for Wesley's view of reason was always tempered by experience. He reacted against an extreme rationalism as much as against any unbiblical "enthusiasm." He was ready to admit that the Christian faith, though rational, also transcends reason. As Albert Outler notes,

Wesley had a remarkably practical rule for judging extraordinary gifts of the Spirit (ecstasies, miracles, etc.) . . . No profession of an "extraordinary gift" ("tongues" or whatever) is to be rejected out of hand, as if we knew what the Spirit should or should not do. . . . What he did insist on was that such gifts are never ends in themselves, that all of them must always be normal (and judged) by the Spirit's "ordinary" gifts ("love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc., etc."). Like faith, all spiritual gifts are in order to love, which is the measure of all that is claimed to be from God. since God is love.³³

In the light of these considerations, we have to conclude that precisely what position Wesley would take regarding glossolalia remains an open question, but he certainly would put the primary emphasis on love—both in the personal experience of the believer practicing gifts and in the attitude of others toward him or her.

In any case, Wesley's view of spiritual gifts is largely undeveloped. He was certainly more aware of, and more positive toward, the charismata than most churchmen of his day.³⁴ But his understanding was complicated by the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary gifts, and for this and other reasons he failed to see the full practical significance of the charismata for the practical "building up" and ministry of the Christian community.

In summary, we may say that Wesley's theology at this point is charismatic, though not in the fully biblical sense.

3. Wesley's theology is charismatic in its emphasis on the communitary nature of the Church. Wesley clearly saw that there could be no true Church without genuine fellowship, and that this was an area where Methodism had a special role to play. Thus Wesley writes in his preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (first edition, 1739),

it is only when we are knit together that we "have nourishment from Him, and increase with the increase of God." Neither is there any time, when the weakest member can say to the strongest, or the strongest to the weakest, "I have no need of

thee." Accordingly our blessed Lord, when His disciples were in their weakest state, sent them forth, not alone, but two by two. When they were strengthened a little, not by solitude, but by abiding with him and one another, he commanded them to "wait," not separate, but "being assembled together," for "the promise of the Father." And "they were all with one accord in one place" when they received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Express mention is made in the same chapter, that when "there were added unto them three thousand souls, all that believed were together, and continued steadfastly" not only "in the Apostles' doctrine," but also "in fellowship and in breaking of bread," and in praying "with one accord."³⁵

Wesley goes on to quote from Ephesians 4:12-16, and it is in this connection that he comments, "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."³⁶ Thus in the context, "social" here means "communitary."

By Christian fellowship Wesley understood not merely corporate worship but watching over one another in love; advising, exhorting, admonishing, and praying with the brothers and sisters. "This, and this alone, is Christian fellowship," he said. And this is what Methodism promoted: "We introduce Christian fellowship where it was utterly destroyed. And the fruits of it have been peace, joy, love, and zeal for every good word and work."³⁷

The great instrument for promoting this quality of community or fellowship was, of course, the Methodist organization of society, class meeting, and band. For Wesley, the class meeting was an ecclesiological statement, and one integrally linked to Christian perfection. As Colin Williams writes, "Wesley's view of holiness was woven into his ecclesiology. He believed that the gathering together of believers into small voluntary societies for mutual discipline and Christian growth was essential to the Church's life." He "insisted that there must be some form of small group fellowship."³⁸ In Wesley's view, if believers were really serious in their quest for holiness they would band together in small groups to experience that level of community which is the necessary environment for growth in grace.

It seems clear that from this perspective also Wesley's theology is charismatic-and in a way that puts it in some tension with the more recent experience of Wesleyan groups which have wholly abandoned the class meeting.

4. Wesley's theology is charismatic in the tension which it experiences with institutional expressions of the Church. This is, in fact, one of the fundamental tensions in both Wesley's thought and his career-to affirm the validity of the largely decadent institutional church while seeing Methodism as more truly manifesting the essential marks of the Church, and to hold the growing Methodist movement within the bounds of the Church of England. This tension between institutional and charismatic tendencies, and this attempt to hold the two together by the animating power of the Spirit within the institution, goes in fact to the heart of Wesley's ecclesiology.

In summary, Wesley's theology is distinctly and fundamentally charismatic, although not in the full biblical sense. A more fully biblical view would require rethinking the ordinary/extraordinary distinction, relating gifts more fully and normatively to the various forms of Christian ministry, and more fully and adequately treating the question of the gift of tongues.

The Methodist Revival

Granted that Wesley's theology was in a fundamental sense charismatic, does it follow that early Methodism was a charismatic movement?

The parallels between early Methodism and the contemporary Catholic Charismatic Renewal are striking. Both are evangelical movements within a largely liturgical-sacramental Catholic tradition; both emphasize personal appropriation and experience of saving faith through Jesus Christ; both combine the emphases of faith and holiness; both put strong emphasis on singing and

praise; both maintain a strong sacramental emphasis, conduct separate meetings for worship and instruction, profess loyalty to the institutional church, claim to be biblical, and emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit (but not to the detriment of a balanced christological and trinitarian emphasis). Both employ a large corps of lay preachers. In fact, early Methodism much more resembles contemporary Catholic charismatic Christianity than it does Protestant Pentecostal and Charismatic manifestations. The one major difference between Catholic charismatic Christianity and Methodism is, of course, the peculiar place of the gift of tongues in the origin of Catholic charismatic Christianity.³⁹

If we do not make glossolalia or other specific gifts the determining criterion, it is fully appropriate to speak of the Wesleyan Revival as a charismatic movement. It manifested the four features we have been discussing: an emphasis on or rediscovery of grace as the basis of Christian experience and the Church, an emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit as the source of the Church's life, the recovery of the experience of the Church as community, and tension with the institutional manifestation of the Church.

If the gifts of the Spirit played a relatively minor part in Wesley's own theology and understanding, their exercise played a major role in the growth of Methodism. A key to the Wesleyan system was Wesley's "lay" preachers, whom he considered as "extraordinary messengers, raised up to provoke the ordinary ones to jealousy."⁴⁰ Wesley thus considered his preachers as exercising a charismatic office, and so they did. His preachers were persons who demonstrated gifts for ministry, and Wesley put them to work, confirming their gifts.

The early Methodist system, in fact, gave ample opportunity for exercising a broad range of spiritual gifts. Among the functions within the Methodist societies were class leaders, band leaders, assistants, stewards, visitors of the sick, and schoolmasters.⁴¹ While these functions do not seem to have been understood primarily on the basis of the charismata, the whole Methodist system in fact encouraged the kind of spiritual growth in which useful charisms would spring forth and be put into useful service. Methodism thus provided considerably more opportunity for the exercise of gifts than did the Church of England, where ministry was severely

hedged about by clericalism. In this sense Methodist ministry was much more charismatic than were Anglican forms of ministry.

Thus Methodism, at least during the life of Wesley, was a charismatic movement. Later, with the decline of the class meeting, the setting up of Methodist ministerial orders, and the general spiritual decline of the movement, Methodism largely ceased to be charismatic in the biblical sense.

The Holiness Movement

The American Holiness Movement grew up in large measure as a reaction to the spiritual decline within Methodism. Its history exhibits some parallels with contemporary Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, although perhaps less than is true of original Methodism.

Whereas early Methodism grew up around the recovery of the doctrine of the new birth, the Holiness Movement sprang from a recovery of Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification as a deeper experience beyond conversion. In this sense, at least, the Holiness Movement has more affinities with modern Charismatic Christianity than does early Methodism.

Viewed from the perspective of this study, the Holiness Revival was indeed a charismatic movement. It emphasized grace, the Holy Spirit, and Christian fellowship, and felt keenly the tension between new life and old forms.

It seems to me that two things characterized the Holiness Movement which, on the one hand, made it less charismatic and, on the other, prepared the way for modern Pentecostalism. In both cases the Holiness Movement failed to carry over the breadth and genius of John Wesley.

1. The first of these was the lessened consciousness of Christian community and of the need for structures for community. We have seen how the class meeting was woven into Wesley's understanding of Christian life and sanctification. It was not for nothing that Wesleyans continued to be called Methodists!

By and large, however, the Holiness Movement failed to perpetuate the intimate, consistent, intense experience of Christian community in the form of the class meeting which so characterized earlier Methodism. In its place was substituted the holiness camp meeting. To some degree the camp meeting became to the Holiness Movement what the class meeting was to Methodism. But by its very nature, the camp meeting could not bear the load. Whatever their value, occasional mass rallies cannot do the job of consistent, week-by-week, committed cells of seekers after holiness. It could be argued, in fact, that the camp meeting phenomenon tended to shift the perception of the work of holiness from that of a day-by-day walk with strong ethical implications toward that of an inner emotional crisis experience with periodic renewals—the typical "revival mentality."

This is not to say class meetings died out abruptly, or that this was a wholesale shift. I am speaking rather of what seems to have been a tendency. Class meetings continued in places well into the twentieth century, and the Holiness Movement exhibited other forms of small groups, such as Phoebe Palmer's "Tuesday Meetings." But it is clear that during the last half of the nineteenth century the class meeting was in decline while the camp meeting was in ascendancy. This is a question, however, deserving of further study; I offer it as an hypothesis.⁴² Some support for this

hypothesis is given by Charles W. Ferguson, who observes in *Organizing to Beat the Devil: Methodists and the Making of America*.

At first the Methodists [in the U.S.] struck a balance between the camp meetings and the class meetings. In this combination the mini and the mass joined. But when camp assemblies became a sustaining feature in Methodist practice, group meetings subsided and fell gradually into disuse. Many undetermined factors may have entered into the change, but the fact is that the growth of mass efforts during the years before 1805 and 1844 coincided with a shrinking of group activities. Methodism moved toward the mass rather than the group as the primary form in society.⁴³

In any case, it appears that the Holiness Movement was less specifically communitary than was earlier Methodism. One consequence of this was that it gave less opportunity for the practical exercise of spiritual gifts.

2. The second development in the Holiness Movement was a narrowing of John Wesley's conception of Christian perfection. A careful reading of Wesley's sermons has convinced me that the fundamental strain in Wesley's doctrine of sanctification is that of process: Growing up into the fullness of Christ; attaining the mind of Christ and the image of God; loving God with all one's soul, strength, and mind. To this Wesley added, on the basis of experience and seemingly by analogy with his understanding of the new birth, his doctrine of a second crisis experience in which the believer was entirely sanctified, cleansed, and empowered to love God and others fully, without hindrance from an impure "heart," as God intends.

The Holiness Movement in the nineteenth century narrowed this focus by placing primary stress on the second crisis and comparatively less stress on the process of growth in sanctification beginning with conversion and extending throughout life. Holiness came to be conceived of primarily as a state. Thus Seth Cook Rees could write in 1897, "Holiness is a state; entire sanctification is an experience; the Holy Ghost is a person. We come into the state of holiness through the experience of entire sanctification wrought by the omnipotent energies of the Holy Ghost."⁴⁴ Admittedly this "state" was a state of growth, but the accent had shifted.

Concomitant with this shift in emphasis was, as several others have shown, a shift toward pneumatological language and an emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

My hypothesis is that these two developments-combining with other trends and currents in late-nineteenth-century society-tended to produce an un-Wesleyan pessimism concerning normative personal and corporate Christian experience and an increasingly subjective focus on the crisis points in one's spiritual life. What for Wesley was a life-long growth in grace enabled by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and particularly by the second crisis of entire sanctification tended to become a series of peak experiences which were seen as carrying the believer through the low points in between. The absence of a consistent normative structure for continued growth in sanctification (such as the class meeting) reinforced this psychology. This tended finally toward a somewhat pessimistic view because it diminished the emphasis on a life of continuing perfecting and

understood the primary dimension of perfection possible in this life as being bestowed at one crisis moment subsequent to regeneration.

If this generalization is somewhat oversimplified, I believe it at least contains an important element of truth. And it indicates that at this point the Holiness Movement was less biblically charismatic than early Methodism and was moving more toward modern Pentecostalism. In Wesley's view, the Christian is always growing in sanctification. The second crisis is important, but more as a means than as a goal. In contrast, the Holiness Movement increasingly tended to see the second crisis as the goal of Christian experience, the end to which all prior growth in grace tended.⁴⁵

From this perspective, late-nineteenth-century Holiness theology logically leads either to Pentecostalism or to a denial of the validity of a second crisis experience. By its very nature, a spiritual peak experience cannot be permanently satisfying. If that experience was a genuine experience of the Holy Spirit in His fullness (which I do not question), we would expect, of course, that the daily presence of the Spirit in the believer's life would be fully satisfying-and of course that was the expectation. But without normative structures for nurturing the life of holiness, and with the increasing emphasis on subjective crises typified by the growing use of Pentecostal crisis language,⁴⁶ one can imagine that many common Holiness people sensed an inner lack in their lives, a sense that there must be something deeper, something more, in Christian experience. So then after 1900 the question logically became, could this "something more" be the new phenomenon of speaking in tongues? And on that issue the Holiness Movement divided.⁴⁷

If this line of reasoning is valid, it leads to two conclusions:

1. The fully Wesleyan understanding of Christian perfection as combining both process and crisis must be recovered. Perhaps the real question before us is less that of the appropriateness of Spirit-baptism language than the question of how we in fact teach, encourage, and make structural provision for the life of "all inward and outward holiness." There is a biblical and practical breadth to the Wesleyan understanding of Christian experience that must be recovered in our day.

2. In this light, modern Pentecostalism may be viewed in both a positive and a negative way. Positively, Pentecostalism has recovered and magnified much of the spiritual dynamism of the older Holiness Movement and has been responsible, under God, for millions of people on all continents coming to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Whether we like it or not, in some sense the mantle of the Holiness Movement as a spiritual revitalizing force has passed to Pentecostalism, which has had a much greater impact than has our own tradition in our day. Furthermore, Pentecostalism has raised the question of the charismata and the charismatic nature of Christianity in a way that has forced the Church at large to re-examine what the Scriptures say on this subject. The new consciousness of the practical dimensions of the charismata which is growing throughout the Church is directly traceable to modern Pentecostalism (and, of course, indirectly to Wesleyanism).

Negatively, Pentecostalism, and to some degree the Charismatic Movement, have not yet recovered the ethical, spiritual, and social depth and

breadth of early Methodism. The sanctifying emphasis has not been sufficiently retained. An over-emphasis on the more dramatic gifts has been accompanied by a lack of a positive balancing emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit and the social impact of the Gospel.

It is completely understandable that the Holiness Movement should react as it did to the outbreak of Pentecostalism. Holiness advocates by and large denounced the gift of tongues with the same intensity that Pentecostals promoted it. And the more tongues became the focal point of Pentecostalism, the more it became the focal point of Holiness opposition. Thus it nearly always is at the outbreak of a new movement. The unfortunate thing is that in such a circumstance the old movement is left without the dynamic of the new and the new is left without the stability and balance of the old.

We are now in a new period, however. The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are here to stay, and indeed in some sectors are showing signs of institutionalism and accommodation. Conversely, Holiness bodies are gradually softening their opposition to Pentecostal and Charismatic themes and are beginning to take a second look. It is time to build bridges of understanding and to ask how the Holy Spirit might be pleased to build in this day a truly, biblically charismatic and holy Church.

III. Wesleyans and Charismatics Today

Three major considerations should be part of the agenda for Wesleyan theology today as it confronts and interacts with Charismatic Christianity.

1. We should re-evaluate our arguments in opposition to Pentecostalism in general and the gifts of the Spirit in particular.

Most Wesleyan commentators, conscious of history and of the similarity at certain points of Wesleyan and Pentecostal theology, have understandably approached the question of spiritual gifts from a defensive and apologetic, rather than positive and constructive, perspective. Our primary concern has been to explain why we differ from Pentecostals and to defend our ranks from outbreaks of tongues-speaking. Most of the Wesleyan Holiness literature on gifts has therefore been of this negative and defensive variety.⁴⁸

More recently, some Wesleyans have begun to approach the question of gifts in a broader and more constructive way, asking how a proper biblical understanding can make us more effective in our work and witness. Two books with similar titles exemplify these two approaches within Wesleyan Holiness ranks: W. T. Purkiser's *The Gifts of the Spirit* and Kenneth C. Kinghorn's *Gifts of the Spirit*.⁴⁹ We might well heed Dr. Kinghorn's admonition to avoid both "charismania" and "charisphobia" in dealing with the gifts.

Most Holiness writing on the gifts so far has zeroed in on the tongues question, focusing particularly on the Corinthian problem. The general line of reasoning has been similar to that described by Charles Hummel in his recent book, *Fire in the Fireplace*:

Most commentaries paint a picture of [speaking in tongues] along the following lines: at Corinth it was an emotional, sensational experience similar to the ecstasy of the pagan religions.

The Christians had an exaggerated respect for this gift which they considered of the highest value. Misuse of tongues was the greatest problem in the church. Paul considers it of least value since it appears last on some of his lists. At best he begrudgingly commands that it not be forbidden.⁵⁰

As Hummel notes, there are several logical and hermeneutical problems with this approach. He comments,

Paul's statements do not support these conjectures. Significantly, these opinions come from a culture for which speaking in tongues is both intellectually and socially unacceptable. Since in every generation Christianity is influenced by its environment, is it not possible that this spiritual gift is far more a problem for the modern church than it was for the Corinthians? The first eleven chapters of 1 Corinthians indicate that for Paul other issues were of much greater concern.⁵¹

Strictly from the standpoint of logic, some of the most common arguments against glossolalia must be called into question. This does not mean, of course, that glossolalia should be promoted or unrestrictedly permitted, that every outbreak of "tongues" is legitimate or authentic, or that there are no valid arguments against the practice. But it does suggest some need for re-evaluation on the part of Wesleyans.

For example, a sharp distinction is often made between tongues as the miraculous speaking of a known, but unlearned, language and glossolalia as "unknown tongue" or ecstatic speech. But this distinction is not so obvious as it seems. In the first place, the New Testament does not make or support this distinction, although it is clear that known languages were involved at least on the Day of Pentecost.⁵² Secondly, the idea that non-language tongues-speaking is a highly emotional, irrational, ecstatic form of behavior involving "mindless utterances"⁵³ or being "out of control"⁵⁴ is a caricature that most Charismatics would reject. Thirdly, it is not clear that it makes any practical psychological or spiritual difference to the tongues-speaker whether he or she is uttering a "known" or "unknown" tongue if in any case the tongue is unknown to the speaker. In either case it is to him or her an "unknown tongue" which is in some sense unintelligible.

Another problem of logic involves inconsistency between the arguments made against tongues. One writer, for instance, considers tongues (other than known languages) as illegitimate because it involves yielding one's rational control to an irrational, overpowering, ecstatic speech pattern, while another author argues that tongues can't be legitimate because the tongues-speaker can speak in tongues deliberately, at will, whereas a truly valid spiritual gift comes by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ One argues that tongues is wrong because it is irrational; the other that it is false because it is rationally controllable. The truth however, would appear to be that tongues-speaking may sometimes be a non-rational but not necessarily irrational speech pattern which lies within the range of normal and rational human behavior. Such tongues-speaking may or may not be prompted or inspired by the Holy Spirit, and in some contexts may be induced by other forces, whether psychological, social, or

demonic. This is no more than what we would admit for some other rather extraordinary forms of behavior which in certain contexts we do not consider abnormal or pathological, including crying, screaming, shouting, or dancing.

Probably the major argument against glossolalia in Holiness circles has been that it is an irrational form of behavior and speech, while the gospel always calls us to rational behavior and speech.⁵⁶ But this argument also needs re-evaluation, on at least two counts. First, it operates on the basis of an unnecessary rational/irrational dichotomy or polarity. What is not totally rational to us may not be irrational; it may simply be nonrational (in the sense that emotions in general, for instance, are non-rational but not by definition irrational), or it may be beyond our present level of knowledge. Thus we now know Einstein's theory of relativity is not irrational, although it appeared to be so at first. In this sense, tongues-speaking when accompanied by other signs of the work of the Spirit (notably the fruit of the Spirit) may have its own reason and rationality that we have yet been unable to fully discern.⁵⁷

The second problem with this argument is its assumption that modern glossolalia is an overwhelming, highly emotion-packed ecstatic experience verging on frenzy and analogous to such phenomena in pagan religions. But this is a caricature of tongues-speaking as found in the Charismatic Movement today. As Hummel notes,

Since some pagan religions have a glossolalia involving frenzy and trance, it is often assumed that the Christian experience is similar. These religions also have ordinary prayer, meditation and sacrifice, but their meaning is hardly determinative for the Christian expression. On the contrary, the Corinthians were not possessed by evil spirits but were led by the Holy Spirit. In fact Paul assumed that they could control their speaking in tongues (14:28).

The Corinthians may have exercised this gift with strong emotion, just as they may have prayed, prophesied or sung emotionally. But this style of expression is not inherent in the gift.⁵⁸

The real danger in this approach to tongues, however, is that it may lead us to the hyper-rationalism characteristic of dead orthodoxy. Wesleyans, of all people, should be open to the working of God in human experience and reticent to state in advance how the Spirit shall or shall not operate. We should maintain the balance of reason, experience, and Scripture found in John Wesley.

We may justly criticize many Pentecostals (not all) for making tongues the evidence of the fullness of the Spirit or for attempting to induce people to seek or experience this gift. But we should be careful that our arguments grow inductively from Scripture and stand the test of the rational logic for which we contend.⁵⁹ This has unquestionably been the intent throughout the modern Wesleyan polemic against tongues. My question, however, is whether our arguments have been totally sound.

I realize that to suggest even the degree of openness to Pentecostalism called for here will be considered by some as an encouragement to tongues-speaking. It should be clear that this is not my intent. My concern is,

rather, that we would sufficiently moderate our position so that we could be more open toward and work more closely with our many Christian sisters and brothers in the Charismatic Movement and appreciate the work God is doing through them. They can learn from us, and we can learn from them.

2. We should understand what the Charismatic Movement is today. Many of our conceptions simply do not stand up to the facts. For example, the movement is much more diverse than we have painted it. We find not only the obvious distinction between the older pentecostalism and the newer Charismatic Movement but also widespread varieties and differences within each of these. The more recent Charismatic Movement may be divided generally into the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Charismatic Movement within the mainline denominations, the somewhat nebulous group associated with The 700 Club and The PTL Club, old-line Pentecostals who have "made the switch" to the newer Charismatic style, and the rather close-knit group associated with Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, and others. Also, there are now fairly well-organized Charismatic Renewal movements in some smaller, more-or-less evangelical denominations, such as the Mennonite Charismatic Renewal.⁶⁰

These groups vary widely in their understanding of the precise role of tongues-speaking in Christian experience and in the Church, although they all practice tongues-speaking. Many do not hold that tongues is a necessary evidence of being filled with the Spirit. Also, one may make the generalization that in Charismatic groups that now have a decade or more of experience, tongues is not the main concern or issue. Many charismatic groups are now primarily concerned with questions of Christian community building, discipline, authority, family life, and personal spiritual growth. In other words, there is a growing concern with ethical questions. One need not agree with Pentecostal and Charismatic interpretations of tongues (as I do not) in order to appreciate the diversity and spiritual vitality in much of the movement.

Nowhere do common stereotypes of the Charismatic Movement become more inappropriate than when one examines the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Here is a movement which is very conscious of historic Christian roots and of the call to a life of holiness. A review of several issues of *New Covenant* magazine (or of the more recent publication, *Pastoral Renewal*) will reveal the blending of evangelical and catholic emphases which are especially characteristic of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. As noted earlier, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has many parallels with eighteenth-century Methodism (as well as many differences), and there is no reason why contemporary Wesleyans should not have frequent and close fellowship with this branch of the Body of Christ.⁶¹

3. Finally, we should seek a more biblically charismatic expression of the Church

I have already indicated the general direction which this concern should take us. We must seek to be charismatic in the fully biblical sense. Among other things, this means:

- 1) A new awareness of the possibilities and potential of God's grace in human experience, the Church, and in society.
- 2) A rediscovery of the charismatic nature and structure of the Church. This means a balanced emphasis on gifts, but it also means understanding

that the charismata provide a foundational insight for understanding the varieties of ministry within the Church. We need to combine an emphasis on gifts with a reaffirmation of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

3) Related to this is a recovery of the understanding and experience of the Church as community. We need to see and experience the Church primarily as a charismatic organism, rather than as an institutional organization. This means recovering some functional equivalent of the class meeting, but it also means a much deeper understanding of the nature of New Testament *koinonia*.

4) A fully charismatic expression of the Church will understand itself as a proto-community of the Kingdom of God and seek by God's grace to be a messianic expression of the Kingdom in a world of contrary values.

5) A charismatic expression of the Church must in no way compromise the call to sanctity and holiness. Rather, it will see holiness as encompassing the corporate, as well as individual, experience of believers, and it will see the Christian community as the essential environment for making progress in the life of holiness.

6) Conscious that the life and witness of the Church stem from the work of the Holy Spirit, a biblically charismatic expression of the Church will seek to manifest the "catholic spirit" which John Wesley advocated. It will seek visible expression of the unity of the church through basing that unity on an openness and sensitivity toward the working of the Holy Spirit in the various branches of the Church.

Conclusion

Contemporary Wesleyans may be uniquely placed to be used for a new and dynamic articulation of the gospel message in our day. We have in our tradition the best of the catholic, evangelical, and charismatic emphasis.

Jeremy Rifkin, in his new book *The Emerging Order*, argues:

If the Charismatic and evangelical strains of the new Christian renewal movement [today] come together and unite a liberating energy with a new covenant vision for society, it is possible that a great religious awakening will take place, one potentially powerful enough to incite a second Protestant reformation.

It is also possible that as the domestic and global situation continues to worsen in the 1980s, the evangelical/Charismatic phenomena, and the waves of religious renewal that follow, could, instead, provide a growing sanctuary for millions of frightened Americans and even a recruiting ground for a repressive movement manifesting all of the earmarks of an emerging fascism.⁶²

Wesleyanism already, to some degree, bridges the Evangelical and Charismatic camps today. It has a clear message of present deliverance from inbred sin by the power of the sanctifying Spirit. If it needs anything, it is a new infusion of an openness to the power of the Holy Spirit and a new appreciation for the breadth and balance of its own heritage as seen in John Wesley himself.

Notes

1Note my discussion in *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977), pp. 66-68.

2W.T. Purkiser, *The Giftss of the Spirit* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1975), p. 17.

3See the helpful discussion in John Howard Yoder, "The Fullness of Christ: Perspectives on Ministries in Renewal," *Concern* No. 17 (February 1969), pp.63-64. For a discussion of "charismatic fullness" as this term was used by Daniel Steele, see Delbert R. Rose, "Distinguishing Things that Differ," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 9 (Spring 1974): 8-11.

4All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

5The NIV brings out the force of the verb by saying, "God in his grace gave...."

6Note also Phil. 2:9; Col. 2:13; 2 Cor. 2:10 and 12:13; Eph. 4:33. The fact that *charidzomai* can also be translated "forgive" (as in the last passage) further underscores the essential nature of this emphasis and its ecclesiological importance.

7For growing recognition in the Church of the Nazarene of the practical place of spiritual gifts, see Frank Carver, "Spiritual Gifts and Church Growth: Biblical Perspectives in a Wesleyan Context" (manuscript copy, n.d.), 14 pp. Dr. Carver was the respondent to the present paper at the 1979 WTS meeting.

8Hans Kung, "The Charismatic Structure of the Church," in Hans Kung, ed., *The Church and Ecumenism*, Vol. 4 of *Concilium* (New York: Paulist Press, 1965), p. 49. See also Kung, *The Church* (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday Image Books, 1976), especially pp. 236-50.

9Kung, "The Charismatic Structure of the Church," pp. 50-58.

10Ibid., p. 58.

11Ibid.

12James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1975), p. 341.

13See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Spirit Versus Structure* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

14John Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," Discourse IV, *The Words of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, third ed. (London: John Mason, 1829-31), 5:296.

15Sermon, "The Good Steward," *Works*, 6:147.

16Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley 's Theology Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 44.

17Sermon, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," *Works*, 6:512.

18See, for example, my discussion in "Wesley's Conception of the Church," *The Asbury Seminarian*, 31:1 (January 1978), pp.38-41.

19Sermon, "Scriptural Christianity," Works, 5:38.

20Ibid.; Sermon, "The More Excellent Way," Works, 7:27; Explanatory Notes on the New Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1950),P.713 (on Eph. 4:8-11). In the Explanatory Notes Wesley usually employs the ordinary/extraordinary distinction, in contrast to Bengel, his source. Note, for instance, Wesley's comment on 1 Peter 4:10. Wesley often departs from Bengel in his comments on the gifts. The ordinary/extraordinary distinction which Wesley makes with regard to gifts (as well as to offices) did not originate with him, but he took it over and strongly stressed it. See Wesley's "Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," I, Section V, in Works (Oxford ed.), 11:138-76.

21It has been suggested to me that Wesley's use of the term "extraordinary" is to be understood in contradistinction to the eighteenth century ecclesiastical meaning of "ordinary," so that it would mean, in effect, "outside the normal ordained ministry" in a more or less technical sense. A search of several dictionaries does not bear this out, however. Even in Wesley's day "extraordinary" had the common sense of simply "outside of what is ordinary or usual" (Oxford English Dictionary, 3:468, 472). Thus a 1706 London dictionary defines extraordinary as "beyond or contrary to common Order and Fashion, unusual, uncommon," and a dictionary published in London in 1790 has "Different from common order and method; eminent, remarkable, more than common." It appears that Wesley was using the term in the general and popular sense, not as a technical ecclesiastical designation. (This is underscored by the fact that Wesley seems to use "extraordinary" synonymously with "miraculous" when referring to the gifts.)

22Works, 7:27.

23Works. 5:38.

24Works, 7:26-27.

25The Journal of John Wesley, A.M., ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London: The Epworth Press, 1938 reprint), 3:490 (August 15,1750).

26Works, 5:38.

27Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, p. 625(1 Cor. 12:31). Note his comment on healing, p. 623.

28Ibid., pp. 713,628 (Eph. 4:12;1 Cor. 14:5).

29Ibid.,P.631 (a comment not found in Bengel).

30Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton, Works, 10:56.

31Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, PP.629,631(1 Cor. 14:15, 28). Here again Wesley inserts his own comment, not following Bengel. Is Wesley here referring to a "prayer language" in the modern Pentecostal sense when he makes this rather surprising remark? Probably not, if by this is meant a form of ecstatic utterance which bears no resemblance to known languages. He does seem to be allowing, however, for the normal use of a miraculously-given ability to use at will, with rational control, a language which the speaker (or prayer) himself does not, or previously did not,

understand. This comes very close to what many "charismatics" mean by a "prayer language," for, contrary to common caricatures, praying in an unknown tongue does not necessarily mean surrendering control of one's rational faculties. Also, it is interesting here that Wesley allows for the use of tongues in private prayer, even though in that case no one but the speaker would be edified.

32Not that Wesley was totally unaware of contemporary instances of tongues-speaking. In his reply to Dr. Middleton he refers to the outbreak of tongues and other gifts among a persecuted band of rural Huguenots in southern France (the "little prophets of Cevennes"), beginning in 1688 (Works, 10:56). But little can be made of this, since Wesley gives no indication of what his evaluation was of this instance. Further, some scholars have contested the common claim that tongues-speaking in this case was ecstatic utterance. Several authors claim that this instance was the first recorded outbreak of glossolalia in modern times, after a "silent period" of one thousand years. See, among others, George Barton Cutten, *Speaking with Tongues Historically and Psychologically Considered* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), PP.48-66; Morton Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking an Experiment in Spiritual Experience* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), PP.52-55. Both Cutten and Kelsey refer to Wesley in this connection.

33Albert C. Outler, "John Wesley as Theologian-Then and Now," *Methodist History*, 12:4 (July 1974), P.79.

34This is indicated both by Wesley's keen interest in all forms of religious experience and by his departure from Bengel in his comments on gifts in the Explanatory Notes.

35Works, 14:320-21.

36Ibid.

37"A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," Works, 8:251-52.

38Williams, pp. 151, 150.

39There are also, of course, many other significant differences between the two movements. For one, the Charismatic Renewal has no one dominant personality who exercises anything like John Wesley's role in early Methodism. Another significant difference needing more scrutiny is that the Charismatic Renewal is not a movement among the poor masses as early Methodism was.

40Sermon, "The Ministerial Office," Works, 7:277.

41"A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," Works, 8:261.

42 On the decline of the class meeting, see especially Samuel Emerick, ed., *Spiritual Renewal for Methodism: A Discussion of the Early Methodist Class Meeting and the Values Inherent in Personal Groups Today* (Nashville: Methodist Evangelistic Materials, 1958), particularly the chapters by Mary Alice Tenney, Robert Chiles and J. A. Leatherman; and Luke L. Keefer, Jr., "The Class Meeting's Role of Discipline in Methodism" (unpublished manuscript, 1974).

43Charles W. Ferguson, *Organizing to Beat the Devil* Methodists and

the Making of America (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1971),P.149.

44Seth C. Rees, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church* (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, The Revivalist Office, 1897),P.13.

45Some significant work on this tendency has recently been done by several Wesleyan scholars. Note especially Donald W. Dayton, "From Christian Perfection to the 'Baptism of the Holy Ghost' " and Melvin E. Dieter, "Wesleyan-Holiness Aspects of Pentecostal Origins," both in Vinson Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1975), PP. 39-54 and 55-80. Dieter notes that Phoebe Palmer's doctrine of entire sanctification, compared with Wesley's, "greatly enhanced the distinctiveness of the second blessing from that of the initial experience of regeneration." The result of such tendencies, says Dieter, "was that the American holiness revival came to emphasize crisis stages of salvation at the expense of an emphasis on growth in grace" (p. 62).

46Note in Rees the use of such phrases as "Pentecostal fire," "Pentecostal electrocution," "dynamite," "jagged bolts of pentecostal lightning," "condensed lightning from the upper skies," etc. (Rees, *passim*).

47Holiness losses to Pentecostalism seem to have been significant in the early years. See Dieter, "Wesleyan-Holiness Aspects of Pentecostal Origins," p. 75.

48See, for example, Harvey J. S. Blaney, "St. Paul's Posture on Speaking in Unknown Tongues," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 8 (Spring 1973) 52-60; Charles D. Isbell, "Glossolalia and Propheteialalia: A Study in 1 Corinthians 14," *WTJ*, 10 (Spring 1975): 15-22; Charles W. Carter, "A Wesleyan View of the Spirit's Gift of Tongues in the Book of Acts," *WTJ*, 4 (Spring 1969):39-68; Carter, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: A Wesleyan Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974, 1977), especially pp. 181-220; Carter, introduction and notes on 1 Corinthians in Charles W. Carter, ed., *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), especially 5:114-16, 197-208, 214-23; Lloyd H. Knox, *Key Biblical Perspectives on Tongues* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1974); Wesley L. Duwel, *The Holy Spirit and Tongues* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1974). Most of these employ similar arguments, although the contrasting treatment of just what Paul means by "tongues" in 1 Corinthians 14 reveals the difficulty of basing a total prohibition of glossolalia on the New Testament material. Not all Wesleyan literature has been of this kind, however. Note especially Wilson T. Hogue, *The Holy Spirit: A Study* (Chicago: William B. Rose, 1916), especially pp. 321-60.

49Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *Gifts of the Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press,1976)

50Charles E. Hummel, *Fire in the Fireplace: Contemporary Charismatic Renewal* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978),P.203.

51Ibid.

52 While different kinds or varieties of tongues-speaking do seem to be reported in the New Testament, no biblical writer makes the language/nonlanguage distinction so common today, at least not as a way of validating the one and condemning the other. The issue in 1 Corinthians 14 is not what is spoken but when it is spoken and whether the congregation is edified through interpretation. In Acts 2 we know for sure that a variety of known languages was spoken; we do not know for sure that "unknown tongues" were not also manifested. Apparently that was not an important question to Luke.

53 Knox, p. 18.

54 Blaney. P 55

55 Knox, pp. 16ff; Diewel, p. 21.

56 Timothy Smith sees this as the most foundational argument against tongues, as do many others. Timothy L. Smith, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Some Honest Questions for Pentecostals* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1977), pp. 42-47. It is not helpful to cite Wesley here, because he never faced the modern question of glossolalia.

57 Hurnmel tentatively suggests four possible purposes for tongues speaking, pp. 203-04. See also Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking*, pp. 218-33.

58 Hummel, p. 135.

59 Frank Carver notes that "apart from those who have a pro or con-tongues axe to grind for ecclesiastical reasons the tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 is normally judged" by New Testament scholarship "to be some form of ecstatic utterance" (Carver, p. 13).

The most difficult passages for a rigid anti-tongues position, as some Wesleyan writers have noted, are three of Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 14—"I would like every one of you to speak in tongues" (v. 5), "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you" (v. 18), and "Do not forbid speaking in tongues" (v. 39).

Some Wesleyan and other writers have gone to great lengths (including suggestions that Paul is employing a psychologically very subtle pastoral approach here) in attempting to establish that these statements do not mean what they seem to say. It appears to me, however, that a sound hermeneutic demands that we take these statements and the whole chapter in as straight-forward and "face value" a manner as possible. Such an approach would have to note several things:

- 1) There is no sound exegetical basis in this chapter for giving "tongues" two different meanings in Paul's use here or for restricting "tongues" to "known languages." Whatever Paul means when he speaks of Corinthian tongues-speaking, he means the same thing when he speaks of his own experience.
- 2) Paul's affirmation that "I speak in tongues more than all of you" cannot, by the text or context, be required to mean "I speak in more languages than all of you." In the first place, in the following verse he contrasts his own tongues-speaking with "intelligible words," which would seem to mean that he in fact knew something about speaking in nonintelligible words. Secondly, the context here is the gift of tongues, not the acquired ability to speak languages. So even if "tongues" in verse 18 means

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A DIALOG WITH THE PROCESS THEOLOGY OF JOHN B. COBB, JR.

by John Culp

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate further the ongoing dialog in Wesleyan-Holiness circles with the Process theology of John B. Cobb, Jr. In order to do that, this paper will primarily be concerned with the ways in which Cobb's thought can be helpful to Wesleyans. A paper addressed to Process theologians would focus on the contributions which Wesleyan thought can make to the development of Process theology. The approach will be to examine Cobb's major concerns and underlying view of reality rather than specific doctrines because the specific doctrines are derived from his vision of reality. This paper is not primarily concerned with providing a critique of Cobb's thought because of the necessity for Wesleyans to move beyond the traditional critiques to which Cobb has already responded. Only an accurate interpretation of Cobb can make pertinent criticisms of his position. This paper deals with Cobb's major concerns so that the dialog between Wesleyan theology and Process theology will not be terminated due to misunderstandings of Cobb's position.

Cobb's Vision of Reality and Natural Theology

John B. Cobb's concept of "vision of reality" makes his theological intentions apparent. Failure to understand his purpose can lead to a misunderstanding of his theological efforts. The concept of "vision of reality" ties together the two major themes in his thought. These have been identified by David Griffin as Christian existence and Christian natural theology.¹ Without connecting these themes, Cobb can be read as either a philosophical theologian attempting a task which has been in disrepute for sometime, i.e. a natural theology, or as a theologian of experience with little concern for the philosophical underpinnings of his position. In addition, ignorance of Cobb's concept of "vision of reality" makes it difficult to understand how his position is an attempt to maintain Christian distinctives.

Cobb understands a vision of reality to be a pre-conscious way of viewing all of reality which influences not only what we do but also how we think.² However, conscious reflection upon a vision of reality is possible and necessary. Without a conscious examination of how this vision is expressed in belief, the vision of reality may be changed or lost.³ At the same time conscious examination makes rational support and modification of a vision of reality possible. Without a conscious examination of our vision of reality, it will become fragmented and ineffective because of the acceptance of features from competing visions.⁴ Modification of beliefs which express and support visions of reality often occur in times of stress when past formulations become inadequate. Christian thought is presently experiencing such a time of stress according to Cobb.

Cobb recognizes that the modern consciousness is dominated by a vision of reality expressed in scientific thought which has rejected such basic features of the Christian tradition as the reality of God and His direction of the world. However, Cobb is convinced that the Christian vision, or a vision influenced by Christian thought, remains a viable option.⁵ Not only is it a viable option, but Cobb finds that revision of the dominant vision is necessary. As evidence of this need for revision, he cites the shifts in modern scientific

theory which challenge the deterministic and materialistic assumptions of past scientific theory.⁶

Cobb is called a post-Enlightenment thinker because he has no desire to respond to the challenges from the vision of reality expressed in the modern consciousness by the mere reassertion of traditional orthodox positions. He is not simply a modern thinker, however, because he remains convinced of the validity of the Christian vision in spite of its minority status.⁷ As a post-modern thinker, his purpose is to demonstrate the viability of Christian thought through a reformulation of its concepts in a way which will remain true to the Christian vision of reality.

The first step in demonstrating the viability of a Christian view is the development of a metaphysics, or natural theology, which is compatible with and influenced by the Christian perspective.⁸ The development of such a metaphysic will enable Christian thought to respond to the challenge of the scientific vision. A Christian metaphysic makes it possible to show the validity of the Christian vision by meeting the demand for an interpretive scheme which provides a better explanatory model than the present scientific one.

Cobb finds that the thought of Whitehead comes closer to meeting the demands of the present situation for an adequate metaphysics which is compatible with Christian thought than any other system of thought. His *Living Options in Protestant Theology* is a defense of the adequacy of Whitehead's thought and its compatibility with the Christian vision. He then goes on in *A Christian Natural Theology* to utilize Whitehead's metaphysics, especially as influenced by Hartshorne, to respond to the modern scientific consciousness.

Cobb's efforts to defend the Christian vision of reality by reformulating the conscious expressions of that vision are distinguished by the notions of God as creator, the historicity of reality, and the mutuality of the God/world relation. Cobb is convinced that Christian thought is the result of the vision of reality which views the world as God's creation.⁹ This means, for Cobb, that all of existence depends upon God. This does not result in the traditional concept of creation from nothing because of the absolutistic implications of that doctrine. If the world depends completely upon God for its existence, self-determination is impossible. Cobb's position is that nothing comes into existence apart from God's involvement with its becoming even though He does not totally determine its being.¹⁰ It is in the sense that nothing exists without God's action that Cobb can accept the traditional doctrine of creation from nothing. If nothing exists without God, then God can be said to create from nothing. This position still avoids making God a limited God because there is no power or reality which competes with His creative activity. God is not a totally determining power though because each event draws from the past in its self-determined response to God's presentation of possible arrangements of the past. The philosophical basis for this concept is Whitehead's analysis that every event is a response to the past. God provides the possibilities, the past provides the resources, and the event itself makes the response. This means that the past is vital to what becomes in contrast to the traditional doctrine of absolute non-existence prior to creation. Nothing, however, could occur without God's action of presenting possibilities. God is the creator because He is crucial to the world's existence.

The second characteristic of Cobb's thought is his notion of historicity. Cobb speaks to the modern situation through his complete acceptance of the modern notion of the historicity of all reality. Whitehead's metaphysics is helpful at this point also because it recognizes the historical nature of reality in its very refusal to be substantialistic. Whitehead purposely used the term "actual occasion" as the description of the basic unit of reality. The term "occasion" was used because it most adequately conveyed the presence of becoming at the center of reality.¹¹ An occasion becomes; it does not endure. An occasion draws upon the past and influences the future, but does not continue to exist through a series of changes over a lengthy time span.

Cobb's acceptance of the historical nature of reality is so thoroughgoing that he not only denies the validity of statements about the essence of Christianity similar to those made by the 19th-century theologians, but also denies the possibility that theology can ever attain a final statement.¹² Because every theological statement is conditioned by its historical situation, it is limited and not final. Any attempt to formulate a principle or concept of a non-historical essence is doomed to failure because it is relative to that period in the history of thought which sought to overcome historicity. This is always the case because every event is an appropriation of influences from the past and thus always related to the past.

Cobb does not think that his position leads to the loss of every standard of evaluation. The standards for evaluation participate in the historical process rather than being some type of an a-historical essence. The possibility of evaluation comes from the inheritance of an event from the past. Because an event inherits from the past, it is possible to compare it with the past events. In other words, compatibility with past values can be evaluated on the basis of the continuity between the events. New events can be evaluated regarding their acceptability as valid developments of past events. The criteria are themselves developing and relative but still make evaluation possible. The criteria are not imposed upon events or statements to determine their validity but grow out of the events. Therefore, the function of theological statements in a new context is more important than simply what their verbal form is.

Christianity itself then cannot be the final statement about the nature of God and His relationship to the world. Christianity is final, for Cobb though, in the sense that it is the most adequate expression of God and His relationship to the world at the present time. Christianity is also final in the sense that any future conceptuality which would be more adequate would inherit from Christianity and develop its unique insights.¹³ This recognition of the historical nature of all theological statements leads to a humility in Cobb's theological efforts. This is attractive at a time when theology often attempts to demonstrate its validity by unconditional assertions about the validity of certain theological tenets.

Cobb's acceptance of historicity influences his concept of God as well as his understanding of the relativity of all theological statements. For Cobb, God is non-temporal, He is not limited to one moment in time. This does not mean that God can be described as eternal in the traditional sense of being separate from development. Cobb holds that God is both non-temporal and becoming. God is becoming, or living, because He includes the events of the world in His very nature. There are two natures of God according to Whitehead.¹⁴ The

primordial nature is the non-temporal and unchanging. The consequent nature depends upon the events of the world. It is always becoming because new events are always taking place. Neither of these natures of God can be adequately understood in separation from the other. Cobb emphasizes this because he thinks Whitehead is somewhat inconsistent at this point.¹⁵ Thus for Cobb, God Himself in His basic nature is becoming as well as being.

The third distinctive feature of Cobb's theology is his understanding of God's relationship to the world. For him, God and the world are mutually related. The traditional understandings of God's relationship to the world have limited themselves to talking about the world's dependence upon God. They are very careful to point out that God does not depend upon the world. There may be an acknowledgement that God works His will through human agents at times, but this is in no way necessary nor does it indicate any dependence of God's being upon the world. Cobb's process theology finds that this is an inadequate response to historicity because it isolates God from history. Isolating God from history would eventually make the incarnation and God's action in the world meaningless concepts. A more adequate response is to recognize that God's relationship to the world is a mutual relation. God depends upon the world, and the world depends upon God. This mutual relation between God and the world further expresses the relativity of God. It also is based upon Whitehead's concept of God's primordial and consequent natures. As has been mentioned, the primordial aspect of God is the permanent aspect of God and presents a goal to each occasion. This goal is crucial for the becoming event. On the other hand, the consequent aspect of God is the aspect of God which is ever growing and developing because of its inclusion of the events of the world. The events of the world do influence who God is. This influence does not merely cause an adjustment of God's purpose but even a modification of His very being. Cobb refuses to separate the primordial and consequent aspects of God. The permanence of God is always related to His inclusion of new events. The primordial nature responds to the consequent nature through the presentation of new possibilities to new events. Thus God is who He is because of what He does in relation to the world, not because of what He is in separation or isolation from what happens in the world.

God is the creator because He created the world. As creator He continues to act creatively in the world. Unless God's relation to the world is a mutual relation, this continuing creative action is impossible. God's constancy is His creativity which continually goes beyond our expectations. His constancy cannot be derived from a concept of substantialistic immutability. **Cobb's Vision of Reality and Christian Existence**

Since a vision of reality strongly influences the pattern of living, conscious expressions of that vision will influence an individual's pattern of living. This is the second major theme in Cobb's thought. Cobb develops this theme in his book, *The Structure of Christian Existence*. There he describes the contrast between the Christian structure of existence and other structures. This examination of patterns of living recognizes the values of pluralism but concludes that the Christian structure of existence can justly claim finality because it includes and fulfills the other structures. But since the Christian structure of existence is not permanent, Cobb is open to reformulations suggested by other religions.¹⁶

The Buddhist structure of existence points toward a possible modification which could lessen the tension in Christianity between personal identity and responsibility, or love, for others. If personal identity is defined in substantialistic conceptualities, it is impossible to fulfill the command to love others as ourselves. Cobb is convinced that much of our guilt over the failure to fulfill this command is false guilt because our conceptualities make its fulfillment impossible. As long as a substantialistic definition of self as that which endures through all changes is maintained, love of the other is never the same as love of self because the self must be first if it is to love the other. A concept of the self as an event which exists in connection with others overcomes the difficulties of the traditional view without sacrificing the concept of personal responsibility.¹⁷

Possible Contributions to Wesleyan-Holiness Thought

The process theology of John B. Cobb, Jr. has a number of significant contributions to make to contemporary Wesleyan-Holiness thought. Cobb's theology reflects his heritage in the Methodist tradition. This common heritage greatly facilitates dialog. The first contribution which Cobb's theology offers is an awareness of the importance of metaphysics for theology. This is especially important for the Wesleyan movement since the movement is based upon the insights of someone who is traditionally described as not being a theologian, or at least not a systematic theologian. Wesley's unsystematic approach requires refinement and development, not glorification. Wesley's theology contains some startling insights along with some serious tensions. His utilization of the Arminian thought of his time, without accepting its rationalism devoid of experience, does provide a pattern; but that pattern must be filled out if contemporary Wesleyans are to minister to the modern world. The best response to the challenges of opposing metaphysical positions is a conscious evaluation of one's own metaphysical assumptions.

Such an examination will prove fruitful to the Wesleyan-Holiness movement by enabling it to attain a higher degree of internal consistency. For example, Arminius and Wesley provided conceptualities which make it possible to acknowledge God's knowledge of the future without going on to say that God determines the future. Arminius initiated this by distinguishing between God's knowledge of the past and future events and saying that God knows the past as actual and the future as possible.¹⁸ Many lay people are unaware of this type of distinction and find that their theology is frequently closer to the Calvinistic position than to the Arminian. This becomes significant not because of some desire for academic purity but because of the implications this shift has for the concept of human responsibility. Any similarly inconsistent development of Wesley will make it difficult to maintain his major insights because of the confusion arising out of the tension. One of the areas of Cobb's thought which Wesleyan thinkers need to examine carefully for insights is the understanding of God's relationship to human existence. Wesleyans cannot adequately respond to a culture seeking freedom, defined as the absence of restraints, without moving beyond a concept of God which supports the view that God acts only as a restraint upon human freedom. Refusing to move beyond such a concept is to fail, because it fails to recognize the biblical basis for defining freedom as the removal of restraint. Until Wesleyans move beyond the implicit rejection of this concept of freedom, they cannot consistently maintain for their culture the concept of human responsibility. A creative response to our

culture requires an awareness of the metaphysical assumptions which we make and a concern for their consistency.

A conscious awareness of metaphysics is also necessary in order for Wesleyan theology to gain a hearing among the many contemporary theological and religious options. Although a denial of the modern consciousness may function temporarily as a basis for religious activity, eventually it is self-destructive because it is acceptable only to the limited few who already share its perspective. If Wesleyan theology is to be more than a theological curiosity piece, it must come to grips with modern thought. This is done most adequately by being aware of our own metaphysical assumptions and those of our competition. This awareness makes discussion, comparison and conversion possible among competing options. Without an awareness of any common history and shared metaphysical assumptions, it will be impossible for Wesleyan theologians to gain a hearing among contemporary thinkers whether they are professional philosophers or laymen in a community. Further, without an awareness of metaphysical assumptions, it will be impossible to ascertain the crucial distinctions between Wesleyan theology and the contemporary consciousness. Finally, if there is no awareness of the metaphysical issues, it will be impossible to present an adequate and persuasive alternative.

Beyond the emphasis upon a conscious metaphysical basis for theology, John Cobb's thought expresses a metaphysic which can be very helpful for Wesleyans. Cobb has based his theology on the metaphysical position of Whitehead because he found it to be the most compatible with the Christian message. The basis for this evaluation is Whitehead's unequivocal affirmation of God's actuality and effectiveness, his concept of God as creative, his acceptance of the significance of religion, and his emphasis upon human responsibility.¹⁹ There are a number of ways in which this metaphysics can be helpful to Wesleyan theology. One aid is Cobb's conception of the basic importance of experience and especially human experience in understanding the world. This conception recognizes the importance of human experience without falling into a subjectivism which leads eventually to solipsism. Whitehead and Cobb both find it necessary to begin with human experience but also recognize that human experience is not the only feature of reality. Human experience is related to non-human existence. The structure of all reality can be seen in human experience but human experience does not exhaust reality. Whitehead attempted to move beyond Descartes with what he called his principle of reformed subjectivity. This principle holds that knowledge of the world begins with human experience but that this knowledge can be generalized to speak of more than human existence. This is possible because human existence is not an exception to the categories which describe reality. Human events have both a physical and mental aspect as do all other types of entities. This means that an isolated subjectivity never exists. It never exists because each person is related to his own past and to the past of the entire world.²⁰

Cobb can also contribute a metaphysical basis for the Wesleyan assertions about human freedom and responsibility through his explanation of how self-determination is a basic feature of reality. Cobb utilizes Whitehead's analysis of an event to do this. For Whitehead, an event is a process composed of past influences organized according to the selfdetermined response of an event to a possibility presented by God. God presents a

range of possible responses to the past, and each event determines for itself which of those possibilities it will actualize. At the center of every event is this self-determination. The event itself is what ultimately decides what an event will become. That is why an event is both unique and responsible at the same time. Cobb has developed the idea that God is active in the world through persuasive power in order to explain how God can be active in the world without any loss of human freedom. God does not act as an external force determining the response of an event to the past. Instead, God presents possibilities and attempts to draw the event to fulfill the best possibility.²¹ This type of an understanding answers such questions as "did Jesus have the capability of sinning?" and "how can I be free to serve God if He has a plan for my life?" It is not necessary to adopt the Whiteheadian terminology, but the thoroughgoing acceptance of human freedom is necessary if human responsibility is to be an effective concept. Wesleyans must recognize that every event and, at the larger level, every person is capable of self-determination to some degree. Cobb makes it possible to describe how this freedom is a part of the very nature of reality.

In the more specialized aspect of the Wesleyan concept of entire sanctification, Cobb's thought can provide a model for relating the crisis and progressive aspects of the experience of entire sanctification. Working with Cobb's understanding of events as the basic nature of reality leads to a view of entire sanctification in which the moment of decision, the second crisis, is carried out and developed by succeeding events. The emotional intensity of the crisis of entire sanctification varies greatly. The continuing influence of that decision indicates more clearly than the emotional intensity the Significance of the event. The crisis event opens a range of possibilities which open up more significant possibilities for the succeeding events. Without the crisis experience in which the person decides to realize fully the possibilities which God provides, there is no ongoing experience of the greater possibilities. Likewise, without the continuing development of the influence of the crisis, the crisis event would have no meaning. The process is initiated in the event, and the event is continued through the process of the following events. Neither exists apart from the other, and there can be no debate about the greater importance of one or the other. Recognizing the dependence of the present upon the past and the continuation of the past through the present is the key.

Many theologians have challenged the suitability of calling Cobb's theology a Christian theology. The most frequent charge against Cobb's thought is that there is no possibility of avoiding complete relativism. The central issue is the degree to which the data for theological reflection are conditioned by their own situation and the situation of the interpreter. If the Biblical writers completely reflect their time, the limitations of their time may make them unreliable. If the interpreters of the biblical materials are completely limited by their perspective, there can be no final theological statement. One of Cobb's students, David Griffin, thinks that the criteria of coherence and consistency may be non-relativistic criteria within Cobb's theology which could be the basis for non-relative judgments about the validity of a biblical expression or biblical interpretation. However, he acknowledges that Cobb at times speaks as though these criteria are themselves relative.²²

Cobb intends to do justice to the modern concept of historical reality. This leads him to refuse to exclude relativity from any aspect of his thought. As seen above, in so far as God is related to the world, God Himself is relative and developing. For Cobb, relativism cannot realistically be avoided. Rather than attempting to find some escape from relativism or some way to limit its scope, theology must accept it and examine what it means. Cobb responds to the charge of relativism by developing five theses and their implications.²³ These express his reinterpretation of what relativism means for theology. Cobb's understanding of relativism does not find that belief becomes impossible or meaningless. In fact, the concept of relativism itself is limited to the modern consciousness. Because a belief may have to be modified in the future does not mean it is wrong or inadequate for the present. A specific situation may demand belief and action which is the expression of belief.²⁴ Because a different situation requires a different belief and action does not make the first belief wrong.

Cobb finds that the concept of relativity is actually an expression of biblical faith which holds to the radical finitude of all created existence. Because of this finitude, absolute certainty is not available. Existential certainty is possible, but that is available through faith and not through abstract propositions even if they are about God or from God.²⁵ This means that Christianity is relativized and that there are no fixed guidelines for determining what is a positive or negative, true or false, development of Christianity. To attempt to define criteria or a necessary expression of Christianity is a failure to take Christianity seriously and tries to establish human autonomy over God. Such an attempt is never adequate because it misunderstands the nature of both Christianity and reality.

Cobb describes the identity and continuity of Christianity in historical categories. The identity of Christianity is found in the priority which it gives to the history which has Jesus as its center. Its continuity is established by the constant re-encounter with Jesus and the earliest witnesses to His meaning for the church.²⁶ This continuity is possible because of the historical relationships among the events which took place between Jesus and the present. The validity of the identification of a movement as Christian cannot be established simply upon the basis of historical inheritance, however. The re encounter with Jesus and the biblical materials must presently be taking place.²⁷ If the vital influence of the events of Jesus is not maintained, a movement cannot be accurately described as Christian. This position still leaves open the possibility of radical modifications in the expression of Christianity.

Cobb's position on historical relativity does not deny the distinctively Wesleyan theological principle of human liberty. In fact, the acceptance of Cobb's position on historical relativity as the expression of human liberty has been demonstrated in the present theological context by some persons within the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. The debates about speaking in tongues and Spirit-baptism terminology illustrate this. I have heard the justification for extra-biblical positions being made by leaders of two Wesleyan-Holiness denominations. In each case, the basis for these extrabiblical positions was historical considerations. The argument against speaking in tongues was that a different situation from Paul's required a different response than the response Paul made. In the case of the

phrase "Spirit baptism," the justification for the validity of terminology which lacked a specific biblical basis was the historical development of the doctrine.

Another type of objection to the theology of John B. Cobb, Jr. is one which has been raised about process types of theology for some time. In one form or another, it is the concern that the process concept of God is too limited to be a Christian concept. Ely first raised this question about the religious adequacy of a process concept of God.²⁸ Black theologians have said that the process notion does not describe a God who is powerful enough to be trusted for the correction of social oppression.²⁹ Langdon Gilkey, in spite of his appropriation of many process concepts, is convinced that the process concept is not a Christian one because its God cannot defeat evil.³⁰

In spite of Cobb's defense of the cruciality of God as creator of all, this does not mean creation from nothing as was mentioned earlier. The denial of creation from nothing would seem to leave room for the existence of opposing powers which would limit God. The central issue is God's reliability. Can God be depended upon to provide salvation from the world, oppression, or evil? The existence of other powers cannot be tolerated if it means that God is limited by other powers because then God cannot be relied upon. Cobb's concept of creation accepts the presence of non-divine realities and the self-determination of individual events. That means that God cannot act independently of the responses of created reality. God's ability to act is limited. This limitation is not due to an opposing power, however. The limit is a logical one. If God acts independently of the responses of created reality, the freedom of creation becomes at best meaningless and at worst impossible. It is a logical impossibility to speak of God as the sole determining power and also to talk about human freedom. The desire to speak of God's power is a desire for security. That desire is a legitimate desire, but it is not best fulfilled by limiting God to providing security through the use of overwhelming power. The problem with that solution is that it both makes security meaningless because there is no threat and limits God to human conceptualities about His possible responses to evil. God cannot be limited by our expectations. Cobb's concept of God is that He is the source of continual and actual novelty. God breaks through our traditions and expectations by presenting us with opportunities never before possible of being realized. Instead of describing Cobb's concept of God as involving a limited God, it might be more accurate to describe his position as one in which God is not threatened by the creation of human freedom even if there is no limitation on that freedom.

That this is a logical limitation rather than an actual limitation of God is made evident because this understanding does not lead to a total frustration of God's purpose. Cobb's concept of God is that His persuasive power is pervasive. The rejection of God's purpose by one event does not destroy God's overall purpose. It does destroy God's purpose for that event and limit His purpose for other events so that rebellion is real and serious. Rebellion does not mean, though, that God cannot be at work in other events. The self-determination of every event does make it possible that at some time every event could rebel and destroy God's creation. But that still would not be the total defeat of a creative God.³¹ Other events would have preceded that rebellion and new ones would follow it.

There are a number of other specific points at which Cobb's thought is in tension with traditional doctrines such as life after death. In these cases, Cobb basically works from the Whiteheadian metaphysic in an attempt to reformulate the Christian position in a way which will express its crucial insight in modern conceptualities. These cases are expressions of his basic understanding and do not require detailed treatment. **Possible Wesleyan**

Contributions to Cobb

Finally, it seems to me that this dialog does not have to be one-sided. Apart from any criticism of Cobb's theology, I suspect that Wesleyan Holiness theology could make a vital positive contribution to Cobb's efforts. I think that Wesleyan-Holiness theology could contribute to Cobb's attempts to define historical continuity. The Wesleyan-Holiness movement could easily serve as a study case in the attempt to formulate more precisely what historical continuity is. The Wesleyan tradition has never been as restricted to creedal formulations as other traditions. And yet, it has retained an identity through a number of transitions. This identity has been closely tied to Scripture and traditional theological expressions without being limited to past interpretations of the Bible or traditional theological expressions. Careful historical study of the Holiness movement, which is aware of Cobb's attempts to define historical continuity in a way which avoids being a definition by essence, might be able to contribute significantly to Cobb's efforts.

In conclusion, a reflective awareness of the nature of our own tradition will be the best way for contemporary Wesleyan theology to make its contribution to the broader efforts of contemporary thought. I think that this has been demonstrated by Timothy Smith's and Don Dayton's contributions to historical theology due to their awareness of their tradition. I find Cobb's thought to be uniquely helpful in my attempts as a Wesleyan to minister to the modern mind. This is because Cobb provides us with a sympathetic basis from which to examine consciously our own theology. **Notes**

1David Ray Griffin and Thomas T. J. Altizer, eds., *John Cobb 's Theology in Process* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press,1977), p.6 (hereafter cited as JCTP).

2John B. Cobb, Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 136 (hereafter cited as GW).

3GW, 123-24.

4GW, 136-38.

5GW, 138; John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press,1965), pp. 13-15 (hereafter cited as CNT).

6GW, 70-71;JCTP, 14.

7GW, 123; CNT, 13.

8CNT, 11-12, 15.

9GW, 120.

10CNT, 203-14, 226.

11Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1929), p. 323 (hereafter cited as PR).

12JCTP, 165-66.

13John B. Cobb, Jr. *The Structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 143-44 (hereafter cited as SCE).

14PR, 523-24.

15CNT, 178.

16SCE, 149-50; JCTP, 170.

17John B. Cobb, Jr. "Can a Christian Be a Buddhist Too?" lecture at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary, April 26, 1979.

18James Arminius, "Disputation XVII: On the Understanding of God," in *The Writings of James Arminius, Vol. II* trans. By James Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), pp. 36-39. See especially theses X, XI, and XII.

19CIVT, 173-75.

20CNT, 44-45; PR, 238f, 288.

21GW 90-92

22JCTP 19-20.

23JCTP, 165-66.

24JCTP, 166

25JCTP, 167

26JCTP, 187

27JCTP, 187.

28Stephen Ely, *The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1942).

29J. Deotis Roberts, Private Comments at School of Theology at Claremont, Spring 1978.

30Langdon Gilkey, "God: Eternal Source of Newness," in *Living With Change, Experience, Faith*, ed. by Francis Eigo (Villanova, Pennsylvania: Villanova University Press, 1976), 151-66.

31JCTP, 189.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY, WESLEYANISM, AND PROCESS THEOLOGY

by Michael L. Peterson

One of the most important questions facing educated Christians today concerns the relationship of Christian orthodoxy to "process philosophy." The major doctrines of the Christian faith must be interpreted and related within some general conceptual system, and one task of Christian philosophers and theologians is to determine which conceptual system is best suited for this purpose.¹ During the 1960s, many thinkers began to claim that process thought can be used to fashion a theology which explains Christian doctrines more adequately than any competing conceptual system. More recently, John Culp has claimed that process thought can even offer new and important insights into distinctive Wesleyan commitments (see "A Dialog with the Process Theology of John B. Cobb, Jr.," in the present issue of this journal, pp. 33-44). The purpose of this article is to respond to both claims.

While I have great respect for all of the complex and sophisticated conceptual systems which come under the rubric of process philosophy. I will express here some serious reservations about whether they can properly interpret essential Christian beliefs in general or Wesleyan beliefs in particular. I develop this response in four phases. First, I briefly summarize the essentials of process philosophy. Second, I assess the basic impact which process philosophy has had on Christian theology. Third, I consider the proposal that process thought can shed light on certain Wesleyan distinctives. Fourth, I explore some background issues which must be resolved before reaching a final assessment of process thought vis-à-vis orthodox Christianity and Wesleyanism. **I. Essentials of Process**

Philosophy

There are at least three different senses in which the label "process thought" can be understood: (1) as a motif running through the otherwise diverse systems of such thinkers as Heraclitus, Charles Darwin, G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Henry Bergson, John Dewey, and Guatama the Buddha; (2) as the optimistic thesis of dynamism, development, and improvement as articulated in the work of Teilhard de Chardin and of those whom he substantially influenced; (3) the basic metaphysical scheme which emphasizes becoming, organism, experience, and creativity as proposed by Alfred North Whitehead and his intellectual followers.

It is the third sense which I wish to discuss in this paper. Although the philosophical descendants of Whitehead (e.g., Hartshorne, Cobb, Griffin, Ogden, Ford, etc.) have augmented and revised portions of his thought, Whitehead is still the fountainhead and prime representative of process philosophy. Hence, the thought of Whitehead himself provides a natural introduction to the whole area of process philosophy. Furthermore, the treatment of Whitehead here applies, with appropriate modification, to virtually all variations on process philosophy espoused by his followers. So, in responding to Whitehead, I am in effect responding to Cobb, who is endorsed throughout Culp's paper.

Whitehead's whole philosophy is based on a highly abstract and general metaphysic of becoming.² Central to this metaphysic is his notion of "actual occasion," which is his term for an actual entity. According to Whitehead, the entire world is composed of these actual

occasions, each of which is a center of experience. These actual occasions are fleeting and perishing, always making room for successive occasions which also perish in their turn. Although these subjects of experience are transitory, each one is able to unify and objectify its experience and transmit it to subsequent subjects. By what Whitehead calls "prehension" an actual occasion receives the data of experience (also called "feelings") from previous actual occasions. By "concrescence" the receptive occasion integrates the data into a unified whole. By "transition" each occasion then donates its initial data and subjective response as a completely new datum to successive occasions.

Obviously, we are not directly aware of these actual occasions and their unique activities. They are metaphysical postulates which Whitehead uses to explain reality. All relevant actualities can be explained in these terms. For example, an object of common experience may seem relatively stable and enduring; but ontologically it is really an aggregate or nexus of these actual occasions. A human being can also be explained in similar terms: the physical body is a succession of relatively low-grade occasions which is coordinated by a soul, or series of dominant, high-grade occasions. Although God does not have a physical body, He too can be explained as the supreme and everlasting actual entity which experiences temporal succession. We can now draw out the implications of this sketch of reality for theology. I find it best to start with the concept of power, which in turn leads to the concepts of creativity and value.

There are two kinds of power in what is actual. There is the power of the past to affect a given occasion; but there is also the power of that occasion to respond in its own way in the present. Now if it is true (and by Whitehead's definition it is) that reality is constituted by such actual occasions, and if it is a necessary metaphysical principle that such actualities possess an inherent power of self-determination, then not even God can completely control or determine the responses of those actualities. According to Whitehead, then, God does not have a monopoly on power, although He has all the power which is conceivable for a being to have. This new meaning must therefore attach to the use of the term "omnipotence" instead of the traditional meaning. In view of this critical change in the conception of divine power, Whitehead concludes that creatures, or actual occasions, have the ability not to follow the divine purpose. This ability is in effect the power to do evil. Hence, Whitehead describes God's power as "relative" to the free exercise of power by other actual occasions.

Whitehead posits God's chief goal for the universe to be the realization, maximization, and harmonization of values. But this cannot be explained apart from God's dual nature. God has two distinguishable (though perhaps not separable) natures, the Primordial Nature and the Consequent Nature, both of which play crucial roles in effecting the divine purposes. In His Primordial Nature, God is the repository of all eternal possibilities for the world. Although Whitehead sometimes seems to indicate that these infinite possibilities are indeed under divine decision and control, Hartshorne points out that it is more consistent with Whitehead's overall metaphysic to hold that they are independent of God's determination.³ Still, the basic point is that these potentialities represent all of the different way-s in which the world can advance or increase in value. Out of this range of possibilities, God attempts to draw out His specific purposes for the course of things:

. . . God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification.

Viewed as primordial, he is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality. In this aspect, he is not before all creation, but with all creation. . . . He is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feeling at the base of things; so that, by reason of this primordial actuality, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation. . . . The particularities of the actual world presuppose it; while it merely presupposes the general metaphysical character of creative advance, of which it is the primordial exemplification.⁴

Connected with this notion of fixed eternal possibilities is the belief that God did not create ex nihilo. Instead the world allegedly originates from an aboriginal disorder and chaos. In a sense, then, God is still creating the world, although He is not able to determine all of the metaphysical principles which govern the evolution of the world out of chaos into order.

We must now be more specific about what it is that God is trying to accomplish in the continual process of creation. Since the experiences of temporal subjects play an important role in Whitehead's metaphysic, it is quite natural that his definitions of good and evil relate essentially to the experiences of these subjects. He holds that experience is intrinsically good in so far as it is characterized by beauty. In delineating the aesthetic concept of beauty, he employs the concepts of "harmony" and "intensity." Hence, the most worthwhile and important experiences will possess both harmony and intensity to a high degree. Alternatively, "discord" and "triviality" are the opposites of harmony and intensity respectively, and are thus intrinsically evil. Consider Whitehead's description of the interplay of good and evil in the world:

The temporal world exhibits two sides of itself. On one side it exhibits an order in matter of fact, and a self-contrast with ideals, which show that its creative passage is subject to the immanence of an unchanging actual entity. On the other side its incompleteness, and its evil, show that that temporal world is to be construed in terms of additional formative elements which are not definable in the terms which are applicable to God.⁵

So, the unfolding history of the world is really God's persistent attempt to bring the world out of discord and triviality into harmony and intensity.

Without going into the intricate relationship which obtains among the relevant values and disvalues, and what kinds of trade-offs can be justified in this imperfect world, let it suffice to say that God seeks to produce an interplay which makes for important, or worthwhile, or "higher," experiences for His creatures. But in order for this plan to be successful, God must also produce "higher" kinds of creatures capable of enjoying and appreciating such experiences. Now "higher" beings are those with a great degree of individual autonomy who are able to produce novelty. This novelty consists in a creative response to and integration of the prehended data of experience. Of course, being autonomous, such creatures may respond in ways which bring evil instead of good. Thus, in His tortuous and risky

development of significant individuals, God must countenance the possibility of evil as well as the possibility of good.

All of this means that God's agency in the world is not coercive but persuasive. God must persuade or lure the world toward the realization of greater value. He does this by providing input for the prehension of all actual occasions. Each actual occasion receives from God an initial aim or nudge toward the ideal. However, the subjective aim of each occasion, which is its response to initially prehended data, may or may not conform to the divinely imparted ideal, since each occasion has some power of self-determination. Whitehead explains the subtle combination of the dual aims:

. . . the initial stage of its aim is an endowment which the subject inherits from the inevitable ordering of things, conceptually realized in the nature of God. The immediacy of the concrescent constitution. Thus the initial stage of the aim is rooted in the nature of God, and its completion depends on the self-causation of the subject-superject.⁶

So, as Whitehead says, each actual occasion, "derives from God its basic conceptual aim, relevant to its actual world, yet with indeterminations awaiting its own decisions."⁷

What about the prospect for the triumph of God's good purposes? The Whiteheadian answer is fascinating and begins with a consideration of God's Consequent Nature. Since all finite actualities are perishing, the matter of personal immortality is problematic in Whitehead's thought. However, it is a question which he really need not resolve in order to draw the conclusions he wants regarding the end of all things. God's Consequent Nature is always storing up all of the experiences of fleeting actual occasions and synthesizing them into a fitting whole. Just as God's Primordial Nature contains and selects from among all possibilities, His Consequent Nature collects and harmonizes all actualized possibilities. Whitehead writes:

Each actuality in the temporal world has its reception into God's nature. The corresponding element in God's nature is not temporal actuality, but is the transmutation of that temporal actuality into a living, ever-present fact. An enduring personality in the temporal world is a route of occasions in which the successors with some peculiar completeness sum up their predecessors. The correlate fact in God's nature is an even more complete unity of life in a chain of elements for which succession does not mean loss of immediate unison.⁸

So, although all other things come to be and then pass away in the stream of time, God conserves their experiences and unifies them in His own conscious life.

Whitehead provides an interesting image for understanding this divine process:

The perfection of God's subjective aim, derived from the completeness of his primordial nature, issues into the character of his consequent nature. In it there is no loss, no obstruction. The world is felt in a unison of immediacy.

The property of combining creative advance with the retention of mutual immediacy is what in the previous section is meant by the term "everlasting."

The wisdom of subjective aim prehends every actuality for what it can be in such a perfected system-its suffering, its sorrows, its failures, its triumphs, its immediacies of joy-woven by rightness of feeling into the harmony of the universal feeling, which is always immediate, always many, always one, always with novel advance, moving onward and never perishing. The revolts of destructive evil, purely self-regarding, are dismissed into their triviality of merely individual facts; and yet the good they did achieve in individual joy, in individual sorrow, in the introduction of needed contrast, is yet saved by its relation to the completed whole. The image-and it is but an image-the image under which this operative growth of God's nature is best conceived, is that of a tender care that nothing should be lost.

The consequent nature of God is his judgment on the world. He saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved. It is also judgment of a wisdom which uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage.⁹

Whitehead makes this same basic point in *Religion in the Making*: "Since God is actual, he must include in himself a synthesis of the total universe."¹⁰

II. Implications of Process Philosophy for Christian Theology

We are now in a position to evaluate the implications of Whitehead's process philosophy for Christian theology. Although there are numerous theological concepts to which process thought can be applied (e.g., grace sacrament, glory, etc.¹¹), I select four which seem fundamental: God, man Kingdom, and Jesus Christ. What I conclude with regard to each of these four concepts, which have doctrinal status within orthodox Christianity, is that process philosophy modifies or distorts their essential meaning to such a great extent that orthodoxy is lost.

The doctrine of God is central to any theological framework and conditions virtually every other assertion made in other parts of the framework. That is why it is important to trace very clearly what process thought does to the concept of God.¹² As we have just seen, all reality is in process including God. Furthermore, the ongoing process or development of God is intimately linked with the process of the world; and the processive realities of the world are crucially tied to one another. What we have, then, is a monistic philosophy of organism, of the unity of all reality. The precise kind of monism which process thinkers espouse is typically called panentheism, a view which supposedly incorporates the strengths of traditional theism and pantheism while avoiding their weaknesses. What is meant is simply that the world is "in" God, an integral part of God's consciousness and life.¹³ One can readily see the new meanings which now have to be given to the theological terms "transcendence" and "immanence." And this is exactly what process thinkers desire, particularly since they believe that the old view of transcendence prevents deity from being religiously available or historically active. Process theology, it is claimed, provides a deity

who is closely involved in the affairs of the world in order to elicit beauty from it, with the ultimate purpose of conserving it forever.

I believe that this picture of God is unacceptable. First, process thought erases the metaphysical dividing line between Creator and creature in such a way that God's status is dangerously lowered and the world's status is unduly exaggerated. The concept of God is no longer ontologically rich enough to account for the free and independent decision of God to create the world in love; and the concept of the world is elevated to the point of being eternally necessary to the divine life. Second, process thought not only shifts the meanings of transcendence and immanence in order to alter radically the relation of Creator to creature, but also specifies that this relation is not one between beings but between becomings (e.g. processes). God is not a being with stable and identifiable characteristics but is rather the principle or dynamic behind the evolution of things. In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead writes: "In the Place of Aristotle's God as Prime Mover, we require God as the Principle of Concretion."¹⁴ In so far as the concept of God as a definite being is eliminated, so is the concept of Him as personal; in so far as the concept of God as personal is eliminated, so is the concept of Him as worshipable. Granted, process theologians often insist that this Principle is worshipable. But their justification of worshipability illicitly smuggles in personal concepts traditionally applied to deity, such as love, creativity, choice, and so forth.

Third, God's worshipability is jeopardized for other reasons as well. Neither the values which God seeks to realize nor the manner in which He seeks to realize them are appropriate to the perfect moral character of deity. Note that Whitehead's God seeks the aesthetic value of beauty, and that all other values are somehow subordinated to this aim. This ultimately implies that moral values are subsumed under aesthetic ends, and opens the way for hideous evils (e.g., the discord of extreme physical suffering) to be justified if they are instrumental in the attainment of certain aesthetic goods (e.g., the conceptual intensity of discovering meaning through pain). We must also note that God's method for achieving His purposes seem to be nonmoral or immoral as well. God does not communicate a clear message to His creatures "from outside" themselves. Instead He nudges them "from deep within" and thereby tries to persuade them to achieve higher and better things. Here divine persuasion becomes nothing more than a kind of subliminal or precognitive inclination toward harmony and intensity. The net result of all this is that God's values and methods are not fundamentally moral, but nonmoral or perhaps immoral. But perfect moral goodness is a necessary condition of worshipworthiness.

The doctrine of man is another important matter to consider in evaluating process theology.¹⁵ Man, like all other realities in process thought, is described in terms of actual occasions. Man is a series of lower-grade occasions constituting the body and a series of higher-grade ones constituting the more central aspect of the self. As Melt explains, "These actual occasions are in a serial order, so that the history of an individual man is traced out and defined by their continuity or historical route through time."¹⁶ According to process thinkers, this concept of man successfully explains the identity of the person through change, whereas traditional metaphysical anthropology does not. On the process account, past experiences are accumulated and transmitted through the series of occasions, so that

there is genuine identity. Yet there is always openness to new experiences and new responses to them, so that there is real change. Some times there are major changes, such as religious conversion. In conversion, the person puts together past experience, or prehended data, in a radically new way, and thus significantly reorients his life. All of personal life is characterized by a type of freedom which is best defined in terms of the ability for novelty and creativity. At death, the particular temporal succession of occasions known as an individual person ceases to exist. However, the accumulated experiences of that personal series are not lost, since they pass into the consciousness and life of God.

I believe that this picture of man is unacceptable. First, the process description of man robs man of viable personhood in much the same way that it robs God of personhood. A person, on this view, is nothing more than a series of events. The only continuity in such personhood is the content of cumulative experience. As with God, it is difficult to see how personal concepts (e.g., love, repentance, responsibility, etc.) can be legitimately applied to these droplets of experience, taken either individually or collectively. Perhaps one of the most obvious problems is the application of the personal concept of freedom. For process thinkers, freedom is virtually synonymous with spontaneity, creativity, novelty, indeterminacy. As long as an occasion is not completely determined by its pretended data and can make a new response to that data, process thinkers are willing to predicate freedom of that occasion. However, the meaning of this type of freedom falls sadly short of the traditional meaning. The process idea of freedom as novel response does not rise above the impersonal and mechanical. Second, the kind of personal salvation offered on the process scheme is inadequate. Conversion, for example, is a change which is only greater in degree from previous changes in life. However, conversion in the traditional view is a change which is different in kind from any other event. It includes the direct and radical intervention of God and the appropriation of a new spiritual life. Third, the brand of immortality offered by process thought is very weak, but I will postpone discussion of this until our consideration of the Kingdom.

The doctrine of the Kingdom of God, in both its temporal and eternal aspects, is another matter which receives reinterpretation by process categories.¹⁷ For process theology, the present Kingdom of God includes all reality, all things, as they experience, develop, and pass into the divine life. The orthodox concept designates the Kingdom to include only those persons redeemed by supernatural grace. For process theology, on the other hand, the future Kingdom of God is not the culmination of all things and the final division of the society of the redeemed from the rest of the world. This is because there is no end of the world at all; everything is in continual progress. It is also because there is no society of real individuals who maintain personal identity at death. The only sense in which things are culminated and redeemed is that they are fittingly included within the ongoing life of God. Robert Mellert explains the peculiar process notion of the Kingdom:

The addition of each actual occasion in the consequent nature of God means that God must be understood as a multiplicity as well as single entity. This multiplicity is God in his function as kingdom of heaven. As every actual occasion perishes, it is preserved everlastingly in the consequent nature of God and it is immortalized as part of the kingdom. For God loses nothing that

is to be saved. He takes all things up into himself and thereby manifests his kingdom. The kingdom of heaven, then, is already with us, in what God is drawing to himself. . . . Salvation is for all reality, because all reality has value for God and is saved by God. Everything ultimately contributes its own reality to the reality that is God.¹⁸

Thus we have the process scenario of the Kingdom, both present and coming.

The process idea of the Kingdom of God is fraught with problems. It opens the door for universal salvation, a notion which has never gained acceptance by orthodox believers. Two of the strongest criticisms against universalistic theories are that they do not square with biblical exegesis and that they tend to make the ultimacy of moral and spiritual commitment meaningless. But there are other problems with the process idea of the Kingdom. One of these is that there seems to be no adequate basis for personal immortality within such a monistic system. It is true that process thinkers differ over the degree to which personal immortality is possible; but they commonly agree that the concept is quite problematic.

Probably the acid test of any theology which calls itself "Christian" is what it says about Jesus Christ. In a very real sense, the problem is to find suitable conceptual categories (and hence suitable language) for expressing the significance of the life and death of Jesus. The typical process view of Jesus is not hard to explicate.¹⁹ As an historical person, Jesus was human in exactly the same way we are human. He was a unified body and soul; i.e., a nexus of low-grade occasions coordinated by a series of high-grade occasions. Now, God is the source of every initial aim for the prehension of every actual occasion. Of course, no person, except Jesus, has ever freely chosen to realize all of these promptings of God. According to process thought, Jesus so strongly prehended God that we can say that He was unique. We could even say that Jesus' intense prehension of God and consistently favorable response constitutes His divinity. It is in this sense that process theology holds that two natures, human and divine, resided in one person. And it is in this sense that God revealed Himself in history so powerfully in Jesus that we can call Him Savior. Through Jesus we can understand that we need not proceed through life from experience to experience, seeking worldly satisfaction, but may respond in much the same way Jesus did to the divine immanence within us.

In the case of Christology, process thought seems to be at its limit. The above description comprises the maximal statement that process theology can make about Jesus Christ, but still fails to capture much that orthodoxy has always wanted to affirm. First, the process idea of Jesus does not include the emphasis that God took special initiative on the part of Jesus. In the interest of maintaining Jesus' humanity and freedom, and God's impartiality, process thinkers prefer to say that God was present in Jesus in the same way He is present in all humanity: God provides, in grace, the ideal aims to which all men may respond. Using Shubert Ogden's terminology, what is manifested of God in Jesus is no different from what is presented to man in God's "original revelation," i.e., the events of nature and history.²⁰ The difference between Jesus and every other person, for process thinkers, is that Jesus was the first working model of humanity. In Jesus God produced a person who realized a

complete relationship with Him, one who affirmed and maximized at every moment the divine initiative within Himself. Although precise Christological formulations are hard to come by, surely this one is too weak. This formulation endorses a fully immanentistic view of God's working through Jesus. It relinquishes the concept that a holy and transcendent God originated a special plan of salvation through history, which culminated in the absolutely decisive person of Jesus.²¹ According to orthodox conceptions, God was uniquely present in Jesus and was making a special intervention in human affairs through Him.

Second, process theologians ascribe to Jesus the function of offering a kind of salvation which is quite different from that ascribed to Him by orthodox thinkers. For process theologians, our salvation is largely comprised of the realization that we can synthesize prehended data in a new way, in a way which maximizes the divine aims within us. This kind of salvation seems unable to adequately interpret the supernatural dimension of orthodox doctrines of justification, reconciliation, atonement, etc., since salvation simply occurs through the natural mechanisms of prehension and concrescence already existing in reality.

Third, the orthodox position on the literal, historical resurrection of Jesus is either implicitly or explicitly denied in process thought. Jesus was resurrected for process theologians, only in the sense that He was powerfully prehended in the experience of the disciples after His death and was taken up into the consciousness of God. However, this kind of resurrection is hardly unique or decisive. We are likewise "resurrected" into objective immortality upon our deaths and become permanently a part of God's Consequent Nature. As such, we like Jesus, are available as prehensible data for future occasions.

III. Implications for Wesleyan Distinctives

To be compatible with Wesleyanism in particular, a metaphysic must first be compatible with orthodox Christianity in general. Although the preceding criticisms of process thought are brief and general, they nonetheless suggest grave difficulties in wedding process thought and Christian orthodoxy. It is my belief that, however tantalizing it may be to some contemporary thinkers, the wedding cannot be successfully consummated. If I am right, then there should be no important sense in which process thought applies to Wesleyan concerns. However, in the interest of completeness, we must consider John Culp's recent proposal that process thought is not only applicable to Wesleyanism, but that it is indeed more adequate than other conceptual systems for understanding certain Wesleyan distinctives. Here I briefly discuss just four areas where Culp believes process thought is helpful for Wesleyans: experience, sanctification, biblical interpretation, and the defeat of evil. Unfortunately, Culp's proposals seem vague and in need of further clarification and justification. As Culp expresses these proposals, they fail to show clearly why existing conceptual schemes do not fully interpret Wesleyanism and to demonstrate precisely how the process scheme is superior to existing schemes for such an interpretation. I am tempted to think that these proposals trade on superficial or verbal similarities between process thought and Wesleyan thought. But let us now take a closer look at Culp's case.

As Culp notes, the concept of experience is undoubtedly an important concept for Wesleyans. The Wesleyan emphasis has always been that the believer could have an

existential or experiential confirmation of God's presence in his life, in addition to sheer intellectual knowledge of it. However, Culp seems to imply that the historic Wesleyan emphasis on experience inevitably falls into a subjectivism which leads eventually to solipsism. He then claims that process thought also recognizes the importance of experience, but avoids subjectivism and solipsism by holding that experience is generalizable to speak of all reality, since all reality "experiences." I think that neither of these points is obvious.

First, although some believers within the Wesleyan tradition have overemphasized the role of personal experience in religion, almost making it normative, this has not been the essential import of the tradition. All that historic Wesleyanism claims in this regard is that experiential confirmation is an accompaniment or result of objective factors such as proper belief, moral change, and trust in God. Only by imputing to Wesleyanism principles which it does not hold can one find a strong subjectivism or solipsism in it.

This brings me to the second point, that subjectivism and solipsism (supposing that they are implicit in Wesleyanism) could be handily avoided by appealing to the process idea of pan-experientialism. There are several philosophically adequate ways to avoid subjectivism and solipsism without invoking process concepts, particularly since they involve serious problems of their own.

Culp further proposes that Cobb's process thought can provide a model for understanding the experience of entire sanctification, especially in terms of its crisis and progressive aspects. To be sure, there are difficulties over the relationship and relative priority of crisis and progress in the sanctified life. But such difficulties are not insurmountable without process models. Besides, even if a process model were used to explain the matters of crisis and progress in the experience of sanctification, there is far more to the experience which process thought seems inadequate to explain. For example, the whole dimension of supernatural intervention (which we have already seen to be generally weak in process philosophy) cannot be fitted easily into a process model.

The issue of biblical interpretation is another one which Culp believes that process thought can settle. While claiming that process thought remains sensitive to the contingent and culturally conditioned aspects of biblical documents, Culp asserts that it need not degenerate into pure relativism. In an attempt to specify criteria of biblical interpretation which are non-relativistic, Culp cites consistency and coherence (after Griffin). However, this will not do for at least two reasons. First, there is the quite lively debate over whether these criteria themselves are subject to change and relativity. Second, even if these formal criteria are not relative or changeable in themselves, they certainly do not restrain relativism in areas of substantive knowledge. For present purposes, such criteria only stipulate that whatever interpretation one derives from the biblical materials must not contradict itself and must hang together as a unified position. But these criteria are hardly strong enough to constrain the variability of interpretations over time, and do not even preclude the possibility of one interpretation being totally contradicted by a subsequent one, as long as both positions are internally consistent and coherent. So, while consistency and

coherence are necessary conditions for a proper non-relativistic view of biblical interpretation, they are not sufficient conditions.

The ultimate defeat of evil and the triumph of good is a major theme in Christian theology in general and in Wesleyan theology in particular. Of course, the scenario envisioned by Wesleyanism differs in important ways from that envisioned by Calvinism, because of the premium which the former places on free human volition. As Culp says, the process concept is that the general exercise of God's power is persuasive rather than coercive. But, in the final analysis, the process view of this tacitly denies God the power to guarantee the final triumph of good as affirmed in orthodox theology, let alone Wesleyanism. For process theology, God simply makes the best out of every free creaturely response which is undesirable or evil, and this process continues forever. **IV. Concluding Comments**

There are two issues which have loomed in the background of the preceding discussion. One issue concerns the relationship of process thought to orthodox theology. The other issue pertains to the independent philosophical appraisal of process thought. Let us now be more specific about these.

The process thinker does not see the question of the relation between process philosophy and orthodox theology in quite the same way I do because he typically exhibits disdain for anything labeled "orthodox." Orthodoxy denotes an expression of the faith which is fixed, stable, normative. However, the whole impetus of process thought is away from such notions. Furthermore, according to the process thinker, all expressions of orthodoxy simply adopt the assumptions and categories of one philosophical scheme over another, and thus cease to be relevant when new philosophies replace the old ones. In typical process style, Culp infers that this means that there should be no fixed guidelines for determining what is a true or false statement of Christian belief, since such guidelines not only become obsolete but also seem to raise human autonomy over God.

I find grave problems with this attitude toward orthodoxy. First of all the process appraisal of orthodoxy already assumes process philosophy to be true, and hence begs the question. More exactly, process philosophy postulates total and continual change as the essence of reality and therefore automatically excludes attempts at formulating orthodoxy. Process philosophy suggests that the modes of thought of one era are virtually meaningless to another era. But surely this view is quite exaggerated. Although there are a number of variable factors among cultural settings and historical eras, which certainly complicate the business of establishing orthodoxy, it is not at all clear that older ones are completely unintelligible or false. The real point is that through the ages, philosophers and theologians have conscientiously extracted the enduring and universal meanings from various statements of faith and thereby arrived at some reliable formulation of orthodoxy. When the process interpretation of Christian theology is fully examined, it is evident that it departs radically from the orthodox doctrinal meanings, meanings which I, contrary to the process thinker, see no good reason to reject. Of course, I would not pretend for a moment that we need not undertake the task of relating these meanings to our contemporary culture.

My second point now becomes relevant. Process thinkers not only reject the idea of formulating orthodoxy at all, but also have definite objections to the substantialistic

philosophical categories in which Christian orthodoxy has traditionally been formulated. According to process thinkers, Christian orthodoxy has too long been tied to Platonic and Aristotelian concepts which fail both to provide a viable interpretation of reality and to square with the dynamic, personal God of the Bible. Hence, process thought can be understood as a strong reaction against classical metaphysics and its doctrinal implications.

But this raises two considerations. One consideration is whether process thought is philosophically more adequate than classical thought. The other consideration is whether classical thought more appropriately expresses the intended meanings of orthodox doctrines. My own appraisal of process thought relative to classical thought is that it is neither more adequate philosophically nor more adequate doctrinally.

First, the process stereotype of classical philosophy as static and impersonal ignores many of the fine points of classical metaphysics of being which, if heeded, help it avoid the problems imputed to it. For example, the ideas of substance and nature need not be taken to imply a rigid, deterministic system which cannot account for freedom, creativity, and change. The classical account of natures includes not only the essential properties of substances, but also their dispositions, which are dynamic capabilities to act and react under appropriate circumstances. This dispositional aspect of natures is receiving renewed attention in current philosophical explorations, most of which recognize its classical Aristotelian character. Hence, substantialistic philosophy, properly understood, can account for real change and activity in the world: change happens to and through relatively stable objects. There is, then, no pressing conceptual need to adopt the process preference for switching the matter around and making change fundamental and permanence derivative. In fact, once process thinkers make this radical switch, it is not at all clear that they can adequately account for the relatively stable and enduring particulars of our world. Thus, instead of doing better than classical philosophy in accounting for both permanence and change—both particulars and events—process philosophy actually does a little worse.

Second, if the categories of classical metaphysics once seemed well-suited for expressing certain orthodox beliefs, it is not obvious that process thinkers can now simply point out that such classical categories are obsolete and then supply radically new expressions which contradict them. Whatever else may be culturally conditioned in classical expressions of the faith, no decisive argument has been offered to show that classical metaphysical categories were so culturally conditioned that they have no generalizable meaning and importance for contemporary expressions of the faith. Unless we see this point, we will be susceptible to adopting a view of God as having no stable nature, a view of Jesus as being merely a perfected man, a view of the soul as having no lasting individual identity, etc. exactly what process thinkers have done. None of what I say here is meant to minimize the difficulty of applying enduring orthodox meanings to contemporary cultural and intellectual modalities. However, unless we affirm that there is some non-negotiable meaning, or range of meaning, to orthodox conceptions of Christianity, we will always be vulnerable to concocting versions of it which are markedly discontinuous with the original faith.

I fear that this discussion of process thought has been all too brief and has left many detailed and sophisticated matters untouched.²² But I hope that it supplies a perspective

from which to approach the large and important questions which Christians must answer about process theology. As I have argued, process philosophy seems to be a weak if not distortive conceptual system for interpreting Christianity in general and Wesleyanism in particular. Furthermore, as I have also argued, process philosophy seems to be an inadequate conceptual system apart from any religious or theological application it might have. **Notes**

1See Frederick Sontag, *How Philosophy Shapes Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

2The central work of Whitehead's philosophy is certainly *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929). Also see *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933); *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan 1926); *Modern Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925)

3Charles Hartshorne, *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays 1935-1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. 139.

4Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 521-22.

5Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 99.

6Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 373.

7Ibid., p. 343.

8Ibid., p. 531.

9Ibid, pp. 524-25.

10*8Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 98.

11See the treatment of these and other concepts in Robert Mellert, *What Is Process Theology?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975).

12See the very fine collection of essays n this topic in Delwin Brown, et al., eds., *Process Philosophy and Christian 1 bought* (Indianapolis: BobbsMerrill, 1 971).

13See the discussion of this in Alan Cragg, *Charles Hartshorne* (Waco: Word Books, 1973), pp. 91-102.

14Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 216.

15See the collection of essays on this topic in Brown.

16Mellert, p. 65.

17See the treatment of this topic in John Cobb, Jr. and David Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 118-24.

18*8Mellert, pp. 58-59.

19See the collection of essays on this topic in Brown, and the other collection in Ewert Cousins, ed., *Process Theology: Basic Writings* (New York: Newman Press, 1971). Also see David Griffin, *A Process Christology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973).

20Shubert Ogden, *Christ Without Myth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 156.

21See Peter Hamilton, "Some Proposals for a Modern Christology," in Brown, p. 362.

22To be sure, further discussion of process thought is necessary. Although a number of good bibliographies of process works exist, one of the most recent and most helpful ones is in Appendix B of Cobb and Griffin, entitled "A Guide to the Literature."

THE DILEMMA OF THE SUPREME PURSUIT

by

Albert L. Truesdale

The presidential address delivered by Dr. John Knight, Jr. at the 1979 WTS meeting at Marion College¹ harbored a dilemma that I believe presently confronts denominations and theologians that identify with the doctrine of entire sanctification taught by the "holiness movement." Although the address did not directly enunciate the dilemma I wish to advance, the clear attempt to cast the reality of Christian holiness in catholic and holistic terms contains the dilemma implicitly, and demands its explicit statement. If the catholic temper of the address could be dismissed as atypical among Wesleyan thinkers, then the dilemma could also be dismissed as not representing any significant issue in the holiness movement. But I believe the tone of the president's address, and the modes of expression chosen to articulate his understanding of Christian holiness to be paradigmatic among many thoughtful Wesleyans. It is precisely the presence and apparent attractiveness of this more holistic articulation of Christian holiness vis a vis the more narrowly defined exegetical, doctrinal, and experiential understanding of entire sanctification traditionally advanced by the holiness movement that forces the dilemma into the open.

The dilemma is stated here with hopes that it will spark further discussion. I wish to make it clear that my discussion is prompted by a compelling fidelity to the New Testament's call to, and our Lord's gracious provision for, Christian holiness. I propose to state the dilemma as I see it, give some preliminary reasons for its emergence, and describe what I see as two possible responses to it.

The dilemma may be stated as follows: The more holistic (comprehensive and inclusive) the forms chosen for articulating the reality of Christian holiness, the less adequate as vehicles for expression are the accustomed exegetical, doctrinal, and experiential categories (commonly called "the distinctives") employed by the holiness movement. Or the dilemma may be stated another way: the more insistent is the holiness movement on defending its traditionally definitive "distinctives," the less comprehensive, and more parochial, its articulation and propagation of Christian holiness becomes.

The impetus behind the dilemma is that for many Wesleyan thinkers the standard formulations of Christian holiness that have become characteristic of the holiness movement are inadequate to the present vision of the Christian life that grasps them.

Now, as we know, in order to have a true dilemma there must exist a situation involving choice between equally unsatisfactory alternatives, but where a choice must be made. As I see it, the nerve center of our present dilemma is that on the one hand the holiness movement insists on maintaining its distinctives, in which case access to the desired catholicity and comprehensiveness is jeopardized, and on the other hand it insists on the catholic legitimacy of its understanding of Christian holiness, which, if pursued consistently, entails a readiness to modify or revise accustomed distinctives.

The first horn of the dilemma—loss of catholicity—has generally been wholly objectionable to the chief framers of the holiness movement's understanding of Christian sanctification. They have refused to identify their characteristic doctrine of entire sanctification as a theological provincialism or culdesac (a point beyond which further advance or progress seems to be impossible). Because of their fundamental catholic commitments they have abhorred such a classification of their position. But for many others in the holiness movement, especially at the popular level, maintenance of the "distinctives" at the expense of catholicity has normally not been viewed as a significant loss.

Bringing the dilemma to expression, and facing its sharp implications, was unnecessary so long as the holiness movement viewed itself in a polemical situation vis a vis the Calvinists and Liberal Theology, and perhaps so long as it possessed a relatively unsophisticated exegesis, understanding of church history, and history of dogma. But with (1) the appearance of the Neo-Reformation renewal of biblical theology and classical Christian doctrines including sanctification (e.g. in Bonhoeffer, Barth, and Thielicke); (2) the emergence of an Evangelical ecumenism that blunted the earlier polemicism; and (3) the more catholic education of many present-day thinkers in the holiness movement, continuance of the polemical posture and avoidance of attention to the latent dilemma has become increasingly unacceptable.

More internally to the holiness movement, the dilemma has been forced by two related developments. First, as holiness thinkers have turned their attention to the monumental examinations of the meaning of Christian existence in the world carried out by the theological giants of this century, they have been forced to question the adequacy of their theological formulations that deal with sanctification. Second as these thinkers have become more alert to the corporate nature of the church, redemption, sin, and guilt, and as they have reflected on the theological and ethical significance of corporate evil and social

solidarity, the highly individualistic way in which the customary doctrine of entire sanctification handles these matters has increasingly disclosed an inherent deficiency.

The dilemma, as I see it, results from the desire by numerous present-day holiness thinkers to reverse the rigidly defined exegetical, doctrinal, and experiential modes for expressing Christian sanctification that have become generally standardized in the holiness movement. But standing against such a revision is the fact that within the holiness movement the reality of Christian holiness has become so closely identified with its narrowly drawn formulas that any attempt to expand or revise them is immediately viewed as an abandonment of the New Testament call to holiness. Consequently, efforts to incorporate insights gained from other theological traditions, or theological movements, from psychology or social theory, as well as attempts to adjust to the more dynamic, and less rigid, expressions of Christian holiness found in the Wesleys, are immediately foreclosed.

Reduction of the Wesleyan understanding of Christian holiness to narrow and inadequate doctrinal and experiential formulas, though unfortunate, is certainly not without parallels in the history of religious movements, and ideas. Repeatedly, attempts to state by credal definition, or orthodox formulation, the rich, ecstatic, creative, and multi-dimensional character of major religious or philosophical breakthroughs have run the danger of losing much of the original breadth and imagination. If examples are needed, remember Protestant Orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, the inability of some Barthians to retain the theological openness of Barth himself, the failure by some of their "disciples" to retain the creativity and breadth of Plato, Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard. The repeated failures by the successors of a highly creative era to provide a form sufficient to the original dynamic have left clearly distinguishable tracks in the sands of religious and philosophical history. But it does seem that we successors to ideas could be alert to this failure and could determine to submit our cherished forms to continuous scrutiny by the dynamic that gives them meaning and life.

Specifically, this principle must be applied to the forms through which the holiness movement attempts to express the reality of Christian holiness, and to guide its communicants in Christian formation. The biblical, theological and experiential forms utilized by the holiness movement simply must be subject to formation at all points by the reality they seek to express. (I am making a conscious distinction between form and content.) Failure to open the forms to necessary reflection, revision and growth can and does open a frustrating breach in our ranks between our theological formulations on the one hand, and the dynamics of Christian life and the elasticity of the New Testament on the other. Beating the drums more loudly in defense of the formulations will not resolve the problem.

The cost of a failure to submit our doctrinal forms to penetrating examination is at least twofold: (1) Continuing interchange with the broader Christian community about the meaning of Christian holiness is forfeited; and (2) the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work in the believer in a manner that takes seriously the historical and psychical fabric of the individual Christian may be seriously impaired.

One supposed resolution of the dilemma calls for continuing to declare fidelity to the "holiness distinctives" that have been carefully delineated by the holiness movement, and

that are presently its identifying features, on the one hand; and for proceeding to discuss, teach, and preach Christian holiness in terms that are much more catholic, holistic, and dynamic than the stated distinctives actually allow for, on the other. To put the matter another way, this resolution means that those who appropriate it will agree to live with a disjunction between their formal and material theological principles. On the confessional level allegiance to the traditional formulations will continue to receive voiced support. But on the functional level much more dynamic biblical, theological, historical (and perhaps psychological and sociological) factors will be the actual molders of theological thought and Christian proclamation. Necessary courtesies will be paid to the customary "distinctives" but the theologizing and proclamation that follow will display a dynamic and catholicity that the "distinctives" cannot support. This approach to the dilemma is now traveling incognito among us. But its disguise is fairly easy to unmask.

Perhaps this is the way to deal with the dilemma. I am sure that this is the much safer way. But this approach is unsatisfactory if for no other reason than its clear lack of theological honesty. It certainly leaves us victimized by a sort of exegetical and theological schizophrenia. It is also a form of theological special pleading; we allow for ourselves what we would not permit in others, a lack of systematic coherency. It is also obvious that this approach utterly strips us of any credible apologetic base.

But intense pastoral interest also moves me to reject this supposed resolution. Many pastors and lay people are incapable of our sophisticated gymnastics. Striving for a coherence in their discipleship that this "resolution" cannot provide, they may, in frustration, abandon the New Testament call to, and gracious provision for, Christian holiness. The cessation may be prompted by the failure of the doctrine of entire sanctification in its standard formulation to actually take the measure of life in the late twentieth century, or of the dynamic of the Spirit's life in us. No failure could more clearly betray the desire of John Wesley to preach a message of God's love that actually graces and redeems the conduct of everyday human existence.

Those who are engaged in teaching on either the college or seminary level must also admit that pedagogical responsibilities for the cognitive veracity of students make this option untenable.

Another and more satisfactory resolution is available and I propose it for consideration. The only adequate resolution of the dilemma, as I see it, is to engage in a sustained critique of our understanding and teaching of Christian holiness that reflects a living examination of Christian life from every perspective that promises to contribute to its richness. Our "distinctives" must be open to revision at any point where they fail to reflect the rich dynamic of the Spirit's activity in the Christian through grace and love. The true distinctives of Christian holiness will prove themselves to be such by rejecting all tendencies toward reductionistic rigidity, and by embracing the enlivening and transforming activity of the Holy Spirit, by embracing Him as Lord over our theological formulations.

Such a continued cultivation, it seems to me, is an imperative for following the living God. Admittedly, this is the much more taxing option. But only in this way can the necessary creative exegetical, historical, and theological work be done that gives promise of a

credible, effective voice for "holiness denominations" in the Christian future. This means defining "distinctives" not in provincial terms but in Christological and soteriological ones that unceasingly work at expressing the breadth, and sufficiency for life, of the gospel of God disclosed in our Lord.

To so state the "distinctives" of Christian holiness that our confessional affirmations harmonize with the dynamic that grasps, excites, and drives us would, I believe, be a mobilizing approachment. It would help us to teach our people that the doctrines we use to describe Christian holiness are not ends in themselves, but more or less adequate statements about the way into the life of Christian holiness, and indicators of what expansive directions this full life in Christ should take, without attempting to capture that life in a series of definitive formulas. It would allow us to embrace the catholicity that is our true heritage, and to eschew the alien provincialisms that have never adjusted their burdens to our backs anyway. It would allow us to approach our pedagogical responsibilities with a logical, exegetical and theological clarity that our present dilemma denies us. Additionally, it would make possible a profitable ecumenical discussion with our Christian brothers and sisters of other communions by allowing us to learn from them what the Holy Spirit is teaching them about the meaning of Christian holiness. It would also make possible a recovery of the sense of urgency and convincability in proclamation. And relatedly, it would provide an understanding of Christian holiness fundamentally and thoroughly informed by grace, love, and faith.

Notes

1John A. Knight, "The Supreme Pursuit," in Wesleyan Theological Journal, 15:1 (Spring 1980), pp. 7-18.

EVALUATION OF TIMOTHY SMITH'S INTERPRETATION OF WESLEY

by
J. Kenneth Grider

In the first number of the 1980 volume of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Timothy L. Smith continues his reinterpretation of John Wesley—suggesting that Wesley associated being baptized or filled with the Spirit with entire sanctification, and not with justification.

In his article entitled, "How John Fletcher Became the Theologian of Wesleyan Perfectionism, 1770-1776"¹ (which article, I feel, might well have been entitled, "Both Wesley and Fletcher Taught Entire Sanctification by Spirit Baptism"), Smith offers further support of the surprising interpretation he gave in the September-November 1979 issue of *The Preacher's Magazine*, in an article entitled, "The Doctrine of the Sanctifying Spirit in John Wesley and John Fletcher."²

While I myself appreciate the attention which our century's most distinguished Holiness historian has given to Wesley during the past three years or so, I do not read Wesley in the way the Hopkins professor does.

Actually, I wish I could find in Wesley what Smith feels that he finds. I would not at all mind finding that, after all, Wesley was a Wesleyan. Indeed, I would be most heartened to be able to enlist him in support of the Holiness movement teaching that entire sanctification is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Let me show what Smith's reinterpretation is and, in a general way, how he arrives at it—and why I find it unconvincing.

Smith's Reinterpretation

Professor Smith says that "after 1740" Wesley "held up the experience of the apostles at Pentecost as a model of it"—i.e., of "the second moment of sanctifying grace" (p. 70). Suggesting that Wesley may have preceded Fletcher in such an emphasis, Smith's full wording is as follows: "In his early writing and preaching, however, Fletcher may not have emphasized, as Wesley had after 1740, the second moment of sanctifying grace, nor held up the experience of the apostles at Pentecost as a model of it" (p. 70).

Discounting the understanding that "'baptized with,'" "'filled with,'" and "'receiving'" the Holy Spirit are interchangeable in Acts (as I think they are), and saying that to view them as such is what, "Recently, several New Testament scholars have come to believe" (p. 71), Smith says that Wesley agreed with Benson and Fletcher's preaching that the 120 disciples of Christ experienced the grace of entire sanctification when they were "'filled with the Holy Spirit' on the morning of Pentecost Day" (p. 72). Smith says that to understand, instead, that Wesley viewed what happened that day to the 120 as justification ". . . will not square at all with the long record of Wesley's teaching . . ." (p. 72). Smith says this in response to Wesley's quite apparent association of Pentecost with justification in a December 28, 1770 letter to Joseph Benson in which Wesley wrote: "If they [the students at Trevecca College]

like to call this 'receiving the Holy Ghost,' they may: only the phrase in that sense is not scriptural and not quite proper, for they all 'received the Holy Ghost' when they were justified" (p. 71).

Smith disallows this clear statement of Wesley from meaning what it must surely mean, in great part because of another letter written to Benson three months later, in which Wesley, not now discussing whether Pentecost was the entire sanctification of the 120, but another subject altogether (the witness of the Spirit), says: " 'I believe that one that is perfected in love, or filled with the Holy Ghost, may be properly termed a father' " (p. 72). Since this is the only statement of Wesley that I know of in which Wesley seems to equate being "perfected in love" with being "filled with the Spirit," and since it is directly opposed to what he wrote to Benson earlier, and since it is directly opposed to Wesley's various comments on Acts passages in his Notes Upon the New Testament (and, actually, on other bases as well), I interpret this seeming equation differently from the way Smith does. I interpret the "perfected in love" to be Wesley's own way of referring to entire sanctification; and I see the phrase "or filled with the Holy Ghost" to be a courteous way of referring to entire sanctification in wording that Benson (and Fletcher) would use. It is as though he might well have added, for clarity, "or, as you and Mr. Fletcher would say, filled with the Holy Ghost. "

In this, I am using a principle, in interpreting Wesley, which he and many others have properly used to interpret Scripture: that of bringing the possible isolated meaning into agreement with the evident general-tenor meaning-and interpreting the difficult passage in keeping with the passages whose meaning is clear.³

Wesley's Teaching in the Notes

Smith only barely refers to Wesley's comments in the Notes, preferring instead to approach from other standpoints the matter of whether Wesley taught that entire sanctification is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This is so of both Smith's 1980 *WTS Journal* article, and the article which appeared in the Fall of 1979 in the *Preacher's Magazine*. The special problem with this kind of approach is that Smith is required to work almost exclusively with evidence that is not crystal-clear. It requires him especially to treat and to reinterpret Wesley and Fletcher's on-going discussion of their difference during a time when both men were doing their very best to be as congenial to each other as their integrity would allow. Wesley was anxious to be conciliating with Fletcher, in part, so that Fletcher might accept his oft-made request to be the founder's successor as leader of the Methodist movement. If Fletcher (who, as it turned out, died before Wesley did), never did show very much interest in becoming Wesley's successor, he did show much interest in writing serious theological treatises which would be sufficiently approved by Wesley to be published by him and commended by him to the Societies.

After Wesley read Fletcher's *Last Check*, he implied (as I see the matter) a slight deprecation of it by writing to Fletcher, as regards his just-earlier Scripture Scales, that that treatise was " 'as convincing as anything you have written' " (p. 78). Then, about the Last Check, Wesley says, " 'It seems our views of Christian Perfection are a little different, though not opposite. It is certain every babe in Christ has received the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God. But he has not obtained Christian

perfection" (p. 78). After receiving this evaluation, Fletcher did some re-writing so as to express himself in as much agreement with Wesley as was feasible. Then he sent it to Charles to have the hymn-writer evaluate it and even add to it-saying "I give you carte blanche to add; but to none but you" (p. 79)-as though, perhaps, not even John Wesley was permitted to do so (which Smith questions). Since Fletcher was quite sure that Charles, in various hymns, taught as he himself did on the theological significance of Pentecost (which I happen to question); and since Fletcher even says that the emphasis could as well be called Charles' instead of his own-I feel that Fletcher probably meant exactly what he said: that only Charles was given carte blanche to "add" to his treatment. Supportive of what I am suggesting is what Fletcher says to Charles in a letter of 24 November, 1771, regarding the third check which he was writing at the time (p. 73). He says:

I shall introduce my, why not your doctrine of the Holy Ghost and make it one with your brother's perfection. He holds the truth, but this will be an improvement upon it, if I am not mistaken. In some of your pentecost hymns you paint my light wonderfully. If you do not recant them we shall perfectly agree.

In this very statement, Fletcher says that John Wesley does not associate Pentecost with perfection. It seems to me that Professor Smith, who quotes the above, and most of the other material I have so far quoted in this evaluation, is so much bent upon proving his strange thesis that he does not allow the contrary evidence to mean what it quite evidently means.

My most special problem with Smith's study however, is that it does not take into account the hard-and-fast contrary evidence contained in Wesley's comments on Acts passages in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.

These *Notes* constitute a kind of brief New Testament commentary, and they contain Wesley's studied and altogether-intended interpretations for New Testament passages-even though he tells us in the work's preface that he uses considerably the thoughts of others, especially those of *Bengelius*. He began them January 4, 1754 (see his *Journal*), worked steadily on them, without preaching, until March (see his *Journal* March 19), and finished them in a more final way on September 23 of the next year, and spent time "correcting and enlarging the notes" in December of 1759 (see *Journal*) preparing "another edition" in December of 1787. These *Notes* and the "four volumes of 'Sermons' " were made the standard of doctrine for Methodist preachers in 1784 (*Works*, 8:331).

It would seem to me that, instead of brushing off the *Notes* without giving any specific consideration whatever to their evidence, Smith might, if anything, have considered them to be of yet more significance than such sources as letters, in determining what Wesley's teachings were.

In these *New Testament Notes*, as Wesley writes commentary on the Acts text, sometimes he simply misses what would be good opportunities to relate passages to his Christian perfection doctrine -- if, indeed, he believed such, as Smith says he did. At other times Wesley does comment on passages which the Holiness movement has viewed as related to Christian perfection, but he relates them instead to the first work of grace.

At Acts 1:4-5 we read, "And . . . [Jesus] commanded them . . . to wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." And whereas Smith says that Wesley taught that the 120 received entire sanctification on Pentecost Day, Wesley does not comment at all about Jesus' "the promise of the Father", and, on "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost," Wesley, in a way that connects it with justification, comments, "And so are all true believers, to the end of the world." Smith says that, for Wesley, to receive the Holy Spirit happens at conversion, but that to be either baptized with or filled with the Holy Spirit, for Wesley, occurs at the time of our entire sanctification. But this is not borne out in Wesley's comments on Acts 1:4-5.

Interestingly, Wesley makes no comment whatever on the Acts 2:4 passage where we read, "And they [the 120, at Pentecost] were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This would be a strange omission, if he viewed being filled with the Spirit as the same as receiving entire sanctification.

On Acts 2:38, where Peter had said that after repenting, and after being baptized with water, his hearers would "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Wesley does not say that the gift of the Holy Ghost means entire sanctification, but rather says that it refers to "the constant fruits of faith, even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Likewise, on Acts 8:15, when we are told that Peter and John traveled from Jerusalem and met with the Samaritans who had earlier "believed" (8:12), and "prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost," Wesley does not relate such to their entire sanctification. Instead, somewhat vaguely, he comments, on the phrase "the Holy Ghost": "In His miraculous gifts, or His sanctifying graces [note the plural]? Probably in both."

More significantly, Wesley implies that Paul was not converted on the Damascus Road, but three days later when Ananias went to him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me, . . . that thou sayest recover thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:17, Wesley). Thus, in a comment on "And he [Saul] was three days" (Acts 9:3), Wesley comments, "An important season! So long he seems to have been in the pangs of the new birth" (Notes, on Acts 9:3). While the Notes only imply that the conversion was not on the Damascus road, but was actually three days later, Wesley, in a letter of November 4, 1758 to the Reverend Mr. Potter, states clearly that the conversion was three days later and that it occurred when Paul was "filled with the Holy Ghost." Wesley wrote to Potter, of Paul's conversion, that ". . . it does not appear that his was a sudden conversion" (*Works*, 9:93). Wesley continues: "After he had seen this [the light], 'he was three days without sight. . . . And, probably, during the whole time, God was gradually working in his heart, till he 'arose, and, being baptized washed away his sins, and was filled with the Holy Ghost' " (ibid.). Worthy of special note is the fact that, here, whereas Smith's strange interpretation is that, for Wesley, to be filled with the Holy Spirit occurs at entire sanctification, this is a crystal-clear instance of Wesley's saying that being filled with the Holy Spirit happens at conversion.

Most significantly, Wesley's comments in the *Notes*, on Acts 10:44 reveal clearly that Wesley associated receiving or being baptized with the Holy Spirit with conversion.

Commenting on 10:44, where we read, "The Holy Ghost fell on all them that were hearing the word," Wesley says: "Thus were they consecrated to God, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles. And thus did God give a clear and satisfactory evidence that He had accepted them as well as the Jews." That this was conversion for Wesley (who I think was incorrect on the matter), is clear because Wesley calls Cornelius the "first-fruits of the Gentiles," and because he states that Cornelius and the others had thus been "accepted"-which is another way of saying "received into favor," or "justified."

Wesley's comments on Acts 10:47 show the same thing. They show that when a sinner repents of his sins he "receives," or is "baptized with" the Holy Spirit. Wesley writes, "Either men have received the Holy Ghost, or not. If they have not, 'Repent,' saith God, 'and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' If they have, if they are already baptized with the Holy Ghost, then who can forbid water? " I myself feel that Wesley is quite incorrect in associating the Spirit-baptism with conversion; but that he does so is too clear to be denied-as this passage from Wesley shows.

Wesley's comments on Acts 10:47 disprove Professor Smith's contention that, for Wesley, receiving the Spirit refers to conversion, whereas to be baptized with or filled with the Spirit refers to entire sanctification. This is because, in comments on that verse, Wesley twice uses interchangeably the phrases "baptism with" or "of the Holy Spirit" and "receiving" the Holy Spirit. Re-quoting him again, as I must do, he writes, "He does not say, They have the baptism of the Spirit; therefore they do not need baptism with water: but just the contrary; therefore they have received the Spirit, then baptize them with water." Wesley also interchanges the expressions again, in comments on the same verse, when he writes, "Either men have received the Holy Ghost, or not. If they have not, 'Repent,' saith God, 'and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' If they have, if they are already baptized with the Holy Ghost, then, who can forbid water? "4

Professor Smith states in end note 33 that John Allen Knight, in his "John Fletcher's Influence on the Development of Wesleyan Theology in America," in the 1978 *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (p. 27), "asserts mistakenly that John Wesley did not connect Christian perfection with Pentecost." My reading of the materials Smith refers to, and of others, suggests that it is instead Professor Timothy L. Smith who is mistaken.

Notes

1Timothy L. Smith, "How John Fletcher Became the Theologian of Wesleyan Perfectionism, 1770-1776," in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 15 1 (Spring 1980), pp 68-87. Citations of the article will be by page reference. Set in parentheses in the text.

2This *Preacher's Magazine* article is similar to the one in the recent *Wesleyan Theological Journal* in many ways, including a disregard of the negative evidence in Wesley's comments on Acts in his *Explanatory Notes* upon the New Testament. In the *PM* article Smith writes, "That the language of Pentecost remained in the forefront of their [John and Charles Wesley's] thinking about sanctification, despite the interpretation of the passages

concerning the outpouring of the Spirit in the Book of Acts that appeared in John Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* in 1754, is clear from his response to the widespread testimonies to full salvation he reported in his Journal during the year 1762." That "response," on Wesley's part, is where Wesley wrote, "Many years ago my brother frequently said, 'Your day of Pentecost is not fully come; but I doubt not it will. And you will then hear of persons sanctified as frequently as you do now of persons justified.' And any unprejudiced reader may observe, that it was now fully come." Yet, even a casual reading of this "response" of Wesley, to the revival that was occurring, does not in any way contradict the teaching in the *Notes* that Pentecost (even for the 120) and the later pentecosts were instances of conversion. The "Pentecost" Wesley had hoped for was not solely the entire sanctification of believers. It was, clearly, a pentecost in the sense of a revival outpouring, when various people would be both justified and sanctified wholly -- and when, Charles Wesley says, you will ". . . hear of persons sanctified as frequently as you do now of persons justified."

3In the *Preacher's Magazine* article, Smith uses Wesley's seeming to equate being "perfected in love" and being "filled with the Holy Ghost" as his special argument against the customary interpretation of "Mr. Fletcher's late discovery." Wesley had told Joseph Benson, in a letter of March 9, 1771, that Benson would be welcome as a preacher in the Societies if he would "abstain from speaking of Universal Salvation and Mr. Fletcher's late discovery." While Smith interprets that "late discovery" as probably indicating "Wesley's continuing misimpression of Fletcher's view of regeneration" (p. 56, *PM*), I feel that it is probably a reference to Fletcher's recent espousal of Christian perfection as being wrought by the Spirit-baptism.

4See, e.g., pp. 71-72 of Smith's *Wesleyan Theological Journal* article discussed herein, for his view that these terms are not interchangeable.

THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT --CONTINUED

by
Robert W. Lyon

In its last number (14:2, Fall 1979) the *Journal* has continued the significant dialog within Wesleyan groups on the baptism of the Spirit. The following is offered in the interest of continuing discussion, and will offer comment on the articles by Colonel Agnew and Professors Grider and Wood¹ as they relate to the biblical data. (I shall not take up the matters of Professor Arnett's article, because it is basically an historical study of the expression of Wesley.) It is not my intention to offer a protracted response point by point to all the evidence marshalled in favor of traditional views because I view their various treatments as flawed at the point of method and perception and apart from their learned scrutiny of data. What I am seeking here is a better understanding of the nature of the evidence.

I. The Aorist Tense

It seems necessary, first, to begin by offering some clarification of the fundamental significance of the aorist tense and the very tenuous character and doubtful value of any treatment of the subsequence or the crisis nature of entire sanctification by appeal to this tense. Both Agnew (*passim*) and Grider (pp. 39, 42, 47) make considerable appeal to the aorist tense to establish their positions; there is, of course, much precedence for this within the holiness tradition.² Two points are often made: (1) that the aorist tense indicates punctiliar action (i.e., crisis, not process); and (2) that it indicates prior action. John 17:17- "sanctify (aorist) them in the truth"-underscores, it is said, the first point. So, too, with the aorist optative of I Thessalonians 5:23-"the very God of peace himself sanctify you wholly." The second point, prior action, often comes to expression in the discussion of Acts 19:2- "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?", and Acts 11:17, "God gave to them the same gift he gave to us after we believed." But almost all such discussion builds upon misunderstanding of the function of Greek tenses, and the aorist tense in particular.³

A. The Type of Action. It is commonly said that the present tense in Greek expresses continuous or repeated action while the aorist tense expresses punctiliar or simple action. So when the aorist tense is used (as in John 17:17 or I Thessalonians 5:24) the action is recognized as punctiliar. But such a view needs to be qualified, and perhaps in view of the qualification even revised. Both A. T. Robertson ⁴ and J. H. Moulton ⁵ speak of the *Aktionsart* of the aorist tense as punctiliar-but punctiliar rightly understood. It is not so much that the event itself is punctiliar, but rather that it is viewed by the writer as a whole without regard to its actual occurrence. It may refer to an action as a whole as though it were a point, or, to use Moulton's ⁶ metaphor, "a line reduced to a point by perspective" (emphasis mine). Perhaps the most frequently cited example which most effectively illustrates this "line reduced to a point" feature of the aorist tense is the use of *oikodomethē* in John 2:20, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years." Here is a multi-year construction project referred to as a whole event by the aorist tense. The grammarians refer to this as the constitute aorist and it is by far the most common use of the aorist

tense. In fact, Robertson goes so far as to call it "the normal aorist."⁷ J. H. Moulton also speaks of the aorist as punctiliar in that it "regards action as a point," and adds that it "looks at a whole action simply as having occurred, without distinguishing any steps in its progress"⁸ (emphasis mine). All the grammars agree that when we speak of the aorist tense as punctiliar it is in terms of perspective, that is, how it is viewed or referred to apart from how the event itself may or may not have occurred.

Blass-Debrunner, when discussing the punctiliar aspect of the aorist tense, notes that "The action is conceived as a point with either the beginning or the end of the action emphasized . . . or the action is conceived as a whole irrespective of its duration"⁹ (emphasis mine).

Similarly, E. D. Burton delineates the aorist tense in terms of perspective without reference to the actual nature of the event. "The constant characteristic of the Aorist tense in all its moods, including the participle, is that it represents the action denoted by it indefinitely, i.e., simply as an event, neither on the one hand picturing it in progress, nor on the other affirming the existence of its result." ¹⁰ Burton approves of Brugmann's ¹¹ statement that most of the time the aorist is used in such a way that the act is viewed as complete and whole, undivided; the fact is simply stated without respect to duration ¹² (emphasis mine).

Nigel Turner correctly notes that the tense stems only indicate "the point of view from which the action or state is regarded"¹³ and not necessarily the nature of the action itself. He adds that the aorist tense "regards the action as a whole without respect to its duration; time is irrelevant to it. ¹⁴ All this is very much in accord with the meaning of the term "aorist" (aorist) from *a*, the alpha privative, and *horidzein*, "to define." That is, it is the tense which, over against the present and perfect systems, does not define the nature of the action. The nature of the action may be defined by the words themselves (e.g., such verbs as "dwell" and "remain" are by definition linear) or by context, which in the end is always definitive.

A further word needs to be said regarding the aorist imperative. Both Robertson ¹⁵ and Moulton ¹⁶ draw attention to observations by Gildersleeve and Mozley that the aorist tense is the normal tense of prayer. Moulton writes, "Moreover, even in the language of prayer the imperative is at home, and that in its most urgent form, the aorist."¹⁷ Gildersleeve speaks of the almost exclusive use of the aorist in prayer as the "true term for instant prayer."¹⁸ What this means is that the aorist tense is the normal, the common tense in prayer because it has (to use Moulton's expression) a tone of urgency. Thus, it may be pointed out that all the imperatives in Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer are aorists. The same is to be said of Luke's version of the prayer except where he has changed the petition from "give us today" to read "give us daily," a change which suggests the use of the present tense. The significance of this observation on the use of the aorist imperative in prayer may be noted in the petition, "Thy will be done," which must by definition be continuous (linear) not crisis (punctiliar) even though the aorist tense is used. In the same way we note that all the imperatives of John 17 are aorists. Yet the petition "Keep them in your name" (vs. 11) must be continuous action. In short, the tense of these prayers (and this would include John 17:17 and I Thess. 5:23) is due not to how the action occurs but to the fact that the peculiar "tone" of the aorist is most suited for prayer.

In view of the widespread misunderstanding of the meaning of "punctiliar" when applied to the aorist tense and its frequent misappropriation in biblical interpretation, perhaps the suggestion might be made that we do away altogether with saying that the aorist tense denotes punctiliar action. The qualifications of the grammarians are frequently not heard, so wisdom indicates that we ought to refer to the aorist as the tense of "undefined action" rather than punctiliar. The "point perspective" can then be picked up when we speak of constative aorists, inceptive (ingressive) aorists, or culminative aorists.¹⁹ To put it in a quite matter-of-fact manner, context and the choice of verbs rather than tense will commonly indicate the nature of an act or event. Sometimes nothing more than style or the avoidance of monotony may lie behind the choices of tenses. The Aktionsart of the aorist tense leaves it undefined.

B. The Time of Action. The other issue of the aorist tense, the one appealed to frequently by Grider, is the time of the action indicated. Both he ²⁰ and Agnew ²¹ refer to the NASB's rendering of Acts 11:17 to show that Cornelius and his extended family received the baptism of the Spirit after believing. Grider speaks of this translation as "somewhat less prejudicial" and says the NASB "translates it in the way aorist participles are normally to be rendered."²² Again we must draw attention to the true nature of the Greek tenses for a clearer understanding of just what tenses do and do not say. The tenses tell us basically the type of action (the Aktionsart) rather than the time of action. In the Greek present tense, for example, we have what is called "futuristic present"²³ as well as the "historic (past action) present." In the case of the aorist tense it is true that time may be conveyed in the indicative, but only through the use of the augment, not by the choice of tense. When we get beyond the indicative mood, which alone employs the augment, time of action is very much a secondary factor if indeed it is present at all. Speaking of the aorist participle Robertson notes that "antecedent action" is the usual idiom, but adds that "simultaneous action" is also very common.²⁴ He reminds us that the time relationship is indicated by content and that the aorist participle does not in itself mean antecedent action.

Even when the aorist participle may be viewed as antecedent, it is usually not in the sense that Grider has in mind when he speaks of subsequent action.²⁵ Probably the most common use of the anarthrous aorist participle is what J. Harold Greenlee ²⁶ and others call "coordinate circumstances that is, two separate actions closely related in a single event or, to say it another way, two components of a single action, but one act logically (and at times necessarily) preceding the other. In Mark 1:7, for example, the Baptist says that he is not worthy to "stoop down and loose" (*kupas lusai*) the thongs of the Messiahs sandals. The question is not whether he is worthy after stooping down, since it is obvious that he is not worthy before stooping down or while stooping down; rather stooping down and loosing are two parts of a single act, one necessarily preceding the other but still a single act. Similarly in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19 we do not understand the tenses to say "(sometime) after having gone into the world make disciples" but "go and make disciples." To come closer to home on matters relating to the baptism of the Spirit the aorist participle *epelthontos* in Acts 1:8 does not suggest that sometime after the Spirit has come upon a believer he or she will receive power. On the contrary it is the very receiving of the Spirit that is the bestowal of power: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." Just so in Eph. 1:13, "When you believed you were sealed." The renderings of the

RSV and NIV in Acts 11:17, therefore, are not "prejudicial" but represent a fair understanding of the nature of tenses, and particularly the aorist participle. Grider suggests that such interpretations are due to the interpreter's basic theology intruding.²⁷ But does he consider that his own use of the aorist tense may be an example of "theology intruding"-especially when it builds upon a faulty understanding of a tense?

If we take aorist participles down his path, then Acts 15:8 could mean that "He [God] bore witness to them (sometime) after having given (aorist participle) the Holy Spirit. " And the following verse would mean that God "made no distinction (sometime) after He cleansed (*katharisas*, aorist participle) their hearts. " Such use of the aorist is patently unacceptable, and the context tells us so. This coordinate expression of the participle is probably the most frequent use of the anarthrous participle. Examples can be found on every page of the Greek New Testament, but to give only one example, in Mark 10:1, *anastas erchetai*-Jesus "arose and went" south to Judea. Two components-two sets-but one action or event, much like the student who "stood up and asked a question." Any suggestion of "some time later" or "still later" is a serious abuse of the aorist tense-unless, of course, the context calls for it. But then it would not be the tense that is determinative. Both Agnew and Grider appeal to the tense rather than the context.

In brief, then, neither the type of action nor the time of action is defined by the aorist tense-except in the indicative mood where time is expressed yet even there it is due to the augment and not the tense stem-since the aorist tense leaves the action undefined This undefined feature is especially true in the participles and the imperative mood. On these matters context is everything. Of course since the aorist tense leaves the action undefined, it permits the possibility of punctiliar (crisis) action, but then again the appeal is to context and not to tense. I am, for example, quite certain that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believer is a "crisis experience" not because in Acts 1:8 the tense is aorist, but because of the context and the very nature of the action as it is described there and elsewhere. Wesleyan writers-and all others!-will enhance their exegetical and theological work when they exercise much more caution regarding the aorist tense and reveal a careful understanding of it.

II. Assumptions and the Nature of Evidence

A second matter which reveals a serious flaw in the articles by Agnew, Grider and Wood has to do with exegetical and theological method. In their treatment of the material in Acts, for example, none of them raises the question as to the author's intent. Why, for example, does Luke recount the experiences of the Samaritans, of Cornelius and his family, and some "disciples" in Ephesus who knew only John's baptism? Instead, we find only a microscopic probing of details rather clearly intended to uncover what the writers (Grider and Wood) have determined must be there. There seems to be almost no recognition of the *heilsgeschichtlich* dimension that controls Luke's narrative-that is, that Luke tells how others outside the immediate Jewish community entered the new age of the Spirit. These biblical narratives are often lacking in details; and that partly explains why they are at times so difficult to understand. But one certain point seems to me to be almost beyond doubt, namely, that Luke is telling of the spreading reception of the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit

and how through that experience more and more people as well as more diverse types of people entered the fellowship of what Paul calls the body of Christ.

But beyond that, what kind of evidence exists in any of the narratives to suggest that any of these experiences were experiences of entire sanctification? Wood speaks of the cases of the Samaritans (Acts 8), Paul (Acts 9) and the Ephesians (Acts 19) as showing a two-step pattern and a repudiation of Dunn's so-called "soteriological monism."²⁸ However one might interpret the so-called first phase of these experiences (the Samaritans before the visit of Peter and John, Paul before the arrival of Ananias, the Ephesians before Paul's coming), what does one find in the texts to suggest that the second phase was an experience of entire sanctification? And going farther back to the disciples' experience in Acts 2, what is to be found in the narrative that even hints that on that day they were made perfect in love? Taken together all these accounts are to be seen *heilsgeschichtlich* as the extension of the "fullness of times" declared by Jesus (Mark 1:14; note the perfect tense of *peplerotai*) upon His own receiving of the Spirit and confirmed by the casting out of demons, which was the fundamental evidence of the arrival of the eschatological Kingdom (Matt. 12:28). During His ministry His disciples live and minister under the aegis of His (Jesus') receipt of the Spirit. Upon His departure the direct possession of (by) the Spirit is promised and, on Pentecost, experienced. The extension of that experience is then told by way of Samaria, Caesarea, Damascus and Ephesus. It is, therefore, of no real consequence when Grider establishes by considerable effort that the disciples were Christians (he calls them "justified") before Pentecost, since there is no effort within Wesleyan circles to deny it. It really means only that after the original followers were Christians they received the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit. Any identification of that with entire sanctification would have to come from the text. Grider's evidence only becomes meaningful if one assumes a priori that a second experience is by definition the experience of entire sanctification. And he does assume it, since he offers no evidence from the text. The appeal to *katharisas* in Acts 15:9 is of no consequence for the reasons Dr. Deasley gives.²⁹ Even if, as Wood attempts to argue, ³⁰ there is a time lapse between conversion and the Spirit's baptism in the experience of the Samaritans, we still find nothing in the narrative to indicate that this experience of the Spirit is the occasion of their perfection in love. The same is to be said of the strange interpretation by Grider ³¹ of the experience of three thousand converts on Pentecost who believed, repented and were baptized (first work!) and after all three thousand were baptized-"it would have to be later, if three thousand were to be baptized in water"-then they receive the Spirit as promised. Does not this very forced effort to see two works of grace ³² reveal the poverty of an approach which forces a two-step paradigm on every text?³³ But even granting the best possible case, again we have to ask the question: where is the evidence within the narratives to indicate that any of the people involved were at the moment of these experiences sanctified wholly? It is surely of much greater-even decisive-significance to note that these are all descriptions of an initial receiving of the Spirit, of their coming to possess inwardly the living Spirit of God. One gets the impression from Grider and Wood that any experience of the Spirit that is subsequent to conversion, especially if it is in "Pentecostal language," is the second work of grace. Such "soteriological dualism" deserves the same criticism Wood levels at Dunn's monism. Wood, for example, devotes three full pages ³⁴ to a treatment of the experiences of the Samaritans, Paul and the Ephesians to support the idea of a time lapse between conversion and the baptism of

the Spirit, but does not devote even a single line to show from the biblical texts that these experiences were what the holiness movement calls the crisis of entire sanctification. Only the a priori assumption that the baptism of the Spirit is the experience of entire sanctification could justify such a conclusion.

It is the flagrant use of assumptions which so egregiously vitiates the points that Agnew, Grider and Wood attempt to establish. Certain equations within the Wesleyan movement have contributed uncritically to their application of a two-step paradigm. It is commonly assumed that the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:6) is perfection in love. And both are equated with the baptism of the Spirit. Add to these the expression of the heart of stone becoming a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26) and we have a set of expressions-circumcision of the heart, the heart of flesh, the baptism of the Spirit-which have been equated with the experience of entire sanctification. But surely it must be recognized on the basis of the biblical evidence that every believer has a heart of flesh, has experienced heart-circumcision as a member of the Kingdom and has received the Spirit as promised! To deny any of this is to negate the newness of life and the liveliness of being in Christ. The experience of Christian perfection is the perfecting of all that is given upon entrance into the community of the Beloved. If we were to put it in the form of an equation, we would set it out as follows: Christians = those of the New Covenant Community = the circumcised of heart = the Spirit-baptized ones = those who are born from above = those with a heart of flesh = the Church on earth. None of these expressions is to be denied to any believer. They are co-extensive, and such a proviso as "potentially but not actually" must apply to all of the terms if it is applied to any of them.

Another methodological flaw is to be noted in the appeal to language-and to terminology in particular. Again Wood, for example, speaks of the "relationship of Pentecostal language to entire sanctification." ³⁵ Why does he not speak of the relationship of Pentecost to entire sanctification? He would then be relating one experience to another experience. But why relate the language of Pentecost to entire sanctification? If one chooses to do so, and if it clarifies an issue, one can relate the language of anything, e.g., of creation or of the atonement, to entire sanctification. (Wood does in fact refer to *ekkechutai* as Pentecostal language, whereas it is as much associated with atonement as with any single idea. See, among others, Matt. 26:28; Exodus 29:12.) The appeal to language is an appeal to descriptive form, and I for one have no problems with employing any language as long as it clarifies and as long as it does not involve misinterpretation. But one has to ask if the appeal to the language of Pentecost is not a retreat from the position that the experience of Pentecost is the experience of sanctification? Elsewhere it is said that Pentecost is related to, associated with, or linked with entire sanctification, but again this seems, methodologically, to be a relate from the equation that supposedly rests at the center of the holiness movement, viz., that the experience of Pentecost is the experience of entire sanctification. We can be quite certain that the Pentecostal gift is related to entire sanctification, because that Gift is integral to the whole work of sanctification.

May I offer here a brief word on the effect of not giving attention to the context of words and the way they are used by writers. Grider refers to my description of conversion as a "truly sanctifying experience" and comments that this appears as though "the converted

person is already sanctified in a pretty complete sense" (p. 48). He then adds, "His word 'truly' is surely similar to 'entire' or 'full' or 'wholly' which holiness people have often used of the second work of grace" (p. 48f). Grider does not perceive how I use the word, but takes it as he would use it. In his essay, *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer Adler reminds us repeatedly that we must listen to how a writer is using a term and what he is trying to convey. What am I conveying by my description of conversion as a "truly sanctifying experience"? The same thing Wesley expressed in his sermon, "On Sin in Believers," when he says of the Corinthians that ". . . their hearts were truly (emphasis mine), yet not entirely, renewed" (Sugden, II, p. 371). In the same sermon Wesley adds, "We allow that the state of a justified person is inexpressibly great and glorious. He is born again.... He is a child of God. . . . He is 'created anew in Christ Jesus': he is washed, he is sanctified. His heart is purified by faith; he is cleansed 'from the corruption that is in the world' " (p. 365f) That is all that I meant by my expression, and I meant all of it! But even this is yet a long way from entire sanctification.

We must all keep in mind our basic goals in working through Scripture on the matter of Wesleyan doctrine. We are seeking to show that Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection is biblical in substance, though we all need to reserve the right to revise, when required by Scripture, his perspective in any number of directions. To be able to make it marketable, we must be able to show that it is biblical. Attempts to define the baptism of the Spirit in ways not in accord with the tradition must be viewed from this angle: they are attempts to set Scripture in perspective, to set aside what is exegetically untenable in order that we-the holiness tradition-might rest our case and proclaim the good news on grounds that will bear the weight.

Notes

1Milton S. Agnew, "Baptized With the Spirit," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 14:2 (Fall 1979), pp. 7-14); J. Kenneth Grider, "Spirit-Baptism the Means of Entire Sanctification," *ibid.*, pp. 31-50; Laurence M. Wood, "Exegetical Theological Reflections on the Baptism With the Holy Spirit," *ibid.*, pp. 51-63. In this discussion, citations of these writers' comments will be footnoted simply by page number.

2E.g., Daniel Steele, *Mile-Stone Papers; Doctrinal, Ethical and Experimental on Christian Progress* (New York: Eaton, 1878), Chapter Five, "The Tense Readings of the Greek New Testament" is built almost entirely on misunderstanding. J. H. Greenlee, "The Greek New Testament and the Message of Holiness" in *Further Insights into Holiness*, ed. Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1963), pp. 73-84, correctly notes "The aorist tense is not concerned with the length of time which is required for an action to occur." But he errs in speaking of aorist tense as conceiving the action as completed (emphasis his). This can only be said of the indicative mood. This misconception of the aorist as indicating action either completed or to be completed-and therefore an "event"-vitiates his discussion. So, for example on the prayer of Eph. 3:14-21 he notes the aorist tense of all the verbs and adds, "I cannot avoid the conclusion that the apostle here is praying that an event may take place in the hearts of Christians, not mere continued progress" (p. 85). "Mere continued

progress" is supposedly pejorative; and logically it is not the alternative to "event." A better explanation of the verb tenses in this prayer is to be found in that portion of this paper which cites footnotes 17 and 18.

3"The translators of our English version have failed more frequently from their partial knowledge of the force of the tenses than from any other cause," F. W. Farrar, quoted in A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 821. Robertson's comments (pp. 821-830) are important.

4Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek N.T.*, p. 829.

5J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. I, Prolegomena*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), p. 109.

6Ibid., cf. C. F. D. Moule, *Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1951), p. 11, who approves this metaphor. Note the similar expression "action focused on a point" by Delbruck and Brugmann, Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek N. T.*, p. 832.

7Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek N.T.*, p. 832.

8Moulton, *Prolegomena*, p. 109.

9Friedrich-Wilhelm Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 166.

10E. D. Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1898), p. 16.

11Karl Brugmann, *Griechische Grammatik*, 2nd ed., (Munich: Beck, 1890), p. 159.

12For similar references in Burton to the aorist tense see *Moods and Tenses*, pp. 17, 19, 60.

13Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. III. Syntax*, by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 59.

14Ibid. Elsewhere in the same volume Turner confuses the issue by some of his comments which come close to contradicting his own perceptions.

15Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek N. T.*, p. 947f.

16Moulton, *Grammar of N. T. Greek*, 1:173.

17Ibid.

18B. L. Gildersleeve, ed., *The Apologies of Justin Martyr*, (New York: Harper, 1877), p. 137.

19Cf., Frank Stagg, "The Abused Aorist," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 91:2 (1972), pp. 222-31. The author expresses similar concerns in greater detail.

20PP. 39.

21p. 9.

22Ibid., cf. also on p. 42, "On the basis of what is customary with an aorist participle...." On p. 41f. Grider again appeals to the NASB of Eph. 1:13 in the same way.

23As we do also in English: "The king is coming"

24Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 860.

25Note his interpretation (p. 42) of Eph. 1:13 that "still later" after believing and being justified they were sealed with the Spirit.

26J. Harold Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1963), p. 67.

27p. 39.

28p. 55.

29Alex R. G. Deasley, "Entire Sanctification and the Baptism with the Holy Spirit: Perspectives on the Biblical View of the Relationship," in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 14:1 (Spring 1979), pp. 39, 44.

30P. 55.

31P. 44.

32Cf., Wood, p. 55, who more judiciously acknowledges that the baptism of the Spirit on this occasion occurred at conversion.

33Cf. Prof. Deasley's comment (WTJ, 14:1, p. 30) regarding efforts to posit an earlier repentance and faith as Peter was beginning to preach to Cornelius.

34pp. 56-58.

35P. 51.

HOLINESS AND DISCIPLESHIP

by **Allan Coppedge**

Wesleyan theology has made a distinct contribution to the Church's understanding of Christian holiness in three areas:

- I. Holiness as an over-arching theme in scriptural truth.
- II. Holiness as containing a crisis point in Christian experience called Entire Sanctification.
- III. Holiness of heart worked out in holiness of life by means of spiritual disciplines.

Because the second of these, i.e. the experience of entire sanctification, has been the point most often neglected by both Wesleyans and non-Wesleyans alike, there has been a tendency to focus a great deal of energy and resources on the articulation and propagation of this central truth. And it is quite right that this should be an area of major concern for the Wesleyan tradition.

At the same time faithfulness to Scripture and to our special theological heritage makes us conscious that this distinctive emphasis upon entire sanctification can never be divorced from the context of the other two major contributions Wesleyan theology has made. If or when this should happen, a grave disservice will have been done to the cause of truth and the holiness tradition, for it would isolate the experience of entire sanctification from its larger scriptural framework on the one hand, while failing to see that its full implications were worked out in godly living on the Other. It is for the purpose of preventing any such isolation of one part of our theological heritage from the rest that I would like to look at the subject of holiness and discipleship in relation to all three of the above mentioned distinctives. **Holiness and the People of God**

The concept of holiness as an over-arching theme in Scripture begins with the character of the God of Scripture: He is the ultimate Holy One. Perhaps the clearest revelation of the centrality of God's holiness comes in the visions of Isaiah (Isa. 6) and John (Rev. 4), where both prophet from the Old Testament and apostle from the New Testament are permitted to see into the eternal world and hear the heavenly creatures declare the glory of God. And what do they declare? That He is holy, holy, holy. This is the essence of His being, and as John so graphically puts it, This is the way He was, this is the way He is, and this is the way He will be. They have caught a vision of the unchangeable nature of God. It is no accident then that this kind of revelation produced in a man like Isaiah a distinctive title for the Lord of his fathers, for one who has seen what God is really like could not help but characterize Him as the Holy One of Israel.

But not only is God the Father styled in the Bible as holy, but the Son and the Spirit are as well. At the announcement of the incarnation the angel declares that Jesus is to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and that "the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:34). This also becomes the confession of His disciples at a crucial turning

point in His ministry. After Jesus had watched many followers go away, He looked to the Twelve and asked, Will you also go away? Peter responds for the whole group in his declaration of their conviction that they have come to believe that Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69). And regarding the Spirit of God it is not a happen-chance that the third person of the Trinity is almost always referred to as the Holy Spirit; because Holy is what God is like!

Even non-evangelicals have recognized the central place holiness occupies in a right understanding of God. Dr. Edmond Jacob in his *Theology of the Old Testament* writes: "Holiness is not one divine quality among others, even the chiefest, for it expresses what is characteristic of God and corresponds precisely to his deity . . . Yahweh is the holy one par excellence . . ." ¹ What is being said is that God's holiness is not just one divine attribute among all the others, but that it is the very essence of His nature. To be sure He is many things: Justice, Wrath, Love, etc.; but each is always qualified by His holiness, i.e., it is holy justice, holy wrath, or holy love. It may not be insignificant that when Isaiah and John saw their visions of what God was like that the creatures around the throne were not crying, Love, Love, Love; even though love is extremely important to our understanding of what God is like. A. B. Davidson, speaking to this issue in his discussion of the title "The HOLY One of Israel," concludes:

No other epithet given to Yahweh is ever used in the same way. For example, Jehovah is righteous; but 'the righteous one,' in the absolute or abstract sense, is a term never applied to Him-nor 'the gracious,' and the like. It seems clear, therefore, that Kadosh is not a word that expresses any attribute of deity, but deity itself.²

If the holiness of Scripture begins with the character of God, it moves quickly to the question of the holiness of men. In the opening verses of the Bible God reveals how He made man in His own image and likeness. This likeness refers to the natural image of God in man as well as the moral image. The natural image includes things like man's dominion over the creation, his spirituality and immortality, and his personality, including his reason, language, memory, emotions, etc. The moral image refers to that which reflects the moral character of God, i.e., that which relates to matters of right and wrong, and here the Scriptures indicate that the content of this moral image consisted in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). This is also to be inferred from the data regarding the nature of God Himself: if He is holy, and He made man like Himself, it follows that in some sense man was designed to be holy as well. To be sure it is a derived holiness, for only God is originally holy, but it is nevertheless a holiness like the holiness of God.³

But men are not holy! They have fallen into sin and disobedience, and rebellion has become characteristic of their life. Beginning with Adam in Genesis 3 the Scripture speaks of fallen, sinful man; or in other words he is unholy, i.e., unlike the moral nature of God his Creator. Yet, in spite of the universality of this unholiness (Rom. 5:12ff.), God still desires for men to be like Himself, and in His grace He has designed a scheme of redemption to make men holy again and restore them to fellowship with Himself. Indeed, the whole plan of salvation is laid out in the Scripture for the purpose of remaking man again in the moral image of

God, i.e., like His holy character. There is thus a teleological aim related to all of His redemptive design, viz., men characterized by the moral holiness of God. He made this purpose vividly clear in the establishment of His covenant with Israel, when He repeatedly reminded them, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

It is at this point, in the giving of the Old Covenant at Mt. Sinai, that we get one of the most explicit statements from God about the kind of people for which He is looking to be a people of His own possession. The account of this event in Exodus 19 serves as an important indicator of the characteristics that God wants to see in a people called by His Name. The first thing that the story reveals is that at this point Israel is a redeemed people, a nation that has been delivered both physically and spiritually from the oppression of the Egyptians. They have not been saved by keeping the law, which only begins to be given in chapter 19, but they have been redeemed by the gracious hand of a supernatural God. Salvation by grace is not strictly a New Testament concept. In both testaments the proper order is Grace first, then Law-Law coming as a means of working out the implications of Grace in everyday living.

While one cannot be a part of the people of God without being delivered, neither can one be part of God's special possession without a willingness to continue living under His control. This is the question of authority. God wants to rule over His people as a King, and so important was this lesson that Israel was not permitted an earthly king for many generations. Even then he was never the absolute ruler after the pattern of other kings in the Ancient Near East, because in Israel God was the ultimate King. And His kingship needs to be understood in terms of His authority over men's lives. This is why the introduction to the covenant offer is prefaced with the conditional elements, "if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant." For to live under His authority in a practical way means to obey Him.

The third characteristic of a godly people described in this passage is that they are to be priests. This is the matter of outreach and service. Priests were to serve both God and the people at the same time. They were mediators. They spent time with God, and then bore His message to men; their role thus included a teaching responsibility. But they also gathered men together to bring them into the presence of God, instructing them how to pray, offer sacrifices, seek forgiveness, etc. They stood between God and men for the purposes of drawing them together. Similarly God intended Israel to play a priestly role in relation to the whole world; "all the earth is mine," He tells them, for He is concerned about all men. This is the same role He envisioned when He first established a covenant with Abraham and promised the patriarch that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). God is choosing a people for a responsibility, viz., the task of reaching out to a world separated from God and lost in sin. This is the work assignment God has designed for all those who are called His people. They are not only to be something, but also to do something!

Furthermore, they are "to be" and "to do" with other people who are committed to the same God, and therefore have the same perspective, commandments, and promises. They are a nation of people. This does not mean that there is no individual commitment to God, but it means that individual relationships with the Lord were to be pursued with others who

enjoyed this same personal walk with God.⁴ This is the issue of the fellowship of believers. Those who had been redeemed were to live and serve together under God's authority, working out the implications of their faith and testifying to that reality in the world, while they were strengthening and encouraging one another as the people of God.

Lastly, the character of this people was unusually significant. They were to be a holy people. They were to be holy for two reasons. One because they were to be like a holy God who had called them to live in fellowship with Himself, and they could not live with Him unless they were like Him, holy as He was holy. Their holiness then related to what they were in relation to God. But it also related to what He had called them to do, i.e., be priests to the nations. For they were to be an accurate reflection of what God was like to the peoples of the earth; God wanted to make Himself known, He wanted to be known for what He was, i.e., as holy, and He chose Israel for that purpose. They could not fulfill their role in the world and in God's plan for the redemption of the whole of mankind without representing God faithfully to men, and this could only be done if His character, His Name, was seen as holy.⁵ So their holiness not only affected their relationship with God, it also affected their mission in the world. The holiness of their character then carries implications for both one's walk with God and one's witness to the world. No wonder God was looking for a holy people!

Apparently from God's perspective holiness is not an optional extra for those who are members of the people of God. He is looking for a people who are holy as He is holy; He began making that clear with the establishment of the Old Covenant and continues to make His desires known under the New. The God who does not change speaks again through His apostle to the Christian Church.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9).

And His reason for wanting the same kind of people has not changed: "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy' " (I Pet. 1:15-16).

These are some of the essential elements then in being a people of God's own possession: a redeemed people, living in obedience to the authority of God the King, prepared to minister to the world in priestly service, encouraging one another in their life of faith, and reflecting the holy character of the Lord. By the same token all these factors may legitimately be seen as characteristics of a holy people, viz., they are a redeemed people who belong to God, who are walking in obedient submission to His kingly rule, who are ministering to the world as His priests, and who are stimulating each other to faithfulness in their personal and corporate commitment to the Lord. Thus a brief review of the introduction to the Old Covenant makes it quite clear that the holiness for which God is looking in men is manifestly bound up with matters of redemption, authority, outreach, and fellowship.

When one turns to the New Testament, it is important to observe that the basic ingredients of being the people of God have not changed. God is still holy, and He still looks for a people to reflect His holiness. There is some further understanding to be sure; God is

making the full revelation of His nature manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. If one wishes to know how the holiness of God looks in human form, then he has only to carefully observe the life and character of the Lord Jesus. It is not for nothing that Peter describes Him as the Holy One of God, for He not only belongs to the Father, but He also is the full revelation of that holiness that is God's. So the New Testament understanding of holiness may be richer and more complete than that of the Old, but it is not different in basic content. For those who are convinced that the God of the New Testament is the same as the Holy One of Israel that comes as no surprise.

In the New Testament the people of God are described in terms of those who are disciples of Jesus, and the process of making them into God's own possession is what we are now calling discipleship.⁶ This life of discipleship begins, in parallel to its Old Testament counterpart, with redemption, when men are called to repent of their sins and believe on the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14-15). Here is where men begin to follow Jesus: when they turn away from disobedience or unholiness and put their faith in Him. These are, of course, the conditions for salvation by grace, viz., repentance and belief. This is the experience sometimes described as initial sanctification, because it begins the process of making men holy like the character of the Lord.

Both Matthew and Mark record that after an introduction to the conditions of redemption, Jesus moves almost immediately to call men to follow Him, and in so doing gives a clear idea of the other characteristics for which He is looking in disciples. Matthew in particular seems to be at pains to present the call of the first disciples and the definition of content of a life of discipleship in terms of the establishment of a New Covenant. Matthew, as the writer of the "Jewish gospel," lays out his material to make clear that what is happening under Jesus is a continuation and fulfillment of what God has already done under the Old Covenant. Thus he opens with a word about the redemption of men, couched in terms of the kingdom of God in chapter 4, and then moves to give the content of the New Covenant in chapters 5-7. Just as Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Old Covenant, so Jesus goes up on the mount to give His followers certain basic covenant stipulations. It is in both the call of the disciples and in the giving them the heart of the New Covenant that we get a fairly good indication of the kind of people the Lord wants for disciples in the new era.

For those who have experienced the redeeming grace of God as they came in repentance and faith, the next step is described in Jesus' statement, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). The command, "Follow me," first raises the issue of authority; either they will choose to obey or not to obey. If they choose to follow Him, it means they are placing their lives, at least in an initial way, under His direction. This is also implied in any call to live under the "kingdom of God," i.e., the reign of God now being manifest in the person of Jesus. To be a disciple is to bring one's life under the control of the Lord, and without this there can be no process of discipleship as the New Testament describes it.

What are the practical implications of this kind of authority under the New Covenant? Jesus begins to spell this out in the Sermon on the Mount when He addresses the question of the relationship of His disciples to the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17-21). They were not only to live under the law and the prophets, but under the fullest implications of the moral law

contained in them. Jesus spends considerable time spelling out the most complete meaning of that moral law contained in the Old Testament, and then couples this with a statement about the authority of His own words at the end of the discourse (Matt. 7:24-27). The Word of God both in the Old Testament and in Jesus becomes the standard of authority for those who desire to be disciples of the Lord.

If men are willing to submit to His authority and walk in obedient faith, then Jesus promises to make them fishers of men. Here is the responsibility of outreach and ministry. Part of being a disciple is being trained to bear the message of the gospel to the world and draw men to Christ. This is why Jesus describes the work of the disciples in terms of salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16); they are to attract others to a life of intimate fellowship with God, and guide them into this personal relationship. They are His lights in a dark world to help individuals find their way to God.

Further, the disciples are called together to follow Jesus. They form an apostolic band of men who are not only committed to Jesus, but who also develop a commitment to each other. While each is learning from Jesus personally, they are also interacting with one another and growing together in their understanding of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord. They form the fellowship of God's people, and the nucleus of the New Israel. Even the number twelve is symbolic of their continuity with God's design in the tribes of Israel under the Old Covenant.

And what is to be the character of these disciples? They are not in this immediate context referred to as holy. Has God's purpose changed in this regard? Perhaps some light may be shed on this with another look at the command of Jesus, "Follow me." While this certainly refers to the issue of authority and obedience, it also seems to imply in the context of the whole of the gospel record that Jesus intended for His followers to become like Himself "Follow me" appears designed to allow Him to make men like His own character and could easily be paraphrased, "Come be like me." This certainly was one of His goals in the years that He spent with the twelve; by patient teaching and example He was working on building their character. They learned by association and demonstration while they lived in intimate fellowship with Jesus for three years.

What is this character that He is imparting? If Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Holy One of Israel, then is it any wonder that His disciples came to confess Him as the Holy One of God? May not holiness of character be described as Christlikeness? And is this not the character that Jesus lays before His followers in the beatitudes at the very outset of the giving of the New Covenant (Matt. 5:3-12)? With all the other parallels between the giving of the Old Covenant and the New, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that on the question of character, the concept of a holy nation under the earlier dispensation has been translated to a living demonstration of holiness in the person of Jesus Christ in the new age. Jesus as the incarnate form of the holy Godhead is the enfleshed manifestation of holiness of character even if the word "holy" itself does not appear prominently in these first descriptions of His public ministry. And He is calling His disciples to be like Himself, viz.,
Holy in character. **The Process of Discipleship**

The process of being like Jesus began for the disciples with their conversion or with what is otherwise called initial sanctification. But the character of the Twelve was not immediately like that of their Master. Character building is a process, and so Jesus, knowing this, invested three years of His life in developing the character of these disciples. This involved that growth in grace which is sometimes designated as progressive sanctification, i.e., that development of character under the authority of Jesus in the company of others of like commitment. While the Gospels reveal some very obvious gaps in the lives of the Twelve, it is also clear that some progress is being made; spiritual growth is taking place. Several factors contribute most significantly to this. One is the living pattern of the character of Jesus. They observe the holiness of God revealed in Jesus through His attitudes, conduct and personal relations. They have in Him a model of holy character. And coupled with this they also have His direct supervision of the development of their own lives, and this is right at the heart of discipleship. Jesus disciplined those twelve men by teaching them what and how to be all that God wanted them to be. He invested Himself in them; it was a time-consuming, laborious, and often painful task, but it was God's plan for building godly men.

Another factor closely interwoven in the fabric of spiritual growth was the group of spiritual disciplines that Jesus began to build into His men from the very earliest days. Some of these have to be inferred from the data, like the importance of knowledge and truth, and thus the necessity of the study of the Word of God; or like the importance of growing with other disciples, and thus the significance of being a regular part of a small fellowship of like-minded men. But other disciplines are more explicit, e.g., giving, praying, and fasting (Matt. 6:1-18). All of these were carefully guarded to prevent them from being done for the wrong reasons—a trap into which the Pharisees had fallen in Jesus' day. But they were to be cultivated as disciplines, because these were the normal ways in which one developed his relation with God—they were the instruments of knowing Him and His will more perfectly, and therefore, became very important to anyone who wanted to be like His holy character.

Yet, in spite of the disciplined life that the Twelve developed and the investment of Jesus in them over a three-year period, they still lacked something in their own character when it was time for Him to leave them. Jesus was fully aware of this. He knew that what had happened in their lives was very significant, but He also knew that it was incomplete. That is why He spent the largest part of His last evening with them explaining the coming of the Holy Spirit and its implications for their lives. Then He closed with a prayer for their sanctification. Both the fulfillment of His teaching and the answer to His prayer came on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus modeled holiness before them for three years, closed His last night with them by praying that the Holy Father would make them holy in a way they were not yet holy, and then poured out the Holy Spirit upon them to give them a holiness of life they had not known before. This is the reason that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is so crucial for discipleship, for Jesus knew His disciples could not be like Him without it.

So the connection between holiness and discipleship has several key points. It begins with initial sanctification when one first establishes a relationship with Jesus by repentance and faith. It continues in progressive sanctification as one follows Jesus, learning from the model of His character and building spiritual disciplines into one's life. It comes to another

crucial point in entire sanctification when the Holy Spirit assumes a more absolute control of the life of the disciple. But it does not end with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, here is where the full implications of a holy heart begin to be worked out in a holy character.

Real growth in both character and effective service begins with the experience of entire sanctification. And this further, more significant spiritual growth is undergirded with the same spiritual disciplines that the disciples learned before Pentecost. If these disciplines were designed to assist a disciple in knowing God and His will more perfectly, then their full value becomes more evident when they serve a disciple who is completely consecrated to God and fully surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit. Now, that total consecration can be coupled with those spiritual disciplines to work out God's perfect will in every area of a disciple's character and service.⁷ **Holiness and the Great Commission**

With this introduction to the process of making disciples, we turn to some of the specifics that relate holiness and discipleship. At the end of a three-year process of discipleship, Jesus closed His time in the flesh with commandments. In these two final pieces of instruction to the men whom Jesus His disciples with two significant has trained, we find again the crucial ingredients that make up a holy people who are God's own special possession. In these last appearances to those who were to provide spiritual leadership for the transformation of the world, Jesus again alluded to the matter of their being a redeemed people of God, dealt once more with the question of authority in their lives, challenged them to a worldwide outreach, reinforced their commitment to a fellowship of like-minded people, and finally, added one more significant command relating to the building of their holy character.

Jesus' next-to-the-last commandment is given in Matthew 28 and is commonly styled the Great Commission. Here Jesus is clearly speaking to believing disciples. They not only have been redeemed after having met the conditions of repentance and faith, but they have walked with Him in faith and have seen their spiritual lives grow in the three years they have lived in personal contact with Jesus. When they gather together with Him on a mountain in Galilee they worship Him. They are men of faith in Jesus Christ. There is no question about their being the redeemed people of God.

They are also men who are living under the authority of Jesus. They went to the mountain in Galilee in response to a commandment of the risen Christ when He first appeared in Jerusalem. And having met Him in obedience, they are further reminded by Jesus of the authority that He has from the Father. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me," is His preface to the Great Commission. And it is the authority that God has given Him on earth that certainly is related to His direction over the lives of those that call themselves disciples. But now a further element related to this question of authority is raised by Jesus in His introduction to the Great Commission. This is so that the disciples are clearly to understand that the going and making of disciples of all nations is based on the authoritative commandment given to them by Jesus. They are not fulfilling this task because they personally think it is a good idea, or because some people desire to hear the Word of God, or because circumstances would seem to indicate this as a natural development of their training under Jesus. But rather the going forth to make disciples is bound up with their willingness to walk in obedience to the authority of Jesus Christ over

their lives as disciples. The implication of that fact seems unusually significant for us in the twentieth century. For if we too are submitting ourselves to His authority, it will be very difficult to escape the conclusion that we also have been commissioned to make disciples of all nations.

The heart of the Great Commission, of course, is the injunction to make disciples. It is not just a commandment to proclaim the gospel, as some of the older translations suggest. A study of the verbs in the original text of verses 19 and 20 makes clear that there is one major thrust based upon the one primary verb, i.e., "make disciples." And it is upon this that three participles depend: going, baptizing and teaching. So the outreach is more specifically defined now than ever before in the history of God's preparing a people for service in His name. Men are to go, to be sure, and this is a part of outreach; but the purpose of going is to make disciples. This is how men under the new dispensation are to be priests to the world, fishers of men, salt and light to the present age.

Further, Jesus reminds them implicitly of the crucial need to be a part of a fellowship of those who are His disciples. The commission is given to a group of disciples. The imperative tense in verse 19 of "make disciples" is second person, plural: you all make disciples. But in addition to fulfilling the Great Commission in the company with other disciples, Jesus reminds them of another dimension of fellowship. That comes with the closing promise of His own personal presence to those who are involved in the task of making disciples: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." It is interesting to observe that when Jesus first called these men to be His disciples, He gave them both a command and a promise. There, in Matthew 4, the command was to follow Him, and that was coupled with a promise, "I will make you to be fishers of men." Now the order of commandment and promise is reversed. At the end of His training the commandment is to go and make disciples of all nations, and that is followed by the promise of the presence of Jesus with them forever.

If in the Great Commission there are references to the people of God in terms of redemption, authority, outreach, and fellowship, may we then ask where are the references to character and holiness? These are not found principally in the passage in Matthew 28 8, but come in the last command of Jesus to His disciples given to them in Luke 24 and Acts 1.

The character question has been dealt with significantly over the past three years. They have come to an experience of initial sanctification at conversion, and this has been followed by progressive sanctification during their years with Jesus. But now He speaks to them in terms of an additional aspect of the shaping of their character. That relates to His prayer for them for their complete sanctification in John 17, and is now couched in terms of a commandment to wait for "the promise of the Father." As Acts 1 makes quite clear, the promise of the Father refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit; for this is the means to their more entire sanctification. Apparently, this part of making the disciples holy was so crucial that Jesus would not let them begin the urgent task of fulfilling the Great Commission until they had been filled with the Holy Spirit. Again, holiness of life is intimately bound up with the ministry to which God has called all believers, i.e., making disciples in all nations. **The**

Significance of Entire Sanctification for Discipleship

The role of entire sanctification or the baptism of the Holy Spirit for discipleship seems to be significant in three major areas. One of these refers to what the disciples were and relates to the question of being or character. Another relates to the work that Jesus had called them to do. This is the matter of ministry or service. And the third area is a connectional area between what they were to be and what they were to do.

The first area in which entire sanctification is significant for the concept of discipleship relates to the fact that after Pentecost God is still looking for holy people. This brings us once again to the matter of character. Believers cannot be a holy people without being like the Father or like the Son, and the experience of entire sanctification is a part of that process. It seems to make its impact felt in at least four ways.

(1) Entire sanctification places our will under the full control of the Holy Spirit, with the result that God can work out His perfectly holy character in our lives. God's character is communicated through His will, then from His will to our will, and last through our will to our character. If our will is submitted to the will of God, then His holy character can be translated into our character. How this transformation takes place is described in a number of different ways. This experience is so complex that no one figure of speech or group of terms adequately describes all that transpires in this event. Thus when our will, which controls our character, is completely submitted to the control of the will of God, which is directed by His holy character, this experience of submission may be described in terms of baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit, or in terms of the cleansing or purification of our sinful nature, or in terms of entire sanctification, or in terms of a heart made perfect in love. Each of these refers to a different dimension in that point of commitment. When the will is surrendered to God's will, then it is completely controlled by the will of God expressed through His Holy Spirit. The entirety of sanctification refers in significant measure to the entire consecration of the will and therefore of the life to a holy God in that experience. It may further be defined as a purifying of a life in terms of purification from sinfulness or a self-will orientation, for one can no longer be even partially controlled by self-will, if one's total will has been submitted to the will of God. Further at that moment, the individual is given a motivation in his heart to love as God loves, i.e., unconditionally, and this is usually described in terms of perfect love.

All of the above takes place at that point of crisis called entire sanctification, and it centers around our will being completely under the control of God's will. But that needs also to be understood in terms of a completely consecrated will that now must control our character. Two dimensions in particular of translating the experience of our will to our character are of special significance. One of these has to do with the description of our character in terms of perfect love. This deals primarily with attitudes. The other area in which our consecrated will is worked out through our character is in terms of righteous living. This is the question of absolute obedience in our conduct. While the surrender of our will in entire sanctification takes place in a moment, the working out its implications in our character, particularly in the areas of attitude and conduct, is the process of growth after sanctification. And it is at this point that discipleship becomes absolutely essential for sanctified living. For it is in these areas of learning the implications of a heart of perfect love and a life of ethical

righteousness in all areas of behavior that we so urgently need the spiritual disciplines of discipleship and the model of a disciple-maker.

(2) Entire sanctification also affects the character of a disciple relative to his willingness to grow. A disciple who has had his self-will/sinful nature purged in entire sanctification should be more teachable. The Holy Spirit now in fuller control of his life should be able to work out the holy character of God in his character particularly in the areas of attitudes and conduct, for now the implications of godliness do not threaten the self-orientation of a disciple. And because he should have a more teachable spirit, this is the place where real growth and maturity can take place.

(3) With entire sanctification a power from the Holy Spirit is available for a more disciplined life. One who has been cleansed from self-will now has dealt with the most significant problem of discipline, i.e., the denial of self. Discipline in all areas means denying self some things in order to accomplish more significant goals. Thus one who has seen the need for dealing with his independent self-will is now in a position to receive help from the Holy Spirit to make spiritual disciplines more effective in his life.⁹

(4) The last reason that entire sanctification seems to have such a significant impact on the life of a disciple is that with the fullness of the Holy Spirit there comes a power for victorious, Christian living. Because the self-will has been dealt with, the ability to resist temptation, which appeals chiefly to the self, is much greater, and consistent victory over sin becomes possible.

The second major area in which sanctification is significant for discipleship relates to the question of authority, and it touches both the character of the disciple-what he is, and his ministry-what he does. The meeting place between authority and holiness in this context relates to the conditions of entire sanctification which are the same as those for a disciple who is living under the absolute, kingly rule of God. For both of these. Two things are necessary. One is the total consecration of the life to God which involves a surrender of self-will and a complete willingness to obey. The second is trust. It is total faith which is that which makes possible total Consecration It is this full consecration and complete confidence in God that are conditional elements for entire sanctification and thus are crucially bound up in what the grace of God does in changing our nature to make it holy. But these two also are intimately wrapped up in living under the total authority of God as the absolute king over our lives and thus they also are crucially bound up in what He is directing us to do with our lives.

The last major area in which sanctification makes its impact on the life of discipleship has to do with the ministry to which disciples are called. This includes at least three things.

First of all it relates to the power from the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth. This is the power for outreach to make fishers of men to be a kingdom of priests and involves the power of the disciple to reproduce his life in other people s lives.

This brings us to the second matter which is the principle that men produce what they are. To make godly disciples men must be godly disciples. Since all disciples are called to be a part of the fulfilling of the Great Commission from Jesus perspective they need to have the kind of character through the fullness of the Holy Spirit that will make it possible to produce other men and women whose character will be like Jesus. So for the purposes of disciple-making by example association and teaching through life-to-life investment the experience of entire sanctification is essential.

Thirdly with entire sanctification the Holy Spirit has total control in the life of a disciple over his spiritual gifts other God-given abilities time resources and energy for the work and ministry. When the Spirit has this kind of complete responsibility in these areas it is far easier for all of them to be used for ministry in the body of Christ. It is easier to learn how one functions in the body of Christ because now the disciple does not have to have this job or carry that responsibility but with the surrender of his self-will he now is available to be used of God according to His design for the individual in the Church.¹⁰ **The Significance of Discipleship for Sanctified Living**

The effects of discipleship upon the individual who has experienced entire sanctification are primarily twofold. The first of these is that it makes it possible to maintain the experience of sanctifying grace. There is no unconditional eternal security for the entirely sanctified any more than for the justified. Wesleyans are quite agreed on the latter but sometimes have not been as vocal about the former. The result has been that some may (even subconsciously) assume that entire sanctification is automatically a permanent possession. Experience should warn us that this can be a deadly trap indeed. Not only can the experience be lost it certainly will be unless the conditions of total consecration to God's perfect will and of total trust in Him leading to full obedience are continually met.

Here the disciple has not only the model and teaching of Jesus to assist him but he has the spiritual disciplines built into his life that are necessary for keeping his life under the full control of God's sanctifying Spirit. These disciplines (e.g., daily time in searching the Scripture and private prayer) have been learned to help the disciple know God and obey His will. They are now used to do just that in a fuller way, in the life of one who after entire sanctification is committed to knowing and trusting God more completely and to walking by faith in full obedience to His perfect will. For example how can one live under God's perfect will if he does not know that will? And can God's will be known without diligent searching of the Scripture? Thus the daily discipline of Bible study becomes one of the underpinnings of a life fully under God's control.

Another aspect of discipleship that assists in the maintaining of the experience of entire sanctification is the regular fellowship with others committed to holy living. This consistent fellowship with a few other disciples provides a place for accountability in one's spiritual life that means regular attention will be given to spiritual examination. Being accountable to others means the disciple must continually check up on himself to see if he is walking in obedience to God's perfect will for him. In addition, the fellowship with God's people may be one of His means of giving guidance regarding His will for the individual. The life of

discipleship then makes it possible to keep one's will and life under the full control of the Holy Spirit and thus maintain the experience of God's sanctifying grace.

Closely related to this is a second way in which discipleship is significant for sanctified living. It relates to spiritual growth after entire sanctification. In this area discipleship is what makes possible the working out of the implications of a will fully surrendered to God's will and a life completely under His control. Now that the self-will of the sin nature has been dealt with in entire sanctification, this is when real growth should take place in the individual, there no longer being a struggle between self-will and God's will. Now the spiritual disciplines learned in the discipleship process for the purpose of growth in godliness before sanctification become even more significant after that experience. For subsequent to entire sanctification these tools for knowing God's will can be applied without the possible reservations about doing that will. Thus the sanctified individual urgently needs these spiritual disciplines to discover the full implications of a heart of perfect love and of a life committed to ethical righteousness. For the full implications of God's total control will only become apparent through the study of the Word, significant prayer time, the regular meeting with a few other like-minded disciples, fasting to know God's will, the model of a disciple-maker, and other aspects of the discipleship process.

Discipleship finds its significance then for sanctified living in that it is what makes it possible to maintain an experience of entire sanctification, and at the same time work out its full implications in the attitudes, behavior and interpersonal relationships of the individual. It may well be that failure to give proper attention to making disciples as a complement to preaching sanctification is the reason that so many do not retain their experience of sanctifying grace, while others never seem to be able to make real spiritual progress after consecrating their lives to God's sanctifying Spirit.¹¹ **The Means of Making Disciples**

When Jesus set out to create a holy people, i.e., to make disciples, how did He go about it? What were His tools for building godly men? The first thing He did was invest His own life in them. This was one of the purposes of the incarnation, to demonstrate the process of making disciples after the likeness and character of a Holy God. What He did in the discipleship process then ought to become a pattern for all who have been given the commission to make disciples in all nations.

This life-to-life investment included four elements. (1) He became a model of the kind of godly life the Father wants to see in every Christian. He who was God in the flesh was able to manifest the kind of holiness of character in His attitudes, behavior, and interpersonal relationships that provided a concrete example of the moral image of God that He wanted to see restored in fallen man. Jesus became a demonstration of holiness with a human face, and by so doing became a model of life and character for everyone desiring to be remade in the image of the Holy One of the universe.

(2) Jesus invested Himself in His disciples by teaching them a knowledge of the truth. Because men needed an understanding of the truth in order to conform their lives to God's perfect will the communication of God's truth was very significant. Without it men could not know God's will, and thus could not become a holy people or perform His ministry in the world. Right understanding is always essential for right living, and so Jesus spent large

amounts of time teaching His disciples. Some of the teaching was done by a formal approach, such as the Sermon on the Mount or His discourse at the Last Supper, and some of it was done in a much more informal way, while they were traveling, or sitting beside a well, or as He mixed with people in everyday life situations. But it was all a part of His communication of truth, and it was designed to be the verbal complement to the living demonstration of the truth which He was modeling in His own life before them.

(3) He was then a model and a teacher of the truth in His training of the twelve, but also He was one who supervised the building into their priorities of the disciplines necessary to cultivate their relationship with God and make it possible for Him to work out His will in their lives and ministries. To be disciples meant to be disciplined followers of Jesus, and discipline is not developed in a day. So a part of Jesus' investment in His men was helping them learn how to get these spiritual disciplines incorporated into their everyday experience. So, for example, after modeling His own prayer life before them and teaching them in a structured setting about the importance of prayer, there came the day when they asked Him to teach them to pray. And in His response Jesus supervised their experience of learning to pray and of learning how to become praying disciples.

(4) Whereas the first three elements of Jesus' investment in His men relate primarily to their edification, the fourth pertains principally to equipping them for the work of ministry. He trained them for the responsibility of outreach and service that would be theirs when they began the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. All of this was intimately related to the above mentioned factors. Jesus modeled before them effective ministry in terms of evangelism, disciple-making, and service. He taught the truth that they would need to carry on their ministries, and He helped them build into their lives the disciplines necessary for effective spiritual service. He then trained them in the kind of things they would later have to do, such as a ministry of service, when He had them assist in the feeding of the 5,000, or a ministry of proclamation, when He sent them on a preaching mission. This part of their education had to do with their activities in the service of the King. They were being equipped to make disciples and do the work of ministry within the Body of Christ and to the world, and their understanding of how to do these things was a part of what Jesus was imparting to them by His life-to-life investment.

Yet, after Jesus had spent three years of His life giving of Himself to His disciples He knew there was still something missing in their lives. So while Jesus investment of Himself was the first part of making disciples, there was also a second major factor in His plan, viz., the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When He had completed all He could do under the first category, He left them with instructions not to depart from Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. After praying for their sanctification on His last night with them, He took the occasion of His last post-resurrection appearance to them to enjoin them to wait for the promise of the Father. Both the answer to His prayer and the fulfillment of His promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit came about on the day of Pentecost when the disciples in company with other believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then and only then, did those men find themselves ready to fulfill the Great Commission. But as soon as the Holy Spirit had come in all His sanctifying fullness, the Twelve began immediately the task of making disciples. They stood forth proclaiming the gospel which led to the

conversion and public declaration of this new-found faith in baptism by 3,000 souls, and then the disciples at once began to fulfill the second part of the Commission, i.e., teaching the new believers. And what did they teach these new converts in order to make them disciples? Just what they themselves had been taught. It was natural; they began to make disciples just like they had been made into disciples by Jesus. Acts 2 makes it clear that the new Christians enjoyed the fellowship of the apostles; in other words they lived close enough to the Twelve to see them model holy living in front of them. They had some living examples of disciples. Then they were trained by the apostles teaching; they were taught a knowledge of the truth just as Jesus had done earlier with His men. Further, the disciples began to help them build spiritual disciplines into their lives; for example, they began to teach them to pray as they had been taught. And lastly, they began to lead the Church in a ministry of sacrificial service that led to a sharing of possessions as any had need, and apparently also to equip the new believers for a ministry of outreach, the Lord adding to their number day by day. It seems likely that they recognized the need of the new disciples to be filled with the Holy Spirit as a part of the discipleship process, and encouraged them in this experience. At least one possible interpretation of Acts 4 sees the company to whom Peter and John returned as those who became believers on the day of Pentecost, and who were then ready to receive the fullness of God's sanctifying Spirit that they too might carry on the ministry of witness with the power and boldness of the apostles.

This picture of the relation of Jesus' discipleship activity to the coming of the Holy Spirit ought to raise some very serious questions for those of us in the Wesleyan tradition. We are absolutely committed to the experience of sanctifying grace. Are we as committed to the matter of investing our lives in a few individuals? Jesus apparently thought both were essential, and spent three years of His life pouring Himself into the Twelve. Are we doing the same thing?

Is it possible that our strong emphasis on the experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit has led us to conclude (perhaps even subconsciously) that the Holy Spirit does everything in the life of a believer that Jesus does? With regard to the immediate relation with the Godhead, He does play an irreplaceable role. But with regard to the discipleship process can He play the same role as Jesus did in the flesh? I submit He does not replace Jesus in this way. And Jesus knew this very well. That is why He told His apostles that their job was to make disciples: They were to do in others' lives by their physical presence what He had done in theirs. It was a deliberate part of Jesus' plan to fulfill the Great Commission that those who were already disciples should invest themselves in others under His authority and through the power of His Spirit. Must not this life-to-life investment also become a crucial complement to our proclamation of sanctifying grace if we are to fully implement Jesus' strategy for making disciples of all nations?¹² **Notes**

1Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 86.

2A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), p. 145.

3Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1948), p. 268.

4G. E. Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1950), p. 69.

5For failure to represent His holy name before the nations God brings judgment on Israel. Cf. Ezekiel 36:22-38. But note in the same passage also His promise of vindicating His holiness through the New Covenant.

6The present writer's contemporary, working definition of discipleship is a modification of that by Allen Hadidian, *Successful Discipling* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), pp. 29-30:

Discipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have been won to Christ, the purpose being to aid and guide their growth in godliness/holy living and equip them to reproduce themselves and to use their spiritual gift(s) in the work of the ministry.

7On the process of discipleship in the Gospels several works are significant. The older classic by A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, was first published in 1871 and revised in 1899; it has been reprinted by Kregel in 1971. A more concise treatment of the same data is the well-written book by Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), and another more interpretative study by Carl Wilson is *With Christ in the School of Disciple Building* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976). Cf. also John James Vincent, *Disciple and Lord The Historical and Theological Significance of Discipleship in the Synoptic Gospels* (Sheffield, England: Academy Press, 1976); Knox Chamblin "Following Jesus According to the New Testament," Columbia Theological Seminary, Th.M. thesis, 1967; Jerome L. Larson, "Biblical Discipleship: Its Questions and Answers," Master's Thesis, Talbot Theological Seminary, 1975; Kent Tucker, "The Principles of Discipleship Used in Training the Twelve in the Gospel of Mark," Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1970; Gary Tangeman, "New Testament Principles of Discipleship," Master's Thesis, Talbot Theological Seminary, 1975. Of these works only Coleman writes from within the Wesleyan tradition.

8Although the second half of the Commission certainly alludes to this, viz., "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The teaching/learning of obedience is certainly a part of the shaping of character in progressive sanctification. It should be noted, however, that this has reference to future disciples, not to the band of eleven.

9Cf., Jay Adams, *Godliness Through Discipline* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 4, 8-12. Adams recognizes the proper place of self-denial in discipline, and he speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit in providing power for a disciplined life. His Reformed position, however, does not allow for the same dynamic role of the Spirit as Wesleyans do with their understanding of the connection between the infilling of the Spirit and entire sanctification.

10There are surprisingly few references in the literature on discipleship to equipping individuals for ministry according to their spiritual gift(s). Leroy Eims devotes a paragraph to the subject in his *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p.

142; and Walter Henrichsen has a seven-page chapter on "Gifts and Calling" in *Disciples Are Made-Not Born* (Wheaton: Victor, 1975), pp. 131-38.

11Far too little attention has been given to the inter-relationship of sanctification and discipleship. For an introduction see Richard Taylor, *The Disciplined Life* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1962), pp. 48-62. A recent work by Jerry Bridges of the Navigators has some useful suggestions, but since Bridges does not write from the Wesleyan tradition, he misses the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit as well as the interaction between entire sanctification and discipleship. Cf. Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1978).

12A number of recent works deal with the process of making disciples in a contemporary setting. The best of these is Allen Hadidian's *Successful Discipling*, but several others provide some very helpful insights on the "how to" of the discipleship process. Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* and Gary W. Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Personal Followup* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) are particularly useful. Cf. also Kuhne, *The Dynamics of Discipleship Training* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made-Not Born*, Doug Hartman and Doug Sutherland, *A Guidebook to Discipleship* (Irvine, California: Harvest House, 1976); Gen Warr, *You Can Make Disciples* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1978). Two works specifically relate to the discipleship of women: Carole Mayhall, *From the Heart of a Woman: Basic Discipleship from a Woman's Viewpoint* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1976), And Anne Ortland, *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1977). Unfortunately, none of these authors write from a Wesleyan perspective, and therefore, the dynamic impact the Wesleyan-Arminian theological position ought to have upon the strategy for making disciples does not receive the attention it deserves. It should be noted, however, that the Free Methodists have developed a manual on this subject for use by local churches entitled *Decision to Discipleship* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Men International, 1977).